

OPAL Play Policy

Introduction

At Holy Trinity, we believe in providing a holistic and inclusive education for our children. Our vision states: *At Holy Trinity we have high expectations of all and our aim is that everyone is nurtured, inspired and empowered within a caring and inclusive Christian community. We teach our children Christian values and promote positive attitudes to learning to ensure that they have all they need to become lifelong learners who reach their full potential and become good global citizens.*

As part of this commitment, we have implemented the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) Play programme, which aims to create enriching and engaging outdoor play experiences; this in turn will promote positive attitudes to school life and learning. This policy outlines our approach to OPAL Play and sets out our expectations for all staff, children and parents in ensuring the best possible outcomes for all.

Rationale

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is:

“... 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.”

Outdoor play is essential for children’s development as it promotes physical activity, imaginative play, problem-solving, teamwork, and a connection to the natural environment. Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. 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. OPAL Play provides a framework to enhance our outdoor provision and maximize the benefits of outdoor play for all our children.

Expectations

Through our school rules of Be Ready – Be Respectful – Be Safe, our OPAL Play programme aims to:

- 1. Promote Personal Development:** To support children’s personal development by fostering their communication skills, independence, self-esteem, and emotional well-being through engaging outdoor play experiences. We will empower children to assess risk, problem solve and manage equipment, and we will ensure all adults support children with this process.
- 2. Provide Inclusive Provision:** We ensure that all children, regardless of their individual needs or abilities, have access to and can fully participate in our OPAL Play programme. We will provide inclusive opportunities for creative, exciting play, use of restorative justice to resolve conflicts and to support children who have additional needs at playtime.
- 3. Benefit and Risk. 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)*. Through regular play assemblies, children will be

introduced to any new initiatives or play equipment and will be consulted and coached on managing risk safely. Play team staff practice dynamic risk management when supervising play.

We have on-going risk assessments that are regularly reviewed and updated to meet the latest health and safety guidelines.

4. **Promote Environmental Awareness:** We promote environmental awareness and responsibility through our OPAL Play programme. Children are encouraged to appreciate and respect the natural environment, be mindful of sustainability practices, and develop a sense of ecological awareness.

5. **Support Staff Professional Development:** We provide continuous professional development opportunities for our staff to enhance their understanding of the OPAL Play programme, outdoor learning pedagogies, risk management, and health and safety practices through Opal College. This ensures that our staff can effectively facilitate and supervise outdoor play activities. Through our MAT links and Tea with OPAL we will share best practice.

6. **Involve Parents and the Community:** We engage parents and the wider community in supporting and participating in the OPAL Play programme. This includes sharing information and resources, inviting parents to observe or assist in outdoor play activities, and encouraging community partnerships to enhance outdoor provision.

Implementation of the OPAL Play Programme

To ensure the successful implementation of the OPAL Play programme, we have established the following guidelines:

1. **Timetabling Outdoor Play:** Play is 20% of children's school week, making this element of school extremely important and essential towards children's learning and development. Scheduled daily, EYFS through to Year 6 will mix and have equal access to a range of play opportunities. Children will be expected to play outside in all weathers and should therefore wear appropriate clothing at all times.

2. **Designing and Equipping Outdoor Play Spaces:** We have organised the outdoor play spaces into zones to promote a range of activities, including imaginative play, physical play and sensory experiences. These spaces contain a variety of age-appropriate resources and equipment to support diverse play interests and will be varied and challenging.

3. **Staff Roles and Responsibilities:** Clear roles and responsibilities for staff are articulated to ensure efficient supervision, supporting and enhancing the outdoor play experiences. This includes assigning roles such as Play Team Members, a Play Team Leader, and first aiders during playtime. In order for staff to have a clear view of all the grounds, vantage points have been identified on the school map and play team trained in ranging supervision such that the most risky play is most closely supervised.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Ongoing monitoring of both the effectiveness of Opal play and the day-to-day management of the zones and equipment will take place through questionnaires, play detectives and regular feedback sessions with the play team, led by the play team supervisor.

5. **Continuous Improvement:** We will be reviewing and updating this policy regularly, seeking professional development opportunities, and staying up to date with best practices in outdoor play provision through our relationship with OPAL play.

Conclusion

At Holy Trinity, our OPAL Play programme is a fundamental part of our commitment to providing outstanding education. Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to create an enriching and inclusive learning environment that supports the holistic development of our children.

Appendices

- a. HSE Risk Assessment
- b. Holy Trinity Risk Assessment
- c. Map of school grounds including OPAL areas and Play Team vantage points.

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