

Mossend Primary

Play Policy



Commitment

At Mossend Primary School we are deeply committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide quality play provision for all of our children. As a school community we believe that play leads to better learning, facilitates our children to make connections and to demonstrate creativity and happiness. Therefore, we will refer to this Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Policy in all decisions which affect children's play.

Rationale

At Mossend Primary School we recognise that many of our children's socialisation and play skills have been impacted by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are fully committed to addressing this through play in school and firmly believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We acknowledge the UN Convention on 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 the child irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities.

We have a shared vision of what our school community should be like for all stakeholders. Our School motto is "Where Stars Shine Brighter" We all share the same values of Aspirational, Caring, Creative, Honest, Respectful and Welcoming.

Our Aims are to:

- Provide a safe and stimulating environment in which all our children learn positive attitudes and become confident individuals.
- Ensure our children develop an understanding of their own and others' feelings, cultures and beliefs and become responsible citizens.
- Create and provide a variety of opportunities for learning for every child which will stimulate and interest their imagination to enable them to become successful learners.
- Extend our children's abilities to communicate ideas and feelings and become effective contributors in all areas of the curriculum.
- Work co-operatively with the school cluster and wider community to share good practice and to ensure smooth transitions from one establishment to another.
- Enable all children to access an inclusive curriculum that provides appropriate support and challenge to allow them to fully develop their skills and talents for learning, life and work.

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.”

Definition

As a school community we define play as an activity which is:

- Fun
- A time for socialisation and interacting with others
- Uses imagination

Stakeholders believe that play develops the following skills:-

- Building resilience
- Creativity
- Communication
- Promotes confidence.
- Builds self-esteem.
- Increases sense of self worth and autonomy.

We also believe that play is important to allow children to :-

- Socialise and interact with others which allows children to build skills that will help them be confident and autonomous later in life. Social interactions will help children develop their self-esteem and build resilience towards the unknown and in turn, create connections that make new social interactions less scary.
- Think creatively and logically.
- Share stories, experiences and resources.
- Develop empathy by helping others. Children that are empathetic will also be more accepting, open and resilient in the future as they have developed skills to face confrontation, to communicate, and are able to integrate into new environments positively.

Out to Play guidance (2020) states:-

More importantly however, there is strong and compelling evidence that playing and learning outdoors has many benefits for children:

- Improves physical health – children playing outdoors are more physically active so are likely to have
 - a healthier weight
 - better bone density through improved strength and greater exposure to vitamin D
 - better fundamental movement skills,
 - improved respiratory health
 - better immune system by experiencing a greater range of microbes
 - improved eyesight
- Improves wellbeing – children's wellbeing and mental health is improved by playing outdoors
 - Resilience is developed through taking and managing risks outdoors in a safe environment
 - Self-esteem and confidence are increased through free play outdoors, making own decisions, problem solving and managing boundaries
 - Emotional health regulation and interpersonal skills are improved through negotiation and conflict resolution
 - Wellbeing is improved by being outdoors in nature which has a calming effect
- Enhances child development – high level functions such as creativity, interpersonal skills, empathy and negotiation are improved
- Improves learning for sustainability – developing a connection to nature and an understanding of environment and place as a child increases likelihood of caring about these things as an adult
- Is cost-effective in meeting the expansion of funded childcare – an outdoor setting does not need a fully functioning building to deliver high quality, flexible early learning and childcare.

And importantly, it is fun and should be an everyday part of children's play-based learning!

Scotland's National Outdoor Play & Learning position statement states that outdoor play and learning is 'life-enhancing', improves learning and is vital for children to thrive in health, wellbeing and development. There have been a number of Scottish Government policies and guidance over recent years which set out national expectations and continue to highlight

outdoor play and learning experiences for children as being key to the provision of high-quality learning.

These include:

- Scotland's National Improvement Framework (2022)
- A Report by HM Inspectors: 'Successful approaches to learning outdoors' (2022)
- Scotland's National Performance Framework (2018)
- The Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013)
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)
- Getting it Right for Every Child (2008)
- Curriculum for Excellence 3-18 (2008)
 - Realising the Ambition: Being Me (2020)

Rights

At Mossend Primary School we recognised the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child including Article 31, 'Children and young people have the right to have fun in the way they want to, whether by playing sports, watching films, or doing something else entirely. They have the right to rest, too.' And also Article 12, 'Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.'

Benefit and Risk

Sensible risk management is not about creating a totally risk-free society.' (HSE 2006)

'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)

The school 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).

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*'.

In addition 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.

7. 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 recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, 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 patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

At playtime and lunchtime Support Staff will be out in the playground with members of management available.

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. 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.

9. 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.

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.

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

