

Play Policy

Rood End Primary School



1. Commitment

This policy has been written to reflect the high value that Rood End 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 and social. Developing our play offer is a high priority and all future planning decisions surrounding play opportunities at Rood End 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 rich opportunities for play. Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. At Rood End we believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

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 Rood End, we recognise the unique contribution playground activities make to the overall wellbeing of the children at our school; play is a vital part of a child's personal development, growth and sense of belonging.

4. Our Rules and Values

We recognise the importance that play contributes towards the school's ethos. It affords children the opportunities to take risks, build self-esteem whilst 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.

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 recognise that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

6. Benefit and risk

'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)

As part of our play offering, we must work to balance our duty of care in both managing potential harm and in providing essential benefits to the children that comes from 'risky' play.

Risk-taking is an essential feature of our play provision. Our Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of an engaging, challenging and managed play environment. Our RICH school value system has resilience at its core and at Rood End we believe children should be supported to encounter and manage risk for themselves in an environment that is safe but not completely devoid of risk.

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. Play assemblies will play a key role in supporting children to identify risk, set rules and discuss safety.

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.

7. The Adult's role in Play

We are working closely with the OPAL team to guide us through this transformation of play at Rood End, as we develop a dynamic approach to planning for and providing play opportunities. We are committed to working with the children to provide the play experiences that they want. 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, pupil interviews and surveys.

It is our aim to maximise the wide-ranging benefits of a self-directed play provision by deploying trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles. Staff will regularly use and refer to these principles when interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios.

Rood End Primary School has generous ratios of adults to children for playtimes and lunchtimes. We recognise OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. The school does not believe direct supervision is beneficial. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can move around the site to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

If children become injured during play, first aid will be administered where necessary by first-aid trained staff. The play team will report any safety concerns to the OPAL working group, who will carry out further risk assessment and management where appropriate.

8. 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.

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.

Initially, children will be able to experience a messy café, build dens using fabric and cardboard, play football in a more contained area, ride scooters and use the existing play equipment. Over time, this will be developed with a focus on providing engaging play opportunities to stimulate children's imagination and social skills, 'rewilding' some spaces to develop a more natural environment, and including large loose parts, small world and sand and water 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

Appendix

[Appendix 1- HSE childrens-play.pdf](#)