

# Play Policy

## Eppleton Academy Primary



**Approved by:**

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**Date:**

**Last reviewed on:**

September 2018

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September 2019

This policy sets out Eppleton Academy's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children. We recognise that play has a vital role in children's well-being, play is an important part of a happy and healthy childhood. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

As a school we will provide high quality, carefully considered outdoor spaces which offer sustainable play opportunities for children regardless of their needs and abilities.

We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development. In a time where outdoor play environments and opportunities are on the decline, the school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play.

We are committed to using this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children.

### **At Eppleton we aim to:**

- facilitate and encourage play;
- provide children with a play setting which is enjoyable, stimulating and challenging;
- allow children to take risks
- provide children with a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and about the world around them;
- be informed by the children and work with the children to create a space that is exciting, engaging and enthuses children, where they feel safe to take risks and explore their world;
- work in partnership with parents/carers and the community making use of local expertise.

We aim to give children the opportunity to:

- explore the world around them through playful experimentation;
- develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving;
- encourage resilience and self-confidence;
- think creatively;
- develop independence and take responsibility for themselves and others;
- develop physical health, co-ordination and fitness;
- develop emotional health;
- develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk.
- Increase self-awareness and self esteem
- Improve language and communication skills

### **Rationale**

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school in play. This equates to 1.4 years of their primary school attendance in playtime. This time is valuable and needs careful planning. Changes in culture and society have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better play means happier children. Happier children mean fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, more effective lessons, core skills development, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary problems, few accidents and happier staff.

Play England drew up The Charter for Children's Play which sets out a vision for play and states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school

- 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.

## **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 and make decisions.

We recognise 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 the role of the adults is to support the play process.

The Government’s Play Strategy defines play as:

*“encompassing children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.”*

When the children in Eppleton were asked to define play, they said it is...

“FUN!”                      “a time for loosening up”                      “at time to try new things”

They think that when you are playing you should see...

“people smiling”                      and                      “children mixing and helping each other”

“

## **Health, Safety, Benefit and risk**

*All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play opportunities. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bike unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury. (Play England)*

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience success and failures. At Eppleton we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational setting and state that:

*“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 dangers “ (HSE 2013)*

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 assessment. We will adopt a benefit-risk approach to manage our duty of care to protect and our duty of care to provide for children’s needs.

Eppleton will use the Health and Safety Executive’s guidance Managing Risk in Play and Leisure ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) and ‘The Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision’ as its principle guiding document in making decisions relating to risk and play.

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

To manage levels of risk we will:

- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children;
- Design spaces where the risks of hazards are clearly apparent;
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed;
- Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.

*“Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children’s development is inhibited, undermining their capacity to deal with the wider unsupervised world.”* (Play Safety Forum Position Statement, South Gloucestershire Council Play Policy)

### **The adults’ role in play**

The adult’s role will be to facilitate an environment which nurtures self-directed play and encourages children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with an outside agency called OPAL ([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Eppleton. We believe that it is the job of a playworker to ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children, to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are available to participate in the play if invited.

Play workers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Remote Supervision: We may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are using the trees. It is expected that staff will move around throughout playtime, finding out what the children are doing. Staff can then check in on the children’s playing throughout playtime.

### **Environment**

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

At Eppleton 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 and use their imagination creativity;
- Encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things;
- Give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors;
- Enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value.