



# Play Policy

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved By	Date Approved	Implementation Date
Summer Term 2025	Mrs N Hair	Local Governing Board	Summer Term 2025	Summer Term 2025
Summer Term 2026				

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Issue No:	1
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Changes to this Policy		
Issue No:	Date	Description
1	July 2025	Updates format of policy

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## 1. Introduction

***‘A child has the right 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.’***

***(Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)***

This policy sets out East Herrington Primary Academy's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children. We recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

As a school, we will provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. These skills link closely to that of our whole school vision which is to encourage our children to become lifelong learners who are resilient, confident and self-motivated.

At East Herrington we are committed to using our school vision and this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children.

## 2. Rationale

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore this time needs to be carefully planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led to ‘play deprivation’ for many of today’s children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and ready to learn.

We surveyed the children in October 2020 for their views on play time. Many were positive about the playground but some children’s comments included; *‘there is not enough to do’*, *‘we need more things to play with’*, *‘the playground needs extra things’*, *‘it needs more resources’*. These comments by children highlighted the need to improve our play resources and opportunities at East Herrington.

## 3. What is 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.”**

We believe Play is a freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. We recognise that play may need to make a noise, get dirty, make a 'mess' and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe the role of the adults is to support the play process.

When the children in East Herrington were asked to define play, they said it is... "FUN!" "a time to let off steam" and "a time to see different children" They think that when you are playing you should see... "children helping each other" and "people smiling."

## 4. The Adults Role in Play

We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

The adult's role as a Playworker will be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL ([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at East Herrington.

We believe that the role of a Playworker is crucial to ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children. A Playworker will observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are available to participate in the play if invited. Play workers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

### **At East Herrington we aim to:**

- ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to 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 which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- provide a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- promote independence and team work within children.
- build emotional and physical resilience.

## 5. Benefit and Risk

**'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' *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide is published for Play England 2012***

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures.

Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new 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'.  
(DCFS)***

At East Herrington we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

**'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 dangers'. (HSE, 2013)**

East Herrington will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to 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 adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

## 6. 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, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take remote and ranging 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. We do have zoned areas in KS2 with this being a larger space.

## 7. The Adults' Role in Play

Staff will use and refer to '*The Playwork Principles*' when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play.

## 8. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable risk and thereby offer the opportunity to explore both themselves, through their freely chosen play.

At East Herrington we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this.
- Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.

**\*The full H&SE Managing Risk Statement is an additional document which will be attached to the Play Policy.**