

Play Policy

Frogwell Primary School

Be safe - Be kind - Aim high

- ***Be safe:*** We want all children to feel emotionally and physically safe in our school and to enjoy coming here each day. We aim to make our school a happy place for everyone
- ***Be kind:*** We believe it is essential to provide children with the support they need to succeed both academically, socially and emotionally.
- ***Aim high:*** We believe all children should be encouraged to aspire for the future, regardless of their starting points. We aim to inspire children and build their confidence to aim high.

Date of Policy: May 2026

Review Date: May 2027

Governor Responsibility: Alison Cummings and David Rousell

Governor Lead: Alison Cummings and David Rousell

Nominated Lead Member of Staff: Jessie Akin

Status & Review Cycle: Annual

Frogwell School will refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

1.Rationale

Frogwell school believes that all children need opportunities to engage in high quality play which allows 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."

The OPAL rationale aligns with our school values and rules: Be Safe, Be Kind, Aim High.

2. Definition and value of play

The United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child defines play as: *'any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which play takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end'*

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. According to the Playwork principals (Appendix 1) there are 16 different types of play, including: include symbolic, rough-and-tumble, socio-dramatic, social, creative, communication, deep, and exploratory play. Play may or may not involve equipment or other people.

At Frogwell we believe that:

- Play is essential for children's 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, advocate for themselves and others, 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.

3. Aims

Frogwell 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 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.

4. 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). According to the same convention, children also have the right to be safe, and the right to learn. At Frogwell we believe it is the adults' duty to consider these rights as a whole, making decisions to balance them where necessary.

5. OPAL and our Behaviour Policy

Our behaviour policy reflects our belief that learning happens in many different ways, including structured learning tasks and child led play. It embeds our commitment to balancing our children's right to learn, be safe, and play. In order to support different kinds of learning, children will complete structured learning tasks during lessons, before they can start play and learning outside. If a child has not completed learning to an expected standard, they will be expected to complete tasks first. When a child is not safe to themselves or others they will be instructed to take a reset until they are calm and safe.

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.'

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) & Play Safety Forum (2012),

In play, exposure to risk and uncertainty can generate important benefits. For example, balancing along a wall may involve a risk of physical injury, while also generating pleasure, excitement, self-

awareness, confidence, risk perception and management skills, and a sense of achievement. In Great Britain, the provision of play opportunities is governed by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the relevant occupiers' liability legislation. Taken together, these require schools to:

- reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- undertake suitable and sufficient assessments of risk and manage those risks appropriately and proportionately under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;

The level of risk to which children may reasonably be exposed is a question of what is reasonable and practicable. In occupational health and safety, risk reduction or elimination is ordinarily the objective. In children's play, however, exposure to risk and uncertainty can contribute to important benefits. Risks and benefits must therefore be considered together when deciding what is reasonable and proportionate. The Health and Safety Executive highlights this in its high-level statement **Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach**¹:

'Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring they are not exposed to unnecessary risk.'

In 2023, the International Organization for Standardization published ISO 4980:2023, a voluntary international standard on benefit-risk assessment for sport and recreational facilities, activities and equipment, including children's play. OPAL uses the term "risk-benefit assessment", while ISO uses "benefit-risk assessment". In this context, both describe the same balanced process of considering risks and benefits together when making decisions. ISO 4980:2023 defines benefit-risk assessment as:

'A form of risk assessment that considers both risks and benefits in parallel when making decisions. Benefit-risk assessment is a balanced approach involving judgment based on clear values and understandings. Where appropriate, it takes account of local circumstances and includes an evaluation of social, physical, and developmental considerations.'

We will use a risk-benefit approach when making decisions about what is reasonable and the desirability of children engaging with heightened levels of risk. This approach aims to ensure that children can experience the benefits of uncertainty in their play while seeking to reduce the risk of serious harm and those risks that are not beneficial to children. This decision-making will be based on evaluating:

- the benefits of the play opportunity;
- the likelihood and potential severity of harm;
- the children involved and the wider context;
- relevant guidance, good practice and comparisons with similar accepted activities;
- the effect that possible controls or restrictions may have on the quality and benefits of the play.

