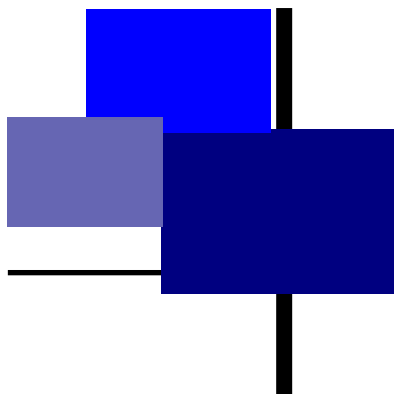
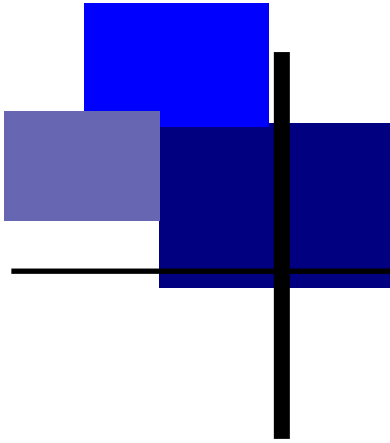


Working together to be the best that we can

Russells Hall Primary School

Play Policy October 2021

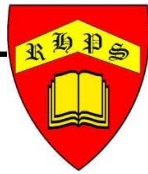
Head Teacher	Alison Harrison
Person responsible for policy	Alison Gray
Designated Governor	Saima Naz
Policy approved:	3/3/22
Review Date:	July 2022



Russells Hall Primary School

Play Policy

October 2020



Working together to be the best that we can be

1. Commitment

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that ‘**A child has the right to engage in rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.**’

This policy has been written to reflect the high value that Russells Hall Primary School places on ensuring quality play experiences are available to all pupils in our school each and every day. We believe that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. Play experiences help our children to become independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable and social. Developing our play offer is a high priority and all future planning decisions surrounding play opportunities at Russells Hall will be guided by this policy.

2. Rationale

Guided by our commitment to the OPAL Programme (<https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>), we aim to improve the way that we think about and provide opportunities for play. Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time at primary school in the playground. In one school year that equates to 231 hours or 37 days. Therefore, we believe that this time needs to be planned for and valued in the same way as we approach curriculum planning. Changes in society have meant that children are experiencing fewer opportunities for play which has led to ‘play deprivation’ for many children. Research has shown that approximately 56% of primary age children only play outside when they are at school, meaning a high quality and enriching play experience at school is even more essential.

Higher quality play experiences will lead to happier children who have more positive attitudes to school and learning. In turn, this will lead to a happier staff. As the quality of our play offer improves and the children enjoy greatly enriched playtimes, there will be fewer accidents and behaviour problems and our children will come in from play happy and ready to learn.

The OPAL programme vision is that...‘Every child in every school has an amazing hour of high quality play every day – with no exceptions. If one child is not enjoying playtimes, then things still need improving. We want every school to plan for, resource and evaluate the quality of their play provision as if it were an important human right, essential to all aspects of children’s development and a source of joy and happiness that every child can access because it is all of these things.’

3. The Value of Play

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as: *'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.'*

At Russells Hall, we recognise the unique contribution playground activities make to the wellbeing of the children at our school; play is an integral part of personal expression, interpersonal growth and community building. Playgrounds can become hectic and busy places; it is our aim to provide a safe, well organised and supportive environment, that offers children opportunities for play, creativity, fun, enjoyment and relaxation. Through a quality play experience, children explore and discover physical and social boundaries, and in doing so construct their understanding of the world and people around them. Quality play can ensure that children become more adept at managing and assessing risk in their lives so as to remain safe and healthy. We recognise that increased levels of physical activity not only improve children's health and fitness, but also have a large impact on ensuring positive behaviour and attitudes. We want playtimes to be safe, fun and a positive experience for all of our pupils every day.

4. Our Rules and Values

We recognise the importance that play contributes towards the school's ethos. It affords children the opportunities to find out who they are whilst developing and maintaining relationships with their peers. Our school rules of **Ready, Respectful, Safe** and our core values relate equally to play and the experiences that our pupils may have in the playground, as they do in lessons and to life in and around the school building.

5. Risk and Benefit

Research studies have shown that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. The uncertainty and challenge of much of children's play is a very large part of its appeal to them; children should be allowed opportunities where they find themselves challenged in order to become more resilient, adaptable and keen to try new activities and experiences. It is worth noting that risk and challenge does not simply relate to physical risk, but it includes the uncertainties that children experience when making new friends and the emotional resilience that they build when trying out new and unknown 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.'
(Department for Children and Families)

At Russells Hall, we believe that children should be encouraged and supported to encounter and 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 use the **Health and Safety Executive's guidance document, 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach'**, as the principle guiding document when making decisions relating to risk and play. (See Appendix 1)

We will adopt this risk-benefit approach (see Appendix 2), to ensure that we are balancing the potential risk of challenging activities with the benefits. We will also adopt the practice of **dynamic risk assessments** (Appendix 3). Our key role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter, whilst empowering and enabling our children to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that offers a level of challenge where adults are present to support them.

6. The Adults' Role

We are working closely with OPAL (<https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>) to guide us through this transformation of play at Russells Hall, as we develop a strategic approach to planning for and providing play opportunities. We are committed to working with the children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in school. We will facilitate a continuing dialogue with the children about the play provision in our playground. This will involve day-to-day communication, regular play assemblies, school council involvement, pupil interviews and surveys.

