

Lady Bay Primary School

2024-2025

Play Policy



Date: December 2024

Review Date: July 2025

1. Commitment

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.

Lady Bay Primary School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a rich choice of play experiences for every child.

At Lady Bay we promote: "Growing together; caring for ourselves, each other and the environment" and this guides our play policy, planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children. We believe play has a vital role in children's health, happiness and wellbeing. Playing enables children to be independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

2. Rationale

Research shows that children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in primary school at play. Like other core parts of the curriculum, this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, and fewer spaces for play and concerns for children's safety have eroded children's opportunities for play in the public realm. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer accidents and a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. When children experience enriching play times, classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play time happy and ready to learn.

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. We create an inclusive environment for play by offering a diverse range of opportunities and allowing children freedom to play in the ways they choose.

3. Definition and value of play

The United Nations Committee defines play in their Rights of the Child report 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".

Many benefits of play emerge when children are allowed to play in their own way and on their own terms. The primary concern for play times is therefore supporting children's freedom to play

Playing supports 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)

4. Aims

In relation to play times our school aims to:

- Provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment for play.
- Allow children to engage with risks and uncertainty in their play, adopting a reasonable and balanced 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 opportunities that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build children's emotional and physical resilience.

5. Benefit and risk

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. 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.

'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world'. (DCFS)

At Lady Bay Primary School, we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

'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 dangers'. (HSE, 2013)

Lady Bay School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) (Appendix 1) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will

adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (Appendix 2) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

'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)

6. Supervision

At Lady Bay Primary School we understand the importance of appropriate supervision during play times. The law requires that children in school are supervised, but for primary school playtimes there are no stated adult to child ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors.

At Lady Bay Primary School, we will use OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. In order to allow children to make full use of our school grounds, direct supervision is not always possible or beneficial. Whilst direct supervision will be initially used for our youngest children starting school, the majority of our playtime supervision will take remote and ranging 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.

Our school grounds will be divided into supervision zones with an adult patrolling each area. An additional 'floating' member of staff will be present during each playtime to have an overview of the whole site and to offer support in a specific areas if necessary. Adults within each zone will communicate via walkie-talkies and a fixed first aid area will be used for any accidents.

7. The adult's role in play

As a staff we are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need during their school day. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

The adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing lunch times. In addition to this, the Lady Bay OPAL Working Team (Appendix 3) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants and all other staff as well as the children to implement the approach highlighted in this policy. They 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 appropriate modes of intervention making changes to the play space if and when needed. The Play Team will ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

8. Children's Role in Play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy. (Appendix 4) In it will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences.
- Respect and look after each other's environment and the resources available for play.

- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour.
- Ensure that play times are fun for everybody.

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council

9. 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.

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.

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

Appendix 1



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 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 that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer bench marks that can help.

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 660 [27])

8. Striking the right balance does mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance does not mean:

- All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
- Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
- Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
- Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
- Mistakes and accidents will not happen

What parents and society should expect from play providers

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers² should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

- The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
- Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful
- Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