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. We understand that risk is not limited to physical risk. It includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure. 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.

The school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012) (Appendix 2) and assess risk using the Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet – (Appendix 2). Our risk management strategy is an ongoing process informed by OPAL's R.A.P.I.D. approach to risk management in play. R.A.P.I.D. stands for Risk-benefit assessments, Assemblies, Policy, Inspections, and Dynamic risk management. (Appendix 3)

7. Supervision & Role of the adults

Frogwell School recognise OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. For KS1 & KS2 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 staff involved in supervising playtimes are called our Play Team. Their role is to facilitate and enhance play, encouraging children to assess risk of their play behaviours and to be creative and collaborative in play, and to support self-directed play as much as possible. Our Play Team will work according to the Playwork Principles (Appendix 1), which will guide staff how to supervise and intervene with children's play. The Play Team will be provided with regular opportunities to meet, discuss and reflect on their practise and our evolving play provision.

The school ground will be divided into supervision zones with an allocated adult supervising each area. When required, 1:1 supervision will be provided. The Play Team will wear high visibility vests and carry first aid kits to administer basic first aid in situ.

8. Whole school communication

At Frogwell we are committed maintaining an open dialogue with children about our play provision, with the aim of further developing their playtime experiences using their voices and ideas as guidance.

Play assemblies are a key aspect of our risk management strategy. This includes meeting with children regularly to discussing the play opportunities on offer, the play environment and their play behaviours, as well as our approach to working with play. We use OPAL's C.I.N.I format, which incorporates **Celebrating** children's play, **Informing** children about aspects of our play provision, **Negotiating** with children about aspects of the play offer, and **Innovating** with children about improving our play offer. These assemblies routinely include conversations with children around various aspects of risk management.

As a school, we will also maintain an OPAL working group, which will oversee the implementation of the OPAL Programme, ensuring that all aspects of school life that influence our play times are aligned with the aims and aspirations of this policy. The diagram in Appendix 4 sets out the staffing structure we have in place to support quality play times.

9. Safeguarding

Effective play helps keep children safe by developing confidence in advocating for their own rights and building trusted relationships with peers and adults. Effective play allows children to assess and explore risks in a controlled environment which will support them when faced with assessing risks outside of school.

Appendix 1

The Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

- 1** All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- 2** Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- 3** The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
- 4** For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult-led agendas.



- 5** The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- 6** The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up-to-date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- 7** Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- 8** Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

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Appendix 2

Health & Safety Executive: Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting A Balanced Approach



Health and Safety
Executive

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks¹ and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

