

Altofts Junior School

Play Policy



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1. Commitment

Altofts Junior School undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. As a school, we are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our pupils.

2. Rationale

At Altofts Junior School, we believe that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We strive to develop curiosity as a value in every child, and this can be encouraged through engaging play. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to all, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. We believe play opportunities should promote independence and allow children to develop respect for their environment and for the members of their school community.

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."*

3. Definition and Value of Play

Play is defined and guided by three key principles that capture the definitive aspects of it as a concept. Play should be 'self-directed, intrinsically motivated and freely chosen'. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.'

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- 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 around them, as well as different concepts, methods and ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding and empathy of others through freely chosen social interactions. These can occur within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultural/social backgrounds.
- 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 regulate 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 in a safe way.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

4. Aims

In relation to play, Altofts Junior School aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow children to take calculated 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 peers.
- Enable children to develop respect for their environment and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments and stimuli that will encourage children to explore and play creatively, whilst also supporting their curricular learning and developing their understanding of the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience within our pupils.

These align seamlessly with our 3 school rules: 'Ready, Respectful and Responsible' as well as our school vision and values.

5. Rights

At Altofts Junior School, we recognise 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 link closely to our school values of our pupils being independent life-long learners, who are accepting and understanding citizens that are prepared exceptionally well for life beyond our school. These are promoted throughout our school community.

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 (Play Safety Forum, 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 principal 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 (Play Safety Forum, 2012)* (see appendix 1).

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision at Altofts aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. Children are encouraged to be curious but in a safe way (as indicated by our school values). As written 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'*.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments (see appendix 2), 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.

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, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. 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. As ever, adults will wear yellow high-vis vests to be clearly visible during play and lunch times. Adults who are tasked with close supervision of identified children will wear pink high-vis vests. Children are reminded to seek out the adults in yellow vests when they need help.

8. The Adult's Role in Play

The 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 (see appendix 3). 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.

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 (see appendix 4).

Appendix 1 – Health and Safety Executive’s Guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

Appendix 2 – Benefit Risk Assessment Record Sheet

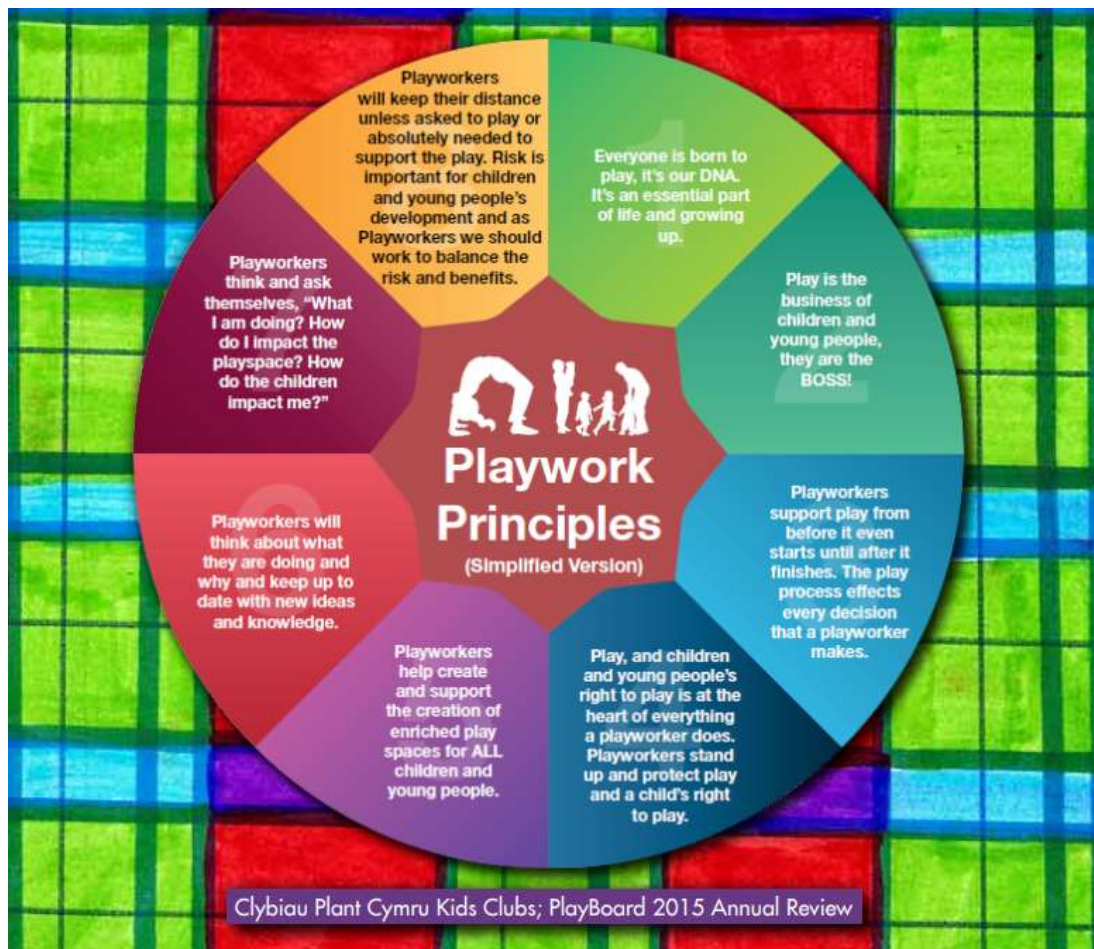
Example of a risk-benefit assessment. These should be brief and clear.

Risk-benefit assessment date:

Assessed by:

Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date
Large loose parts Falling on children Crushing injuries Heavy lifting Could involve players or bystanders	All those listed in play policy plus – core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment.	Agree stacking heights in play assembly. No double size pallets Large dens only in supervised den zone	OPAL lead	
Digging area use of real spades Chopping feet Accidental blows Use as weapon Risk to players and bystanders	All those in play policy – plus Upper body strength Creativity Core strength Enjoyment.	Tools not toys training in play assembly Only diggers in the digging zone Only spades, not forks	Play coordinator	
Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date

Appendix 3 – Playwork Principles



Appendix 4 – Best Play – What play provision should do for children

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