

Jennett's Park CE Primary

Play Policy



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Contents

1. Policy Summary	3
2. Scope	3
3. Our Commitment	3
4. Rationale	3
5. Definition and Value of Play	3
6. Our Aims	3
7. Rights of the Child	3
8. Risk–Benefit Approach	4
9. Supervision	4
10. Roles and Responsibilities	4
Senior Leadership Team and Play Governor	4
OPAL Lead	4
Playworkers	4
Teaching Staff on Duty	4
Site Team.....	4
Parents & Carers	4
11. Inclusion & Additional Needs	4
12. Environment and Play Zones	4
13. Equipment and Loose Parts Management	5
14. Behaviour and Conflict Resolution	5
15. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.....	5
16. Review Schedule.....	5
Appendices	5

Jennett’s Park CE Primary School PLAY (OPAL) POLICY

School Background:

Jennett’s Park CE Primary School is openly inclusive Christian school, welcoming all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment where they can achieve to the very best of their abilities. At Jennett’s Park CE we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We emphasise the development of the whole-learner physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically. We wish for children to flourish and achieve under God’s Love.

We promise as a staff and community to try to serve the common good with our work as part of the Church of England.

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills	To help grow resourceful , resilient and reflective children who are equipped with the skills , knowledge and tenacity empower themselves, their learning throughout their lives.
Educating for Hope and Aspiration	To inspire and enrich lives beyond current opportunities and experiences in order to open minds to the potential their future holds
Educating for Community and Living Well Together	To be a multi-cultural, inclusive community of individuals loved by God who feel valued and involved where we create qualities of character to enable people to flourish.
Educating for Dignity and Respect	That children might know how much that they are loved and valued by so that they might show dignity and respect for themselves and others by carefully and safely thinking through their actions.

1. Policy Summary

Jennett's Park CE Primary School is committed to providing high-quality, inclusive, safe and creative play for all pupils. Through participation in the OPAL Primary Programme, we aim to offer rich play opportunities that promote happiness, wellbeing, resilience, independence and social development. This policy sets out the school's vision, approach, responsibilities, supervision, risk-benefit principles and expectations for children, staff and parents.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils
- All school staff (teachers, support staff, midday supervisors, playworkers)
- Volunteers
- External visitors or contractors supporting OPAL or outdoor provision

It covers all breaktimes, outdoor play, OPAL-related activities, and the use of play environments during the school day.

3. Our Commitment

Our school undertakes to:

- Use this policy to inform all decisions relating to play.
- Provide strategic leadership to ensure high-quality play provision.
- Offer a safe, stimulating and inclusive play environment for every child.
- Support and embed the OPAL Primary Programme throughout the school.

4. Rationale

At Jennett's Park CE Primary School, we believe that play is a fundamental part of childhood and an essential component of social, emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual development.

We recognise that:

- Children need opportunities to explore, imagine, create and influence their environment.
- Play supports their wellbeing, resilience, problem-solving and communication.
- Play allows children to experience risk, learn responsibility, negotiate with peers, and regulate emotions.
- High-quality play improves behaviour, relationships, attitudes to learning and overall happiness.

Our Christian ethos — *"Live life in all its fullness" (John 10:10)* — aligns with our belief that children deserve meaningful opportunities for choice, exploration and joy every day.

5. Definition and Value of Play

Play is:

- **Freely chosen** by the child
- **Self-directed**
- **Intrinsically motivated**
- Carried out for its own sake

Play may be messy, noisy, solitary, collaborative, energetic or quiet. It may involve equipment — or none at all. Children may experiment, take risks, negotiate rules or follow their own ideas.

Play benefits children by:

- Enhancing wellbeing and resilience
- Supporting physical health and motor development
- Building creativity, curiosity and imagination
- Strengthening social relationships and emotional intelligence
- Encouraging independence, decision-making and responsibility

6. Our Aims

We aim to:

- Provide varied, challenging and stimulating play environments.
- Enable children to take risks safely and manage these independently.
- Foster respect for the environment and for each other.
- Support physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Encourage curiosity, imagination and exploration.
- Promote collaboration, independence, resilience and teamwork.
- Ensure adults support children's right to play and intervene only when appropriate.

