



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

Play Policy



Danesholme Academies

Approved by:

Sonia Kendal
(Executive Principal)

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Last reviewed on:

December 2025

1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is 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. 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."*

At Danesholme Academies, our curriculum is designed so that every child will **'Be Ready'**:



Ready to Learn — We provide an engaging, knowledge-rich curriculum that ignites curiosity and builds firm foundations. Through purposeful play and exploration, we nurture children's readiness to question, discover, and grow both academically and personally.



Ready for Life — Our learning goes beyond academic success: we develop resilience, confidence, and self-awareness. Playful experiences help children adapt, problem-solve, and prepare for the challenges and opportunities of their futures.



Ready to Contribute — We foster a strong sense of community and kindness. Through collaborative play and shared experiences, children learn to respect others, work together, and contribute positively to their school, neighbourhood, and the wider world.



Ready to Succeed — Through high expectations, scaffolded support, and progression in skills and knowledge, every child is empowered to reach their potential. Play is woven into learning, ensuring they are ready for the next stage of their education.

3. 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.

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, 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.

Children need the freedom to play how they choose, and this includes taking risks and engaging in risky, challenging play. Children, regardless of their culture, background or ability will need to take risks physically and emotionally and for adults a balanced, thoughtful approach to supporting challenging play will help. Challenging, risky play can look different for different children dependent on their age, stage or ability and children with a disability have an equal need for adventurous play. One child's idea of something challenging might be something easy for another. Children need to explore their limits, try out new experiences and develop their capabilities. This will be evident from a very young age. Children would never learn to crawl, walk, climb stairs or ride a bike if they were not afforded the opportunity to stretch and challenge themselves.

4. 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.

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

One of our academy core values is 'all different, all welcome.'

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)*.

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. As outlined 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 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.

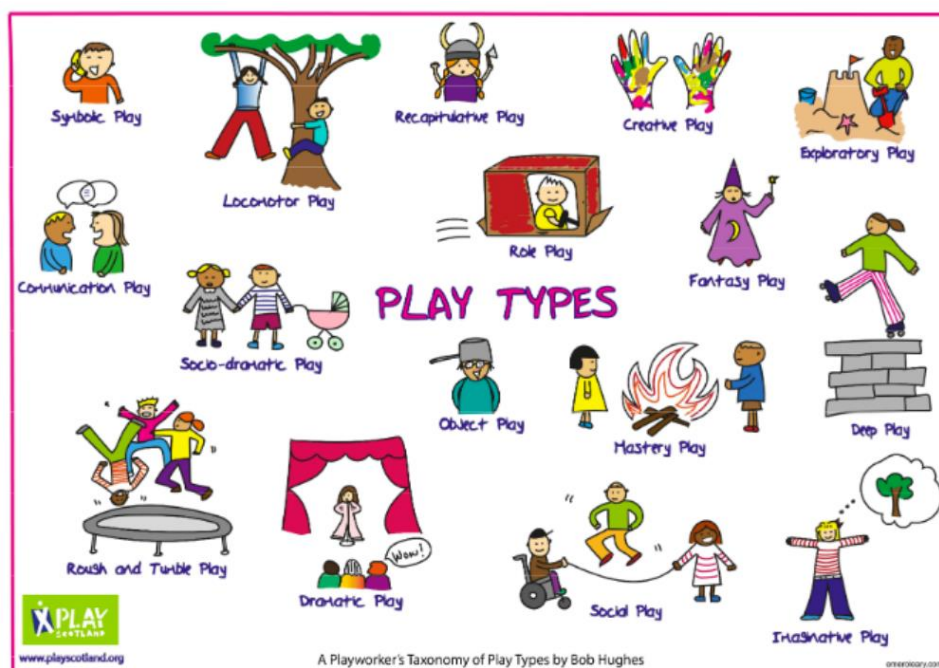
7. Supervision

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 in reception, 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**. This will be where adults are tasked with walking a given route on a timed basis, eg circulate the field every five minutes or so. Although the route would be known it would be approximate and would allow staff to divert to check on remote spaces, while at the same time pupils will know an adult will not be far away should they need support. This enables patrol of our large site to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

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 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.

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 play experiences. 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 if invited.



Here is a video with it in practice <https://youtu.be/UnfdamgVFhY>

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

A rich play setting supports safeguarding, 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 environment. Challenging, risky play helps children to learn about themselves and to work out what their own individual limits are. Children learn skills to manage risk through play and these skills can be used in other life-long situations. When we try to limit these experiences we take

away valuable learning opportunities from children which may actually result in them being less safe (they will not learn how to do these things for themselves). Children may occasionally (and will) have minor accidents (cuts, grazes, bruises) when taking part in some of these types of activities. We, as adults, need to recognise their desire to test their boundaries (remember your experiences as a child) and consider the life-long benefits of those experiences.