Parkside OPAL play policy

1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. 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, sexual orientation, 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."*

CYP who attend Parkside have SEND which creates further barriers to play compared to their mainstream counterparts. Below are some survey results which bring together views of parents/carers, staff and CYP, showing why we need to develop play at Parkside.

<u>Feedback from parents and carers surveys:</u>
85% said that playtime is extremely important (15% said important) and stated a host of benefits they got from playing with mud, sand, climbing and being with friends.
60% said their child does not get the same opportunities as they did as a child due to increased traffic, technology and not as safe as it was. Only 17% said that their child plays outside everyday.
60% saying that weather was a big factor in this, along with their child's behaviour and lack of understanding of others.
Parent/carers would like their child to have more variety and choice of what to play including water play, sandplay, climbing, scooters and social areas to name a few. No parent/carers disapproved of minor accidents and muddy clothes through playing.

<u>Feedback Staff Surveys:</u>
65% stated resilience is a bit low or very low.
Staff have commented how pupils can be very dysregulated following lunch and that there is a lot of non-compliance during, including unkindness towards each other. Some of the challenges at lunchtime are that there is not enough storage, resources and staff confidence in supporting play.
Staff have said how more screen time and poor social skills are a major difference in playtime for CYP at Parkside today.

<u>Feedback from CYP Surveys:</u>
60% said how staff are inconsistent with playground rules with 53% saying they do not enjoy playtimes. Most say that there are not enough resources for them and that they are not allowed to go to places they would like to.

We have also collected data from behavioural incidents over the Summer Term 2023.This has shown that there were 4,040 behaviour incidents recorded across the School during Session 3.

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Lunch play had 853 recorded behavioural incidents. We would hope that through the OPAL programme, that the behaviour data stated will reduce.

3. 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.

Play is the unteachable curriculum where CYP learn about themselves, others and their environment

Parkside's key vision is for CYP to feel empowered and enabled to be happy, confident and active members of their community. They will have an improved ability to communicate, self-regulate leading to greater independence where they will not feel limited by their particular needs and aspire to try new experiences. As a result of this, becoming an OPAL School and developing our play is now on the School SIDP and a main focus of the 2023-24 academic year. We have a working group focussed on play development including Iain Mills as the curricular lead (and part of SLT role), Daisy Camplin as Play Coordinator, Alison Clarke as Governor, Claire as PFA, Justin Howard as Grounds support and Carolyn Ellis-Gage as Head Teacher.

4. 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.

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- Provide a range of environments that 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.
- Although not a direct focus of play, the results will link directly to EHCP outcomes

5. 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. At Parkside we want CYP to feel empowered and enabled to be happy, confident and active members of their community where they will not feel limited by their particular needs and aspire to try new experiences.

6. 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) (See Appendices)*

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 practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for SEND school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day, adults are deployed in accordance with class and pupils risk assessments including RAGS and PBMP's. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. 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. Although seen as the less conducive and efficient method of supervision, we will use the direct supervision model where an identified need is seen relating to dynamic risk assessments and class and pupils risk management plans as stated previously.

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8. The adult's role in play

The school will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

The playworker's core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced playworker is capable of enriching the child's play experience both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in terms of the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

Please see the Playwork Essentials document for further reading

9. 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.

Please refer to our Schools Equality and Diversity Policy

10. Environment

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

In addition, a rich play setting supports safeguarding, helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, increases children's social and emotional capabilities and helps develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment.

Appendices

HSE Managing Risk Statement

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OPAL Playwork Essentials

Parkside Schools Equality and Diversity Policy

Best Play Guide

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