



# Play Policy

## Commitment

This policy sets out Ambleside CE Primary School's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all our children. Play is fundamental to a child's quality of life and we believe our school grounds provide a perfect environment for children to experience and engage in self-initiated play which is freely chosen by their own instincts, ideas and interests.

## Rationale

We believe high quality play provision provides the perfect landscape for our children to live out our vision of '*Life in all its fullness*'.

Through the freedom of play we will learn to show the following Christian values which work to underpin the positive culture on which our school is built – *friendship, thankfulness, hope, trust, forgiveness and fellowship*.

***'Play is often talked about as if it were a break from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning.'***

Fred Rogers

## What is Play?

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by 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. Our school will use 'A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types' by Bob Hughes (**Appendix 1**) and the play types guidance as outlined in OPAL's guidance 'Playwork Essentials: An Introduction to Essential Playwork Skills and Knowledge for all Adults Working in Schools' to guide and develop our knowledge and understanding of play.

At Ambleside CE Primary School we realise that play can be noisy, messy and dirty, and should be undertaken 'whatever the weather' since there is no such thing as 'bad weather' only the wrong clothes. The role of adults is to develop and support free play within all areas of our wonderful school grounds.

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.

***'It is a happy talent to know how to play.'***

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## **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.
- Support children in learning about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

***'I have the right of education. I have the right to play. I have the right to sing. I have the right to talk. I have the right to go to market. I have the right to speak up.'***

Malala Yousafzai

## **Rights**

At Ambleside CE Primary School we believe our children have a right to play in a safe and supportive environment where our school values of *friendship, thankfulness, hope, trust, forgiveness and fellowship* are modelled and followed by all. In this way, our children will feel free to enjoy happy, active opportunities for play in a space where they feel safe and able to take risks. We are committed to ensuring a program of regular play assemblies where we will value and manage the children's play in a collaborative way. We recognise these are key in providing sufficient care for our children.

At Ambleside CE Primary School we recognise the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31 – **Appendix 2**) and *the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12 – **Appendix 3**). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

***'Play is our brain's favourite way of learning.'***

Diane Ackerman

## 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)

This document can be viewed here:

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/8625/1/00942-2008DOM-EN.pdf>

At Ambleside CE Primary School, we believe play should be viewed as an essential feature of the school day where our children are able to learn together and care for themselves, each other and the world in a safe and supportive environment which facilitates high quality independent play experiences and allows for the provision of acceptable risks.

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all the environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Our provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed outdoor 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'***.

This document can be viewed here:

<http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments, the school will practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

Our school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document '*Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach*' (September 2012 – **Appendix 4**) 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)*.

***'Children learn as they play but most importantly, in play, children learn how to learn.'***

Fred Donaldson

## 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. Except for new children in reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, our school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Therefore, at Ambleside CE Primary School, supervisors will use **ranging** and **remote** supervision models (**Appendix 5**), so that children can quickly find them whilst they in turn can patrol large sites in order to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

At Ambleside CE Primary School, one adult playworker will be responsible for overseeing the play in each agreed play zone.

These key adults will commit to the SMILE model of supervision (Jason Bangbala):

Scan

Move

Interact

Learn

Engage

***'Time spent playing with children is never time wasted.'***

Don Lantero

### **The adult's role in play**

At Ambleside CE Primary School, we aim to help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by ensuring our supervisors are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles (**Appendix 6**). 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 supervisors 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 playwork supervisor is capable of enriching the child's play experience both in terms of the design and resourcing of the physical environment and in terms of the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. Supervisors are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children as they explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

***'Play is the highest form of research.'***

Albert Einstein

### **Equality and diversity**

Through the provision of a rich play offer which meets every child's needs, we therefore aim to ensure all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other additional need, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

***'You can learn more about a child in one hour of play than you can in one year of conversation.'***

Plato

### **Environment**

At Ambleside CE Primary School, we believe that a rich play setting should ensure all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks thereby offering children the opportunity to explore for themselves through freely chosen play opportunities.

To manage risks, we will ensure:

- The play space is zoned in order to create quiet areas as well as areas for physical play.
- Our school staff and members of the governing body's health & safety committee perform regular audits of play spaces.
- All playtime, supervision staff check for dangers/risks when outside with the children.
- The children are be made aware of possible risks and helped to manage these via dialogue with playtime supervisors, e.g. wet or slippery surfaces.
- The children attend regular play assemblies led by members of the OPAL working party where the OPAL CINI approach of Celebrate, Inform, Negotiate and will be followed in order for the children to understand their role as co-collaborators in ensuring safe play spaces.

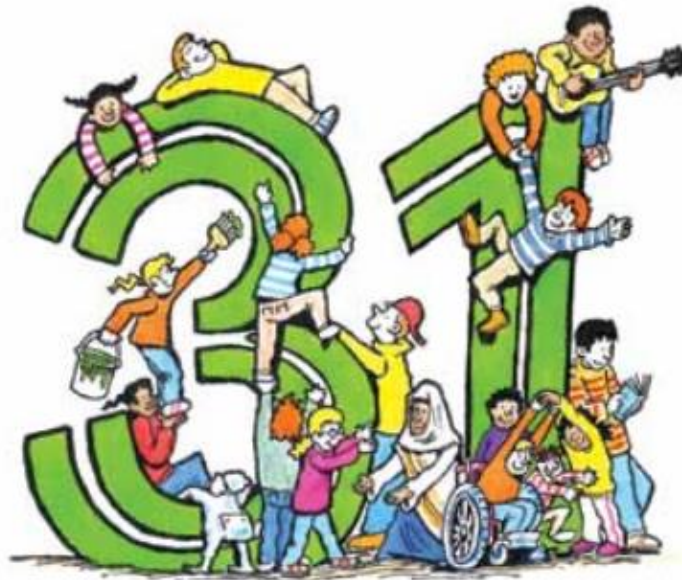
## Appendix 1



## Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

**1.** States Parties recognize the right of the child to 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.

**2.** States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.



## **Appendix 3**

### **Article 12**

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.



## 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 risks<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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])



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.

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 providers<sup>2</sup> 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

---

Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday layschemes, 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**

### **Remote**

This is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location at a good vantage point some distance from an activity, eg supervisor on the playground and activity 20 metres or more away, or supervisor in the middle of a flat school field.

This style is widely used in other countries and its purpose is for an adult to be present to respond rapidly to an accident or serious behaviour incident.

### **Ranging**

This is where the supervisor moves around the play area, usually on a set course/schedule.

The distance from pupils therefore differs but can be 20 metres or more away. On a large site, supervisors should have zones so that they know which parts of the site they are covering, and they should modify their attention based on the kinds of play and their judgement about areas of highest risk.

## Appendix 6

### 1. Understand Need

All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals.

### 2. Understand Process

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

### 3. Support Process

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

### 4. Advocate for Play

For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

### 5. Create Spaces

The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

### 6. Learn and Reflect

The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, reflective practice.

### 7. Understand Impact

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

### 8. Choose Intervention Styles

Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker interventions must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.