



# Bell Lane Play Policy (Opal)

	Name	Date
Committee with oversight of the policy	Finance & General Purposes	
Lead Person	Miss Harsha Patel	
Prepared by	Mrs. Cara Demetriades	Jan 2021
Reviewed By	Opal working group	Jan 2021
Approved by	N/A	
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# 1. Commitment & Rationale

This policy sets out Bell Lane Primary Schools Commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children.

As a school we aim to improve the way we think about and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

The school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play.

The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. 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.

At Bell Lane Primary School, at the heart of everything we:

**B**uild a safe environment

To help us

**E**ngage in our education

To help us

**L**earn that we can shape our community and the world

Because

**I**ndependent thinking requires collaboration

To help us

**E**xcel in our work, aiming high

To help us

**V**alue everyone's differences

Because

**E**ducation will support our future generation

We **believe** in everyone being a learner, including our teachers. If you **believe** in me, I **believe** in you.

## 2. What is Play

Play is any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light hearted. IT may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children an opportunity to be creative, to make decisions and to assess and manage risks.

At Bell Lane Primary school we recognize 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 that the role of the adults is to support the play process. We aim for children to have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

We aim to/for:

- 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.
- provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide children with the opportunity to use a range of equipment in play whilst taking care not to hurt others.
- Allow children the right to assess risk, get out and tidy away equipment
- Adults to respect these rights providing inclusive opportunities for creative, exciting play, use of restorative justice to resolve conflicts and to support children who have additional needs at playtime.
- Adults to dynamically risk assess and to encourage children to assess risk and to support the children in taking out and tidying away equipment.
- Adults support the children to develop new opportunities for play, listening to their ideas about play and supporting all children to access play.
- enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.

### 3. Benefits of Play

An essential element of exploration within play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities.

WE believe that

- 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, different concepts and different 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.
- Our Play is inclusive for all pupils as each pupil can push their own boundaries from their own starting point

## 4. Managing Risk

Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to judge risks independently and to learn new skills. All children need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capabilities. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs and ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving the risk of injury.

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'*.

*'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: An Implementation Guide (2012)

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

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

## 5. Supervision

Except for new children in reception, the school does not believe direct supervision of playtime is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take remote and ranging models, so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can patrol the playground to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. We will ensure that the numbers of staff available and patrolling the play area to support play are assessed and is suitable for the number of children at play.

## 6. The Adults' Role in Play

Bell Lane School aims to maximize the benefits children gain from play by training all staff who supervise playtime in Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures children's self-directed play.

The playworker'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. 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.

Playground rules will be kept to the minimum required to maintain safety and all playground rules will be agreed by the Play working party.

## 7. Environment

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

To manage risks

- Our caretaker performs regular Health & Safety checks of the play areas
- The Opal working party and all playtime supervision staff will check for dangers/ risks when outside with the children
- The children will be made aware of possible risks and helped to manage those via staff alerting them, for example slippery or wet surfaces
- Separate the play area into zones to maintain a risk/benefit management system creating quiet areas as well as areas for physical play.