



ST. PETER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

PLAY POLICY

To be read in conjunction with all other policies.

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share the same commitment. We follow Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. For more information go to <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gscp/>

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Incorporating Child Protection Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Ratified: March 2024
Next review: March 2026

Commitment

At St. Peter's Catholic Primary School, we are committed to using this Play Policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities, and quality environments for play and informal recreation, for our children. We believe that play has a vital role in promoting children's happiness and wellbeing and therefore should be planned collaboratively with the children. Our Play Policy encourages our children to be respectful of each other and the environment in which they are playing and therefore fully embraces our Mission Statement, 'Live, Love and Learn in Jesus' footsteps'.

Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, be creative, take acceptable levels of risk, express themselves, build confidence, challenge themselves, develop resilience and acquire good social and behavioural skills. Twenty per cent of a child's time in school each day is play time and as a school we believe that this time needs coherent planning, especially as changes in society such as heavier traffic, less freedom for children to play outdoors and the increase in digital technology have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital. We recognise that 'rich' play opportunities are a child's right, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

Our school acknowledges and supports the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) (Appendix 1), especially Article 31 which focuses on the child's right to play and Article 12 which focuses on the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them.

Our school acknowledges and supports the [Play England Charter for Children's Play](#) (Appendix 2) which underpins some key understanding for play:

- Play is an essential part of every child's life – vital to his or her development. It is the way that children explore for themselves the world around them; the way that they naturally develop understanding and practise skills.
- Play is essential for healthy physical and emotional growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.
- Play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious.
- Children's own culture is created and lived through their play.

Our school acknowledges and supports the [Outdoor Play And Learning](#) (OPaL) principles which promote 'more active and creative playtimes ... happy, healthier children ... and impacts in a more positive attitude to learning in school, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life.'

Links to Learning

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development which gives EAL learners a chance to practice. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types (Appendix 3) e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

The other area of focus for the impact of play and playwork on education and learning is the role of play at school break periods and the impact on children's behaviour and learning in class.

As a result of implementing this Play Policy within school we believe that our children will:

- Be happier
- Increase self-awareness and self-esteem
- Improve language and communication skills
- Improve concentration
- Improve their imagination, independence and creativity
- Improve their social skills
- Improve their negotiation skills
- Be resilient, confident and good problem solvers
- Develop life skills
- Improve physical development, co-ordination and fitness

Benefit and Risk

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. As a team we feel taking risks in play have these benefits.

- Enables children to develop their own boundaries, knowing where and when to take a risk
- Builds confidence
- Develops independence
- Promotes peer interaction and reciprocity
- Extends experiences and develops life skills for the future

It is the school's responsibility to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits of play. This policy sets out the school's overall objectives for risk management in play provision, and the school recognises the challenge that this brings. To manage the level of risk within our play provision St. Peter's Catholic Primary School will adopt the [Health and Safety Executive's 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach'](#) (2012) (Appendix 4) as its primary guidance source in

decisions related to risk and play. The school will use a 'risk benefit' approach to balance its duty of care to protect and its duty of care to provide.

Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change/ development in play provision/equipment takes place.

Health and Safety

All activities, play zones and equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily and/or periodic basis. These checks will be kept on file in the office. Risk-benefit assessments for areas, equipment and activities will be held on file in the office for inspection. All new activities which involve potential significant risk will be subject to individual or generic assessment as part of the planning process. All previous assessments will be reviewed as and when appropriate.

The Play Team will be responsible for the site, equipment and resources in general, which are intended to be open access. They will also be responsible for any activities which are directly led by the Play Team. Visiting carers, teachers and parents will be responsible for the conduct and behaviour of those in their care. They will be responsible for ensuring that those persons in their care use the site and equipment in a safe, controlled and appropriate manner to ensure the wellbeing of ALL users on site.

It is the responsibility of all visitors and staff to work within agreed policy and procedures and to adhere to all control measures imposed as a result of assessments.

It is the responsibility of all carers to bring any potential hazard or concerns regarding the site, equipment or activities to the attention of the Play Coordinator on duty.

It is the responsibility of the Play Team to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to the Play Coordinator as soon as possible.

Supervision style

From guidance developed in partnership with the schools Health and Safety Team at South Gloucestershire Council, the Play Team will follow the 'Ranging' model, where the supervisor moves around the play area, usually on a set course/schedule. The distance from pupils therefore differing but can be 20 metres or more away. All risks have been assessed using this model of supervision.

The Adults' Role in Play

Staff will use and refer to ['Playwork Principles'](#) (Appendix 5) when appropriate interventions are needed, but ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play.

The Play Team's core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play-worker 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. Play-workers 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 available to participate in the play if invited.

Environment

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

At St. Peter's Catholic Primary School, we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity;
- encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things; and
- give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors.
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value

APPENDIX 1

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

APPENDIX 2

PLAY ENGLAND CHARTER FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY

APPENDIX 3

PLAY TYPES

Play Types

There are acknowledged to be a number of different play types (around 16) which provide Playworkers, managers and trainers with a common language for describing play. They are listed below, in no particular order.

- 1 **Symbolic Play** – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of depth e.g. using a piece of wood to symbolise a person or an object or a piece of string to symbolise a wedding ring.
- 2 **Rough and Tumble Play** – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. This type of play allows children to participate in physical contact that doesn't involve or result in someone being hurt. This type of play can use up lots of energy.
- 3 **Socio-dramatic Play** – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.
- 4 **Social Play** – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended e.g. any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols i.e. games, conversations, making something together.
- 5 **Creative Play** – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. Allows children to design, explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. They can use lots of different tools, props, equipment. It can have a beginning and an end, texture and smell e.g. enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake. Self-expression through any medium, making things, changing things.
- 6 **Communication Play** – play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. mime / charades, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, whispering, pointing, debate, street slang, poetry, text messages, talking on mobiles / emails/ internet, skipping games, group and ball games.
- 7 **Dramatic Play** – play which dramatises events in which the child is not a direct participator e.g. presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.
- 8 **Locomotor Play** – movement in any or every direction for its own sake e.g. chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.

- 9 **Deep Play** – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear e.g. light fires with matches, make weapons, conquer fear such as heights, snakes, and creepy crawlies. Some find strength they never knew they had to climb obstacles, lift large objects etc. e.g. leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike on a parapet, balancing on a high beam, roller skating, assault course, high jump.
- 10 **Exploratory Play** – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects e.g. engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.
- 11 **Fantasy Play** – This is the make believe world of children. This type of play is where the child's imagination gets to run wild. Play, which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way that is unlikely to occur e.g. playing at being a pilot flying around the world, pretend to be various characters/people, be where ever they want to be, drive a car, become be six feet nothing tall or as tiny as they want to be the list is endless as is a child's imagination.
- 12 **Imaginative Play** – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply e.g. imagining you are or pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting a dog which isn't there.
- 13 **Mastery Play** – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments e.g. digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.
- 14 **Object Play** – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements e.g. examination and novel use of any object e.g. cloth, paintbrush, cup.
 15 **Role Play** – play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. brushing with a broom, dialling with a telephone, driving a car.
- 16 **Recapitulative Play** – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.

APPENDIX 4

HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEARNING – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH (2012)

APPENDIX 5

PLAYWORK PRINCIPLES