



HAYESWOOD AND COLEHILL FIRST SCHOOLS

PLAY POLICY

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3.1 Woodhills OPAL play policy

INTRODUCTION

Colehill and Hayeswood First Schools are committed to ensuring that quality play opportunities are available to all children. Our schools are committed to providing the leadership and support to enable our staff and children to work together to develop and maintain enriching play skills and environments.

1. Commitment

Our schools undertake to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our schools are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale

Our schools believe 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 play times 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."

This reasoning is supported by the Woodhill School's core values, which emphasise respect, reflection, and resilience in our students. Children that have a good outlook on life are more resilient because they will have self-confidence and want to keep going. Respect for the equipment, and one another, among children, fosters deeper relationships and reduces playtime mishaps and behavioural issues. Giving children the freedom to express their preferences during playtimes and allowing them to become involved themselves gives them the ability to think through their suggestions and methods to improve things.

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.
- Understanding and developing the "whole child," in school, is strengthened by play. While physical activity is certainly very important, playtimes also fosters the development of other abilities like empathy, reasoning, negotiating, and resilience. Ofsted highlights these competencies as essential components of personal growth, cultivating law-abiding, polite young people who take an active role in public life.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure every child is nurtured and every child is empowered to be their best selves, both in the classroom and at playtimes.
- 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 - where everyone matters.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other, one of our core school values.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development, building upon their resilience, another of our school values.
- Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them, using the outdoor environment to both reflect on and enhance their learning, the third of our school values.
- 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.

6. Benefit and risk

Play Coordinator (s)
Parent Representative (s)
Play Governor
Play Team (s)

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.

Our new Play Team will be the heart of this new initiative, working alongside the children, following their lead and direction and providing safe and stimulating resources for their playtimes. They will work closely with our Senior Leadership Team and the Curriculum Lead for play, as well as teachers, to provide a fun and exciting playtime experience where all children are encouraged to take risks and learn and play alongside each other, regardless of year group.

9. 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.

A rich play setting supports safeguarding by helping 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.

10. Resources

Children will have access to resources ranging from a variety of loose parts, larger construction materials & roleplay equipment.

Play coordinator, curricular lead for play & the play team are responsible for maintaining and identifying developing risks with equipment. Further responsibility is to be shared with children for identifying unsafe resources or loose parts that are in a poor condition. This responsibility will be taught and refreshed through play assemblies and supported by the play coordinator and the play team. Large marked bins are present in several visible areas of

the outside learning space to be used for disposal of unfit or dangerous resources.

SEE RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT & RESOURCE LIST AND AREAS IN OPAL FOLDER (IN SCHOOL OFFICE) FOR MORE INFORMATION

11. Clothing

We encourage children to play in a range of ways and environments. This means that children may get dirty clothes through engaging with their surroundings.

We would advise as staff that all children come prepared for outdoor/all weather play. During the colder and wet weather wellies or walking boots should be worn by staff and children when walking on the school field or in the woods.

Children should also wear coats during cold weather. Children need to be responsible for managing their outdoor clothing. This includes being prepared before they go outside to play.

In the summer children will need to have had sun cream applied before school and hats to protect themselves. Part of outdoor play means children may get muddy. We will endeavour to reduce this as much as possible but free play means allowing children to explore the areas they like. A uniform is designed to give children a sense of belonging but also a way to protect their 'good' clothes they wear at home.

12. Review and assessment procedure

The curricular lead for play will lead regular meeting with the whole play team (once a term) to formally approach reviewing and assessing the risk / benefit of any changes made. Further to this, weekly meetings between the curricular lead for play and the play coordinator will give opportunities to review and assess play at both Hayeswood and Colehill and any changes made more regularly and offer opportunities to communicate any needs, issues or concerns with the wider play team.

Regular meetings between the curricular lead for play and the senior leaders team will ensure top-down dissemination of information, changes or concerns and will provide a platform for informal assessment of the impact of each development and a support structure to implement changes school wide.