7. Rights of the Child

We uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- **Article 31:** the right to play, leisure and recreation.
- **Article 12:** the right to express views on matters affecting them.

Children's feedback on play is gathered regularly through pupil voice, and parent views are also collected at key points throughout the OPAL implementation cycle.

8. Risk–Benefit Approach

Play involves risk. Our goal is not to eliminate risk, but to provide a balanced environment where its **developmental benefits outweigh potential hazards**.

Our school:

- Uses risk–benefit assessments for all fixed, loose-parts and natural play areas.
- Trains staff to support children in dynamic risk management.
- Encourages children to identify, assess and manage risks independently.
- Follows Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and OPAL professional guidance.

Risk-taking is an essential part of children’s learning and confidence-building.

9. Supervision

We follow OPAL’s three models of supervision:

- **Direct** – close monitoring (used for new Reception children only)
- **Remote** – adults visible and available but not intrusive
- **Ranging** – adults moving on agreed routes to monitor wide areas

All playworkers wear high-visibility clothing. Supervisors are expected to:

- Circulate rather than stand together
- Monitor zones using ranging routes
- Respond quickly when needed, without dominating play
- Support restorative conversations when conflicts occur

Reception pupils receive enhanced supervision during their initial orientation period.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leadership Team and Play Governor

- Oversees strategic development of OPAL and play provision
- Ensures policy implementation, staffing and training
- Reviews incident patterns, audits and risk assessments

OPAL Lead

- Coordinates OPAL rollout and ongoing development
- Leads audits, staff training and child play assemblies
- Maintains documentation, risk assessments and action plans
- Liaises with site staff and external partners

Playworkers

- Create welcoming, inclusive play environments
- Support children using Playwork Principles
- Encourage problem-solving, negotiation and autonomy
- Use dynamic and ranging supervision models
- Report hazards, incidents or concerns promptly

Teaching Staff on Duty

- Support supervision and modelling of expectations
- Help facilitate restorative conversations
- Ensure health, safety and safeguarding standards

Site Team

- Conduct routine checks on grounds and equipment
- Manage repairs, maintenance and storage
- Support development of new zones

Parents & Carers

- Ensure children attend school dressed for weather
- Support the school’s play ethos and expectations

11. Inclusion & Additional Needs

We are committed to ensuring that all children can access play. This includes:

- Providing sensory-friendly and quiet zones
- Ensuring accessible pathways and equipment
- Supporting children who find unstructured time challenging
- Offering adult-supported play when needed
- Making reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND

12. Environment and Play Zones

We strive to continually improve our outdoor environment. Our grounds include a variety of play zones which may include:

- Quiet/reading areas
- Creative and craft spaces
- Construction/loose parts zones

- Mud or digging areas
- Physical challenge and climbing zones
- Sports and running zones
- nature exploration areas
- Reflection/prayer spaces

Children are expected to play outdoors in most weather conditions. Parents are informed of clothing expectations through our uniform policy.

13. Equipment and Loose Parts Management

We aim to provide diverse play materials and loose parts. Our systems include:

- Clear donation guidelines
- Safe storage and rotation of materials
- Daily setup and end-of-day tidy routines
- Safety checks
- Removal of hazardous or broken items

14. Behaviour and Conflict Resolution

We promote restorative practice. Adults support children to:

- Manage disagreements
- Communicate feelings
- Understand impact
- Repair relationships

Play is an important context for learning these skills.

15. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The school monitors play through:

- Termly OPAL team meetings
- Accident and incident analysis
- Behaviour tracking
- Pupil and staff feedback
- Annual reports to governors

This data informs continuous improvement.

16. Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed every **two years**, or sooner if required following significant changes in guidance, grounds development or OPAL recommendations.

Appendices

(Available as separate documents)

- Appendix A: Playwork Principles
- Appendix B: HSE Risk–Benefit Guidance