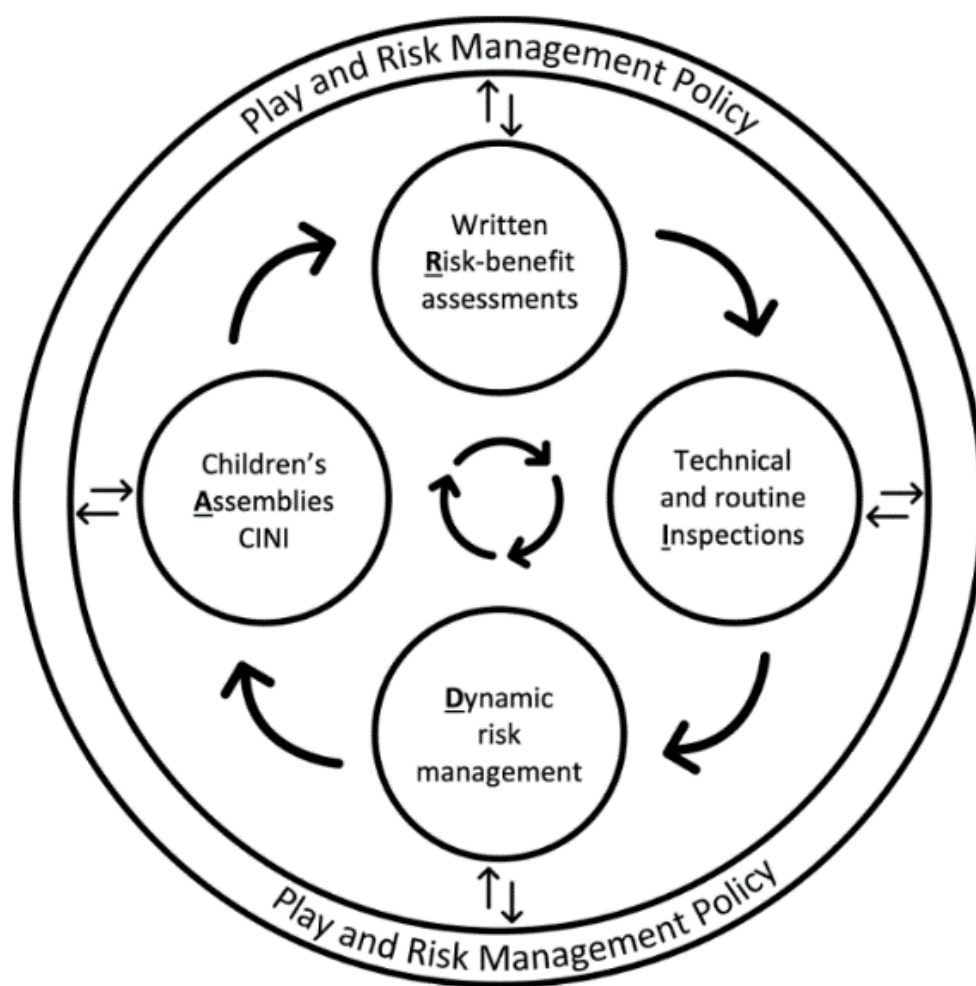
Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: 'Play is great for children's well-being 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'.