The day-to-day role of our Play Team (our lunchtime supervisors) will be to facilitate the play process and to encourage the children to assess the risks and benefits of their chosen play activities. Our Play Team will all be expected to practise '**Dynamic Risk Management**' methods for which they will receive appropriate training. They will help to ensure the broadest range of opportunities are available, observing, reflecting and analysing the play that is happening and intervening when appropriate. Our Play Team are a key part of our implementation of the OPAL programme as we strive to improve play at Russells Hall. The law requires that children in primary school have supervision at playtimes, but for primary schools there are no stated ratios. Our playground will be zoned into four areas (see Appendix 4) with a member of the Play Team in each zone. We recognise and will practise OPAL's three models of supervision Direct, Remote and Ranging. In addition, a number of Teaching Assistants will also support our Play Team in their roles.

7. Children's Role in Play

The children will have access to their own version of the play policy blueprint. This will be displayed around school and be shared with the children regularly as part of our ongoing play assemblies and class discussions.

The blueprint will include the children's roles and responsibilities to:

- Take ownership for their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other, their environment, the equipment and toys
- Remember our school rules of Ready, Respectful, safe and be aware of the sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for **everyone**

8. First Aid

There is a central outdoor first aid station, where equipment is kept and a first-aider is present at all times. In addition, Teaching Assistants on duty are first-aid trained and all members of the Play Team carry a waist bag that contains basic first-aid equipment.

9. Clothing

During the colder and wet weather, wellies or walking boots should be worn by all children and staff when playing on the school field. Children should also be wearing coats during cold weather.

10. Environment

At Russells Hall we will:

- Perform regular health and safety reviews of the outdoor space (Caretaker & Curriculum Lead). Daily litter picking by the Play Team and our Playground Pickers will ensure the outdoor space is safe and free from litter (see Appendix 5).
- Ask all lunchtime staff to check for risks and dangers whenever outside with the children.
- Divide the outdoor space to make supervision manageable and to ensure that higher risk activities are distributed evenly across the site.
- Provide Play Team staff with two-way radios when supervising the field away from the main school building.
- Include the children when planning for play and adding to play opportunities.
- Ensure that our playground is an integrated area where **all children** can play freely and safely.
- Strive to enrich the quality of the environment to ensure that the outdoor area offers all children an inclusive play opportunity to investigate, take risks, explore and use their imagination and creativity.

11. Review

This policy will be closely monitored by the Curriculum Lead for Play and the Headteacher.

Appendix 1

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

Appendix 2

Example of Risk Benefit Record Sheet

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

Taken from Playwork Essentials:

Play Team members in OPAL schools should practice '**Dynamic Risk Management**' when on duty. This means they should be constantly aware of the changing nature of the play taking place in their allocated zone. Staff should have an idea of where all children are in their zone, how risky their play appears to be, and what resources they are using. Staff should support children to assess and manage their risks as much as possible for themselves, but they should also be vigilant and take immediate action, if ever they think that a risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely.

For most of the time staff will simply need to practice 'relaxed vigilance', meaning that adults should always appear calm and confident, whilst constantly being alert and aware of the risks the children are taking (OPAL calls it 'Heads up', see below).

Staff should always be prepared to intervene, if necessary. Intervention should balance the management of risks with preserving as much of the benefit of play as possible. Children should be empowered to gradually manage their own risks, as they steadily mature.

When to intervene

- If staff think that serious harm (meaning death, life-long debilitating injury or hospitalisation) is imminent, or probable, they should intervene to manage/stop the risky play **immediately**.
- If they think that serious harm is possible but not probable, they should **remain vigilant** and observe from close by. **Do not allow yourself to become distracted!**
- If serious harm is very unlikely, then they should focus their attention elsewhere, or act to **improve the quality** of the play offer, using their playwork skills.

Appendix 4

Aerial image of our school site and new playground zones:



Appendix 5

Russells Hall Primary School

Risk Assessment for Playground & Field Litter Picking

Litter on our playground and field is a particular problem. Part of our OPAL work includes encouraging the children to care for our school environment, so a team of litter pickers will be nominated to help care for our school grounds. These children will assist our Play Team to keep each playground zone litter free. At the start of every lunch session, each zone will be visually checked by the member of the Play Team responsible for supervising that space. They will then work alongside the children to ensure that each zone is litter free.

HAZARD	PERSON (S) IMPACTED	CONTROL MEASURES
Weather	Staff Children	Ensure children and staff wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions - wellies in particular when litter picking on the field or on wet days.
Environment	Staff Children	Playground and field area to be checked by staff <u>before</u> litter picking begins for signs of broken glass, fox faeces, etc. These items to be removed by staff using appropriate PPE/equipment.
Slips, trips	Staff Children	Pupils and staff to wear strong outdoor shoes (no gym shoes, open sandals etc) Pupils will be instructed not to run.
Equipment	Staff Children	Pupils will be provided with gloves, bags, litter pickers and high visibility vests.
Safety	Staff Children	Pupils to be instructed on the proper use of the litter picker. Pupils will be supervised at all times. Pupils told not to hold/wave litter pickers towards any other person.
Manual handling	Staff Children	Children advised not to overfill sacks. Staff to assess if an item can be safely moved.
Cross contamination	Staff Children	Pupils will be told <u>not to pick up</u> litter with their hands, <u>but to ALWAYS use the litter pickers</u> . Litter will be dropped directly into plastic bin bags. Any cuts or grazes will be covered with surgical tape or waterproof plasters. Children will be advised not to rub their mouth and eyes whilst working. Pupils will thoroughly wash their hands once litter picking is completed.

Date: 14/2/22

Risk rating with all control measures in place Low/Medium/High