

**Sacred Heart Catholic
Primary School**
To live, love and learn joyfully in the family of Christ



Play Policy
Policy Review

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on September 2024

It is due for review in Autumn 2025

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SignatureM.Fusi.....

Date 24/09/2024

Head Teacher

SignatureM. Payne..... Date ...24/09/2024

Chair of Governors

Mission Statement

At Sacred Heart School our mission statement is:

‘To live, love and learn joyfully in the family of Christ’.

In striving each day to fulfil our Mission Statement our community tries to build respect in all aspects of school life and at all levels. In writing this play policy, we remember that we should:

‘Recognise Christ in ourselves and in others.’

The staff and governors at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School seek to create an environment in the school, which encourages and reinforces positive behaviour and a positive self-image.

Our vision Aims In relation to play our school aims to:

- ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- aid children’s physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- provide a range of environments which will support children’s learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- promote independence and teamwork within children.
- build emotional and physical resilience.

Commitment

At Sacred Heart, we are committed to this play policy to guide us in our planning and actions in providing excellent play opportunities for all children. We believe that play is an essential part of children’s wellbeing and happiness. Enjoyable play supports the development of children who are independent, confident, imaginative, social, creative, resilient and therefore able to assess risks.

Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is that “... *better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life.*”

The Charter for Children's Play (drawn up by Play England) sets out a vision for play which states:

Children need time and space to play at school

Adults should let children play

Children value and benefit from staffed play provision

Children’s play is enriched by skilled playworkers

Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children’s health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.
- Play enhances children’s self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children’s openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31) and the *right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Benefit and risk

'Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.'

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. As outlined in the play sector publication 'Best Play', play provision should aim to *'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm'*.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

Sacred Heart will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) and 'The Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision (Appendix 1)' as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision:

Direct, Remote and Ranging

Except for new children in reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

The adult's role in facilitating play

The adults on the Play Team at Sacred Heart will:

- ensure that the broadest range of play opportunities are made available to children.
- observe, reflect and analyse the play that is occurring and select an appropriate mode of intervention or make changes to the play space if necessary.
- ensure that the play spaces are inclusive, supporting all children of all abilities to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.
- encourage and support children to be reflective risk managers; innovative, creative thinkers and problem solvers.

The Play Environment

At Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, we will:

- use the outdoor space effectively as a natural resource for learning and playing.
- include the children when planning for outdoor play and learning.
- ensure that the outdoor areas offer children the opportunity to investigate, explore, imitate, innovate, create, problem solve and use their imagination creatively.
- encourage children to respect the outdoor environment, the resources available and care for living things; and
- give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors.
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of types of play and increase the play value (see Appendix 2 for types of play).

Equality and diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's needs we will ensure all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special needs, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play.

We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play. We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

Review

This policy will be closely monitored by the OPAL Play Team, SLT and governors. A working play group, led by the head, composed of play leader, Play Curriculum Leader, Play Curriculum Supervisor, Play parent and play governor, will take responsibility for managing the action plan for play.

This policy has been shared by the whole school community.

This policy is under continuous review in line with our OPAL Journey.

