



Friars Primary School and Nursery: Play Policy- a summary for new staff and families

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.*”

The OPAL programme and our Friars School Values

At Friars, individual wellbeing comes first.

Our OPAL playtimes promote the highest level of wellbeing through all encompassing, rich, highly motivating and engaging play opportunities

We believe in respecting and including everyone.

Our OPAL playtimes are accessible for all as outlined in the rationale above. The focus on open ended, creative, loose parts play means that all children can engage at their level and age and stage of development.

We aim high and show resilience in our learning.

Our OPAL playtimes are engaging for our children and are intrinsically motivating as children focus on their own play and ideas. Resilience is built as challenges are faced and tackled by children working alone and with their peers.

Our aim is to succeed in everything we do!

Our OPAL playtimes provide opportunities for children to think critically, create, try new ideas out, explore, construct and imagine. All children can succeed through play.

Our School Values

At **F**riars, individual wellbeing comes first.

We believe in **R**especting

And **I**ncluding everyone.

We **A**im high and show

Resilience in our learning.

Our aim is to **S**ucceed in everything we do!



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.

“Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child’s soul.” Friedrich Froebel

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children’s health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, language, 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.

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.
- 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.

How play links to our Academy Improvement Plan 2023

‘Fully deliver our school’s ambitious OPAL plan to provide outstanding play opportunities.

1. 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.



These rights clearly connect to our school values- the importance of well-being, respect and inclusion.

2. 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)

Why risk matters at Friars Primary School and Nursery

“Start from the perspective of what will go right outdoors rather than the reverse. See the real possibilities.”

Kathryn Solly, author of ‘Risk, Challenge and Adventure in the Early Years

Taking risks and managing risks in life is important. We want our children to be confident, to recognise and manage around them. We also want them to recognise that trying something new, taking a risk, being brave, pushing themselves beyond their comfort zone is testing out a new idea or developing new skills is a fundamental part of being an effective life long learner and rounded individual. These essential attributes do not just matter in play, but in side the classroom, in the work place, in our interactions with others.

3. Supervision

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.

4. The adult's role in play

Our core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. Our adults 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 available to participate in the play if invited.

5. 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.

6. Environment

*"The best classroom and the richest cupboard are only roofed by the sky."
Margaret McMillan*

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

We believe that a rich, open ended, play setting 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 world they are growing up in.

There are three teachers of children: adults, other children and their physical environment.
Loris Malaguzzi

Policy date: September 2024

Policy review date: September 2026