2 Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

If things go wrong

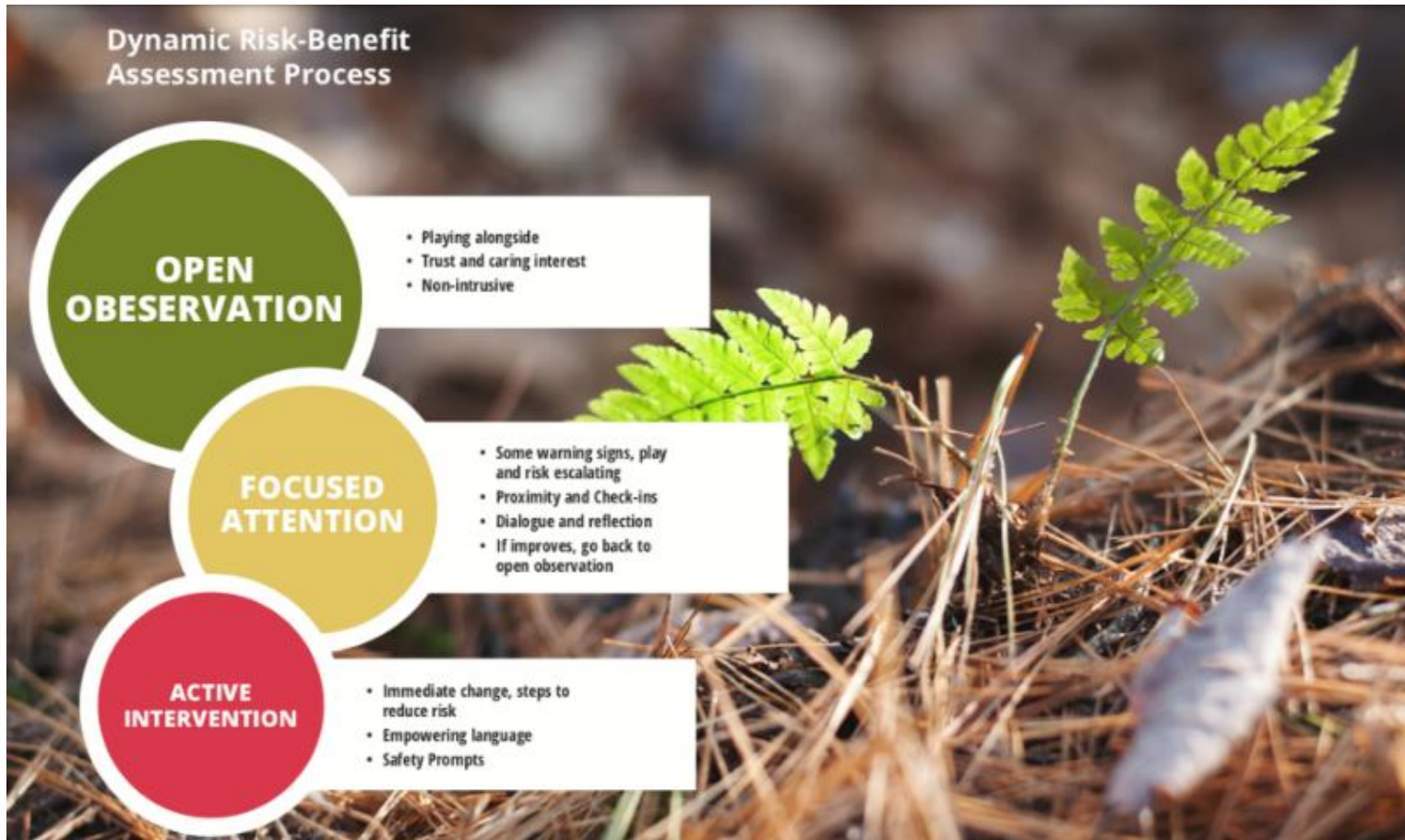
Key message: ‘Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.’

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.

15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

September 2012

Appendix 2 (OPAL document stating the process for risk benefit assessments)



Appendix 3 OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Lady Bay Primary School. It consists of:

The Head Teacher – Steve Border

Play Curricular lead – Tracey Keane (Leads and manages strategy)

Play Coordinator – George Dearnley (Leads and manages lunchtimes)

Play Head Midday Supervisor – Razwana Bibi

Play Governor – Alison Thomas

Parent Play Champion – Ellen Wilson

Site Manager – Steve Middleton

OPAL Play Team – The Midday Supervisors



Appendix 4 Lady Bay Primary Play Charter

We have the responsibility to make sure everyone enjoys playtime
by:

BEING KIND

- We share the resources available
- We will listen to and value the ideas of others

BEING SAFE

- We make our own choices about what we play
- We look after each other, our school environment and the equipment
- We think about and manage the risks so that we can keep everyone safe

BEING READY

- We try to sort out problems in a kind, understanding way before seeking help from an adult
- We help to tidy away equipment and take responsibility for our play environment