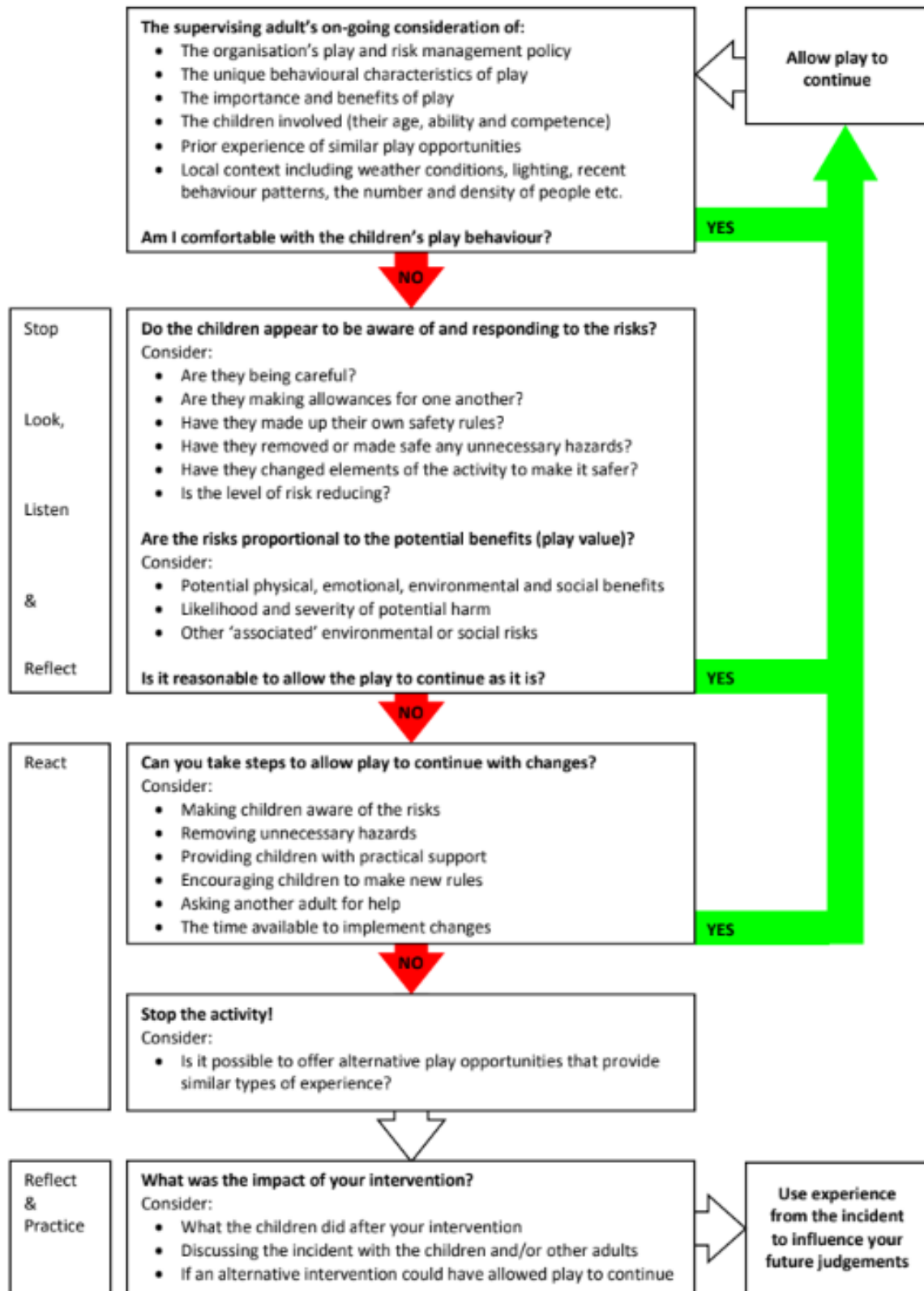
6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

¹ The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 680 [27])

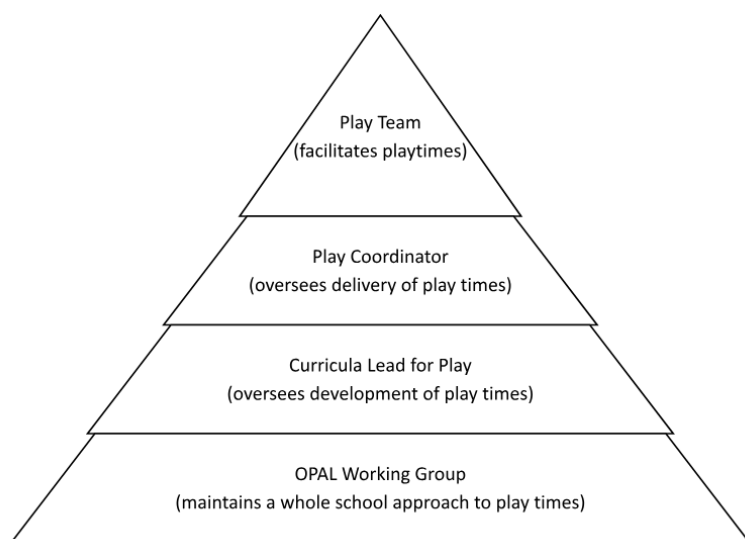
Appendix 3



Dynamic Risk-Benefit Assessment Flowchart (Guidance)



Appendix 4



At Frogwell:

Play Team: Team of Lunchtime Staff

Play Coordinator (Leads and manages play times)

Co-ordinator: Ollie Millet

Play Team Play Curricula Leader (Leads and manages strategy): Jessie Akin

Assistant Head (Oversees strategy and implementation): Lucy Cooper