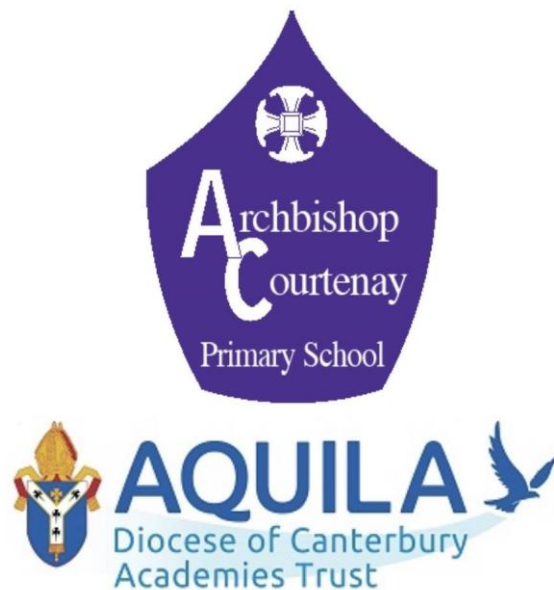




Archbishop Courtenay Primary School

Play Policy

March 2025 - September 2027

'To know the plans I have for you...to give you a future and a hope'
Jeremiah 29:11

Archbishop Courtenay Primary School

Play policy

Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that 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.

Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that 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, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

The OPAL Primary 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."*

At Archbishop Courtenay Primary School, we are a haven of hope and aspiration, where God's love and care guides our richly unique and diverse children along their spiritual path. We nurture them with kindness and compassion, fostering a strong, resilient, and proud community where every child learns to value themselves and others.

Through enriching, active, and creative OPAL play, we cultivate happier, healthier children who thrive in an environment of joy and discovery. This fosters a positive attitude to learning, leading to more effective classroom lessons, reduced behavioural issues, and fewer accidents. Our children develop resilience, creativity, and social skills, empowering them to learn, flourish together, and embrace a healthy, fulfilling life

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- 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, as well as different concepts and 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.

Play, at ABC, is a freely chosen, joyful activity where children explore, create, and imagine. It is a vital process of learning and discovery, where children engage with their environment and each other, building essential life skills. It is an activity where children can express themselves, and grow in confidence."

Benefits of Play, Through Our School Values:

- **Resilience:**
 - Through play, children encounter challenges and setbacks, learning to persevere and try again. They develop the resilience to bounce back from frustrations, building inner strength. Play allows for safe risk taking, building the confidence to try new things.
- **Respect:**
 - Play fosters respect for others as children learn to negotiate, share, and cooperate. They develop an understanding of different perspectives and learn to value the contributions of everyone. Play teaches children to respect boundaries, and the feelings of others.
- **Compassion:**
 - Play provides opportunities for children to develop empathy and compassion. They learn to recognize and respond to the feelings of others, offering support and encouragement. Through role play, they can experience other peoples lives.
- **Aspiration:**
 - Play ignites imagination and fuels aspirations. Children explore their interests, discover their talents, and develop a sense of possibility. Play allows children to test the boundaries of their own abilities, and to aspire to greater things. We encourage positive competition between pupils.
- **Friendship:**
 - Play is a foundation for building strong and lasting friendships. Children learn to connect with others, build trust, and develop social skills. Play creates shared experiences, and helps children to form strong bonds.

In essence, play is not just a pastime; it's a fundamental part of a child's development, deeply intertwined with the values that Archbishop Courtenay holds dear.

Aims

In relation to play our school aims 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.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships and **friendships** 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 that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical **resilience**.
- Through play, children explore their interests and imagine possibilities, igniting a sense of **aspiration** as they discover their potential and envision future goals
- Play fosters **compassion** by providing opportunities for children to understand and respond to the feelings of others through shared experiences and collaborative activities.

Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31) and the *right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Our school's values of resilience, respect, compassion, aspiration, and friendship directly support the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31: the right to play and leisure. Resilience allows children to navigate challenges encountered during play, respect ensures inclusive and harmonious interactions, compassion fosters empathetic connections and support within play, aspiration encourages exploration and discovery through play, and friendship cultivates positive social bonds. By nurturing these values, we actively create an environment where every child can fully exercise their right to play, rest, and participate in cultural life, fostering their holistic development and well-being.

