

**ST Federation**  
**St Clement and St James**  
**Play Policy**  
**February 2023**

**Our Schools' Federation vision**

We will create schools with love, faith and hope at their heart. We will welcome and celebrate every child, helping all children to develop their character and a love of learning.

Our school vision is rooted in biblical teaching as defined by 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."*

And Matthew 19:14

Jesus said, *"Let the children come to me, and do not stop them because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."*

**1. Commitment**

St Clement and St James will refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing strategic and operational leadership in order to maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

**2. Rationale**

Children spend 20% of their time (the equivalent of 1.4 years) playing at school. At St Clement and St James, we believe that this time needs to be carefully considered and planned for so that all children have play opportunities 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.

We believe in the OPAL rationale 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."*

The way children conduct themselves in the classroom, by demonstrating our Christian values, is replicated in the way we play together. We have the same high expectations of the pupils behaviour both in the classroom and in the playground. At St Clement and St James, the opportunity to engage in meaningful play enables our children to live the values in a number of different ways. For example:

- Friendship - mixed year group play times allows children to develop relationships with peers from all year groups.
- Forgiveness - learning how to show forgiveness when a disagreement has taken place.
- Compassion - acknowledging the needs of others through sharing equipment, resolving conflict and encouraging their peers.

- Thankfulness - respect for the playground environment and equipment.

### **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.

### **4. 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 and learning about the world around them.
- 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.

Alongside the rights of the children, children should follow the school values of friendship, forgiveness, compassion and thankfulness. We also aspire to the school's vision of celebrating every child, helping all children to develop their character and a love of learning. We believe that every child has the right to a

safe, enjoyable playtime where their play is acknowledged, valued and highlighted to show the value of quality play.

## 6. 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)

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed 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'*. Opportunities to experience and manage risk safely in play will support children to develop their character and love of learning, as stated in our school vision.

At St Clement and St James we are committed to providing these experiences in a managed way. **St Clement and St James will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) 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). <https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm> (see full document in Appendix 1)

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 (*Appendix 2 - Risk Assessment example?*) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs. Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. In the words of 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'*.

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.

## 7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school playtimes 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 Early Years, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can supervise sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

At St Clement and St James we will ensure that there are at least three members of staff available to support children at break times and lunch times.

## **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 (see appendix 3). 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.

We work on the principles that:

- adults should let children play;
- children value and benefit from staffed play provision;
- children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers;
- children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Our approach to play is structured to enable adults to facilitate children's play:

- the Play Leader is a member of SLT and is responsible for the strategic development of play within the school;
- the Play Coordinator supports, monitors and implements meaningful, enjoyable and productive child initiated play through the Play Team;
- Playworkers are responsible for supervising and providing a stimulating play environment for children.

## **9. Equality and diversity**

At St Clement and St James, we strive to continually build a community in which there is equity and equality for all. A community in which everyone shows respect and understanding towards each other. By doing this, we improve the quality of all our lives. Through providing a rich play offer that meets 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 play experiences and school life.

## **10. 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.

The school will work with OPAL to improve play opportunities and our environment in the long-term to:

- ensure our play setting provides a varied, challenging and stimulating environment;
- allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to these risks and their benefits;
- allow adults to observe and sensitively intervene when necessary, following safeguarding procedures;
- provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other;
- enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other;
- embed restorative approaches to support children in resolving conflict with peers;
- enabling children to use emotion coaching strategies in their play;
- 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;
- develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment;
- promote independence and team work within children;
- build emotional and physical resilience;
- have an integrated playground for children from Year 1 to Year 6;
- use the OPAL audit tool and pupil surveys to monitor the implementation of this play policy.

We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school’s grounds to enhance 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](http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf)

### **Appendix One: Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012).**



Health and Safety  
Executive

#### **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

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<sup>2</sup> Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, 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.

**Appendix Two: Risk Assessment Example:**

Example of a risk-benefit assessment. These should be brief and clear.

Risk-benefit assessment date: .....

Assessed by: .....

Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date
<b>Large loose parts</b> Falling on children Crushing injuries Heavy lifting Could involve players or bystanders	All those listed in play policy plus – core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment.	Agree stacking heights in play assembly. No double size pallets Large dens only in supervised den zone	OPAL lead	
<b>Digging area use of real spades</b> Chopping feet Accidental blows Use as weapon Risk to players and bystanders	All those in play policy – plus Upper body strength Creativity Core strength Enjoyment	Tools not toys training in play assembly Only diggers in the digging zone Only spades, not forks	Play coordinator	

# Playwork Principles



## 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. That is, 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 ADULT 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 intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.