

Applecroft School



Play Policy

Person Responsible:	Deputy Headteacher
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Play Policy

1) **Introduction:**

School Vision:

'To be a positive and inspiring community that nurtures each individual and empowers leaders for life.'

School Mission Statement:

'Nurturing Potential, Inspiring Minds, Changing Lives'

School Values:

- Ambition and Leadership
- Kindness and Supportiveness
- Respect and Honesty
- Determination and Resilience

2) **Rationale:**

At Applecroft School, we recognise the importance of the need for high quality sustainable play for all children, and that inclusive play is achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a real choice of accessible play opportunities.

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."

As an OPAL school, we share their vision:

...'that every child in every school has an amazing hour of high quality play every day - with no exceptions.'

We firmly believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development. Children have an innate urge to play from birth. We believe taking risks, or being challenged is a vital part of play. Children will often need and want to create challenge and uncertainty in their play. We want children to try out new experiences and develop their capabilities. Challenging play helps children to learn about themselves and to work out their limits. Children learn skills to manage risk through play and these skills can be used in other life-long situations. Through play, we will help them to manage and experience challenging opportunities. Through this type of play, children will learn to be emotionally and physically resilient.

3) **Background:**

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play. This time is invaluable and needs clear planning. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, less areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Play England's vision:

- Children need time and space
- Adults should let children play
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision
- Children's play is enriched by skilled play workers
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

4) What is 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 play.

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as:

'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.'

Play activity meets the four components of a child's development:

- Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness)
- Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination)
- Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes)
- Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

5) The Benefits of Play:

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types, e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

At Applecroft School, we recognise that great play has many benefits:

- be happier
- increase self-awareness and self-esteem
- improve language and communication skills
- develop negotiating skills
- improve concentration
- improve their imagination, independence and creativity
- improve social skills
- be resilient, confident, good problem solver
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought
- be better at problem solving
- develop life skills
- improve their physical development, co-ordination and fitness.
- being creative and cooperative
- essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development
- explore the physical and social environment

6) Aims and Objectives:

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 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.

7) Benefit and Risk, Health and Safety:

'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)

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely-chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills. Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk children's development is inhibited, which reduces their ability to deal with the wider unsupervised world.

'Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury'

Research shows that the uncertainty and challenge of much of children's play is a very large part of its appeal to them, and that it also enhances the development of their brains and bodies, making them more adaptable and resilient as they grow. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk - it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

Children should be encouraged and supported to encounter and manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk. 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.

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'.

- All activities, play areas and equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily basis by the Play Team (MSAs). The site manager will ensure annual checks are carried out on engineered and fixed equipment. These checks will be kept on file in the office.
- 'Risk-benefit assessments will be carried out for activities involving risks presented by environment, materials or practices deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of serious injury or harm.' All risk-benefits will be carried out by the OPAL Curriculum Lead (Deputy Headteacher) and OPAL Play Coordinator (Pastoral Lead) and held on file in the office for inspection.
- The Play Team, guided by the Play Coordinator will be responsible for the site, equipment and resources in general, which are intended to be open access. They will also be responsible for any activities which are directly led by the Play Team.

- It is the responsibility of all staff to work within agreed policy and procedures and to adhere to all control measures imposed as a result of assessments.
- It is the responsibility of the members of the Play Team to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to the Play Coordinator as soon as possible.

8) Adults' Role in Play:

Applecroft 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 Play work 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 play worker'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 play worker 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. Play workers 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.

The Play Team, guided by the Play Coordinator, will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children, to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. They will ensure that the play space is inclusive - supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

9) OPAL - Outdoor Play and Learning:

Applecroft School has entered into an agreement with OPAL Outdoor Play and Learning to support the development of the quality of our playtime provision.

We aim to transform the school grounds over several years to promote the continued creation and recreation of the play space by the children. Our ultimate aim is to have an integrated playground from EYFS to Year 6.

- **Loose Parts**

Research shows that the greater the range of experiences presented by a play environment, the more children will naturally explore and learn through play. The vital ingredients for these experiences are loose parts: attractive, flexible materials that children can readily change, manipulate and control for themselves. These will be stored in allocated areas both outside and in the OPAL storage shed.

- **Monitoring**

The school will use the OPAL audit tool and pupil surveys to monitor the implementation of its play policy, strategy and action plan. An annual report should be presented to governors.

- **Physical Environment**

We recognise that our outdoor environment can be used as a natural resource for learning and playing. With careful planning that involves the children we can ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve and use their imagination and creativity. Our children will be given the opportunity and responsibility to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors. By empowering our children in this way they will learn to develop, value and respect the outdoor environment and care for living things.

For types of play see Appendix A

10) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

Article 31 of the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' states that children *have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.* Applecroft School acknowledges that every child has the right to choose the kind of play that is suitable for them whatever their age, gender or background.

At Applecroft School, we aim to ensure that no pupil experiences harassment, less favourable treatment or discrimination within the learning environment because of their age; any disability they may have; their ethnicity, colour or national origin; their gender; their religion or beliefs. We value the diversity of individuals within our school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. We believe that all our children matter, and we value their families too. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. The planning and organising of teaching strategies for each subject is consistently reviewed to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged. This is in line with our Equality Information and Objectives Policy.

Play Types

There are acknowledged to be a number of different play types (around 16) which provide play workers, managers and trainers with a common language for describing play. There are in no particular order.

- 1 **Symbolic Play** - play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of depth e.g. using a piece of wood to symbolise a person or an object or a piece of string to symbolise a wedding ring.
- 2 **Rough and Tumble Play** - close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. This type of play allows children to participate in physical contact that doesn't involve or result in someone being hurt. This type of play can use up lots of energy.
- 3 **Socio-dramatic Play** - the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.
- 4 **Social Play** - play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended e.g. any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols i.e. games, conversations, making something together.
- 5 **Creative Play** - play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. Allows children to design, explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. They can use lots of different tools, props, equipment. It can have a beginning and an end, texture and smell e.g. enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake. Self-expression through any medium, making things, changing things.
- 6 **Communication Play** - play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. mime / charades, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, whispering, pointing, debate, street slang, poetry, and text messages, talking on mobiles / emails / internet, skipping games, group and ball games.
- 7 **Dramatic Play** - play which dramatises events in which the child is not a direct participator e.g. presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.
- 8 **Locomotor Play** - movement in any or every direction for its own sake e.g. chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.
- 9 **Deep Play** - play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear e.g. light fires with matches, make weapons, conquer fear such as heights, snakes, and creepy crawlies. Some find strength they never knew they had to climb obstacles, lift large objects etc. e.g. leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike on a parapet, balancing on a high beam, roller skating, assault course, high jump.
- 10 **Exploratory Play** - play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects e.g. engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.
- 11 **Fantasy Play** - This is the make believe world of children. This type of play is where the child's imagination gets to run wild. Play, which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way that is unlikely to occur e.g. playing at being a pilot flying around the world, pretend to be various characters/people, be where ever they want to be, drive a car, become be six feet nothing tall or as tiny as they want to be the list is endless as is a child's imagination.

- 12 **Imaginative Play** - play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply e.g. imagining you are or pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting a dog which isn't there.
- 13 **Mastery Play** - control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments e.g. digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.
- 14 **Object Play** - play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements e.g. examination and novel use of any object e.g. cloth, paintbrush, cup.
- 15 **Role Play** - play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. brushing with a broom, dialling with a telephone, driving a car.
- 16 **Recapitulative Play** - play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.