



# **Play Policy**

# East Markham Primary School Play Policy (OPAL)

## 1. Commitment

This policy sets out East Markham Primary School's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children. At East Markham, we are to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. As a school we aim to improve the way we think about and provide opportunities for play as we believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Our school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play. We are 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. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. 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 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."*

Our school motto is '**Believe, Achieve, Succeed**'. We hope that by providing better, more active and creative playtimes, all children at East Markham Primary School will be happy, successful learners who believe in themselves and achieve their full potential. Our school motto, '**Believe, Achieve, Succeed**', and school values, **Respect, Empathy, Resilience, Courage and Passion**, underpin all areas of school life. Children will have opportunities to embody these values when taking part in OPAL play.

## 3. Definition and value of play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children an opportunity to be creative and make decisions.

We recognise that play may need to make noise, get dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe the role of the adults is to support the play process. Children will have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

We believe play has many benefits, including the following:

- 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, different concepts and different 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.

Most importantly, play at East Markham is inclusive for all pupils and each pupil can push their own boundaries from their own starting point and allow them to reach their own goals and feel a sense of achievement.

#### 4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment for all children, of any age, gender, race or disability;
- allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits, building on our school value of **courage**;
- provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other;
- enable children to develop our school value of **respect** by showing this for their surroundings and each other whilst playing;
- aid children’s physical, emotional, social and intellectual development;
- provide a range of environments which will support children’s learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them, including developing knowledge about nature and the ‘outdoor world’ by being outside in most seasons and weather;
- promote independence and teamwork within children, including showing **empathy** for other children when collaboratively and independently playing;
- build on our school value of **resilience**, both emotionally and physically;
- ensure children have a **passion** for active and creative play.

#### 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 take these rights seriously and listen to children’s views on their play.

## 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 (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 principle 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*'.

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. In the words of 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. Children will have opportunities to manage risk constantly and a guided time for this will take place during discussions in whole-school OPAL assemblies.

We are strong in the belief that allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to judge risks independently and learn new, vital skills. All children need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capabilities. Children need to take risks to be able to learn new key life skills, such as learning to walk, climb stairs and ride a bicycle. If they were not strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving the risk of injury, these key life milestones would not be met.

## 7. 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, the school does not believe direct supervision is necessary or beneficial. Supervision will take **remote and ranging** models. This means that children will be able to quickly find an adult, if they need one, and at the same time adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

We will always ensure that the numbers of staff available and patrolling the play area is assessed and is suitable for the number of children at play and meets the needs of all children.

All adults (members of the Play Team) supervising outside, will have a designated 'zone' to range whilst the children are playing. At East Markham, our outdoor area consists of four main zones. All children and adults at East Markham are aware of these zones and understand how supervision takes place within them. The zones at East Markham are as follows:

Zone 1 – Fixed play equipment and playground

Zone 2 – Trim trail and left-hand-side of the field when looking down from the main school

Zone 3 – Large loose parts, mud kitchen (right-hand-side of the field)

Zone 4 - MUGA

## 8. The Adult's Role in Play

East Markham aims to maximize the benefits children can gain from play by training all staff (including teachers, TA's and midday supervisors) who supervise playtime in necessary 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.

Those supervising playtimes will be known as 'Playworkers.' 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 experiences through play. 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, only if they are invited to by the children, meaning play is completely child-led. For example, if a group of children are playing with tyres and pallets, building a 'jeep', the playworker may strategically place an extra loose part of tyre near the structure for the children to 'find.' Meaning they have supported their play, however not directly interrupted or participated in their play. *See Playwork Principles in appendix for a greater understanding.*

We will continue to ensure that playground rules are kept to the minimum required to maintain safety. All playground rules will be agreed by the Play Working Party.

## 9. Equality and Diversity

Through providing a rich play offer which meets 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.

## 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.

To manage risks the following will take place:

- The OPAL working party and all playtime supervision staff will continuously check for dangers/ risks when outside with the children;
- The children will be made aware of possible risks and helped to manage those via staff alerting them, for example slippery or wet surfaces;
- We will separate the play area into zones to maintain a risk/benefit management system creating quiet/calm areas as well as areas for physical play and allowing staff to safely supervise the children.

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.

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

## Appendix

### 1. Playwork Principles

