



# Red Hall Primary



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# Red Hall Play Policy

## Contents:

Our school motto and vision

1. Commitment
2. Rationale
3. Definition and Value of Play
4. Aims
5. Benefit and Risk
6. Supervision
7. The Adult's Role in Play
8. Environment
9. Links with other policies



# Red Hall Play Policy

## Our Motto

Our school motto is **'Believe and Achieve'**.

Red Hall Primary is a school where ALL children no matter what their background or academic ability, are given the skills to **'believe'** in themselves and to **'achieve'** their very best.

## Our Vision – CARING

Governors gathered words from our whole school community to create our vision.

We are proud to be described in this way;

**C**ommunity

**A**spirational

**R**espect

**I**nclusive

**N**urturing

**G**rowing together



# Red Hall Play Policy

## 1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions which affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children. We view play as a vital part of our children's day and we value play in a high regard.

## 2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which 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

Our whole school approach is strongly influenced by the philosophy of Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Hygge. We are preparing our children for a life-long love of learning and play while developing them as unique individuals. Play helps provide children to develop skills for life. These include resilience, independence, self-expression, self-confidence and self-belief, all which will result in our Red Hall pupils becoming the thinkers and doers of the future. Our place spaces across school are interesting and engaging, and follow the curiosity and wonders of the child, which is guided by the knowledge and expertise of our passionate play team. We will make amazing memories with your children and give them opportunities to experience things they may never have experienced before through all 12 types of play.

The OPAL programme rationale is that ...” ***better, more active and creative playtimes 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***”.

## 3. Definition and Value of Play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. When a child plays, they learn about them self and their surroundings. This includes how to coordinate their body movements, talk with friends, apply rules, and more. But the learning process is even broader than this, we believe play has many benefits, including:



# Red Hall Play Policy

- 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, be resilient, be independent and to be creative.
- Play helps to develop speech and language skills as well as encouraging children to be creative and imaginative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

At Red Hall Primary School, we want our children to develop a love of the outdoors, be physically more active, explore their world and communicate and collaborate more effectively with their peers. Positive play experiences will do just that.

The impact of **Covid-19** has been evidenced in our children's poor physical health (increased weight gain due to lack of physical activity), emotional well-being and limited development of age appropriate social skills during free time. This is mainly due to the lack of social interaction with peers. We need to focus our support through our plans for school improvement in teaching our children how to play again, to not rely on technology for entertainment and to develop the skills highlighted above that play can encourage and facilitate.

## 4. Aims

In relation to play our school intends to always keep our school rules at the forefront of our minds; to look after ourselves, to look after each other and to look after our school.

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 the management of these risks and their benefits.





# Red Hall Play Policy

- 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 and their place within it.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.
- HAVE FUN!

As stated in our **CARING** vision we will always aim to develop a sense of community, be aspirational, respect each other, make play inclusive, provide a nurturing environment while GROWING TOGETHER.

## 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: 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.

It is our job as educators to inspire and nurture an inquisitive mind in every child. It can be easily achieved from the play environment we create; to the open ended questions we ask. However, Dr Bruce Perry tells us about three common ways adults can crush the curious child's learning: fear, disapproval and absence. A fearful child will be unwilling to explore and be curious, preferring to seek the familiar over anything new. The constant "don't touch", "don't climb" and "don't do that", disapproval that children hear from the adult so often can also diminish the child's willingness to be curious and adventurous. With the absence of an invested adult, the child may not be as curious without that boundary of safety and someone to share in the discovery and joyfulness of learning with the child. So we believe the benefits of risk are important, alongside positive risk assessments and with experienced play workers.

Risk-taking is an essential feature of our play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Our 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'*.



# Red Hall Play Policy

Children have OPAL passports; these contain the rules of safe play in our risk taking play areas. When children have shown they understand the risks involved in certain play types, they receive a signature from the class teacher of play team which means they can then play in this area. We currently have rules around:

- Tree climbing
- Stick Play
- Mud Kitchens
- Water Play
- Tyre Play
- Loose Parts
- Wheels
- Pallet Safety

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.

## 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 recognizes 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.

At Red Hall we have a passionate play team which consists of senior leaders, teaching assistants, teachers and play workers. This team comes with a depth of knowledge. We will be working together to carefully, plan, manage play spaces and to keep children safe.

## 7. The Adults' 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. 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 play worker's and 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



# Red Hall Play Policy

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.

## 8. 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.

The children are at the centre of all learning and play at Red Hall Primary School. We follow their interests and fascinations, listening to any questions they have and encouraging exploration and wonder. We will document these interests and build upon them to create the best play environments bespoke to our children. We follow their interests and return to them repeatedly, building on their ideas and provoking deeper thinking and play. We value every child's ideas and collaborate with them in the learning and play process.

Children love to ask questions; it is one way they make sense of the world. Children are able to pose questions to us and investigate the answers; we want to allow them to feel in charge of their own play when possible. We aim to use inquiry-based approaches to learning to promote investigation, in turn creating interesting, engaging and meaningful play for the children.

Our learning environment has strong Reggio Emilia and Montessori influences. We use natural, recycled materials, which support open-ended play and encourage children to use their imagination. Every aspect of the environment is carefully thought out to encourage independence and to inspire the children. Children will be invited to play out in all weathers.

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.

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

## 9. Links with other policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Emotional Health and Well Being Policy
- Managing Risk Statement
- Play Risk Assessments