Benefit and risk

'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.

At our school, we believe that experiencing risk and challenge within a supportive environment is essential for children to embody our core values: resilience, respect, compassion, aspiration, and friendship. By embracing challenges, children develop resilience, learning to persevere and adapt. Navigating risk requires respect for their own limits and the safety of others, while compassion encourages them to support peers facing similar challenges. Aspiration is fuelled by pushing boundaries and discovering new capabilities, and shared experiences of overcoming challenges strengthen friendships and build a sense of community. We want our children to confidently step outside their comfort zones, knowing that these experiences will empower them to thrive and flourish, embodying the values we hold dear.

HSE Managing Risk Statement *see end of document* (Appendix 4.6)

How can parents help?

Play is not messing about but is the process that enables children to learn all of the things that cannot be taught, while also feeling like it is fun. There are certain things children must have in order to be able to play. These include:

- Having clothes that you can play in
- Having things to play with
- Having a certain amount of freedom

As the school improves play opportunities for your children, you may find the school is asking you for resources and is making changes about how the children use the school grounds. They may use more of the grounds, for more of the year. Your children may get a bit messier, be exposed to more challenges and have greater freedoms to play where, with whom and how they like. The experiences the school is fostering are essential for children's physical and mental well-being and health and in line with all current good practice advice on health and safety, well-being and development.

Clothing

We advise that all children come prepared for outdoor/ all weathers play. During the colder and wet weather wellies will need to be worn for certain activities. Children should also wear coats during cold weather. Children need to be responsible for managing their outdoor clothing. This includes being prepared before they go outside to play. In the summer children will need sun cream and hats to protect themselves. Part of outdoor play means children may get muddy. We will endeavour to reduce this as much as possible but free play means allowing children to explore the areas they like.

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.

When there is more than one class outside, there is always more than one adult. This applies during lessons and playtimes.

Should an accident occur, our first aid bag is always available outside in the playground. A list of first aid trained staff can be found in the school office.

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.

Online Playwork training can be found on <https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>

Playwork Principles *see end of document* (Appendix 5.5).

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.

We aim to create a community with a Christian ethos, where the spiritual, moral and intellectual talents of our children are nurtured. Our core Christian values resilience, respect, friendship, compassion and aspiration are at the heart of all that we do. We encourage children to act towards others in play as you would wish them to act towards you, we feel that this reflects the principle of Luke 6:31.

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

A rich play setting, deeply rooted in our school values of resilience, respect, compassion, aspiration, and friendship, significantly bolsters our safeguarding practices. By fostering resilience through safe risk-taking, children learn to assess situations and make informed choices, enhancing their personal safety. Respect for boundaries and others during play cultivates a culture of mutual care, reducing the likelihood of harmful interactions. Compassion emerges as children support each other, creating a sense of collective responsibility. Aspiration blossoms as children explore their capabilities, building confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, knowing they have a voice. This environment dramatically increases children's social and emotional capabilities, teaching them to navigate complex social dynamics and build strong, supportive relationships. Furthermore, a rich outdoor play setting fosters a deep love and enjoyment of nature, which is a crucial foundation for developing a lifelong commitment to caring for the environment, ensuring a safe and sustainable future for all.

Appendix: 4.6**CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH**

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. 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 danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks¹ and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: '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'.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and

¹ The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.

7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer benchmarks that can help.
8. Striking the right balance *does* mean:
 - Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
 - Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
 - Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
 - Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
 - Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full
9. Striking the right balance *does not* mean:
 - All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
 - Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
 - Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
 - Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
 - Mistakes and accidents will not happen

What parents and society should expect from play providers

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers² should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.
11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.
12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:
 - The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
 - Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful □ Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk
13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

If things go wrong

Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.
15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

September 2012

² Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

Appendix 5.5: Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

Where the Principles refer to children and young people, they mean **all** children and young people.

- 1** All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
- 2** Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- 3** The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
- 4** For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
- 5** The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- 6** The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- 7** Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- 8** Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

The Playwork Principles are held in trust for the UK playwork profession by the Scrutiny Group that acted as an honest broker overseeing the consultations through which they were developed.