



Winshill Village Primary and Nursery School

OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING 2026-2027

Introduction

At Winshill Village Primary and Nursery School, we believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience, and affect their environment. We acknowledge Article 31 from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which supports the child's right to play. 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. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child.

We understand that play has a vital role in children's health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.



Rationale

The OPAL programme rationale states 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"*.

We know that that time spent outdoors is time well spent and research shows that children who play outdoors move more, sleep more, they eat better, are happier and care about the planet more. However, in England 1 in 5 children get to go to a green space like a local park less than once a month. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, less areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children.

We also know that our school playtimes account for 20% of a child's day which is equivalent to one day a week of school or 1.2 to 1.4 years of a child's primary school life. With this in mind we believe that this makes a child's play opportunities at school even more vital.

At Winshill Village, we believe the opportunity to develop play opportunities also enables our children to 'learn without limits' in a number of different ways at both break time and lunchtimes.

Outdoor play encourages children to develop the social skills, good manners and personal values. We care for our environment and continue to be aware of issues that improve the health and well-being of our school. We will provide opportunities to play that supports learning across the curriculum and helps children understand about the world around them. We believe outdoor play develops the confidence, independence and self-esteem of every child in our care, so that they are equipped to live as global citizens in an ever-changing world.

The way we conduct ourselves inside the classroom, by demonstrating our school values, is replicated in the way we play together.

Our Aims

Our aims are:

- To provide a secure, caring environment where all children are happy, intrinsically motivated and able to reach their potential.
- To include children in negotiating outdoor rules that all children must follow to create a safe and respectful environment.
- To respect a child's right to play by providing opportunities for creative, exciting and risky play which is both stimulating and challenging and is accessible to every child.
- To provide opportunities for children to communicate and develop respectful relationships with one another where collaboration and problem solving is encouraged.
- To build emotional and physical resilience and encourage children to become more independent and take responsibility for themselves and others.
- To ensure play is accessible to all children and support those with additional needs to play.
- To instil a sense of wonder and interest for all the children in the natural environment.
- To provide opportunities for children to feel comfortable in an outdoor environment in all weather conditions.
- To allow the children to be confident in developing their own problem solving skills.

An Exceptional Learner

An exceptional learner at Winshill Village engage with outdoor play and learning. An exception learner will:

- Have high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Have the skillset to become a leader.
- Be a great communicator.
- Be able to self-regulate and self-actualise.
- Be creative and curious.
- Feel a sense of belonging in their environment.
- Be adventurous.
- Be brave.
- Be metacognitively intelligent.

Learning Opportunities

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. It may be serious or light-hearted. It may produce something, or it may be done simply for its own sake. We believe the learning opportunities of play include:

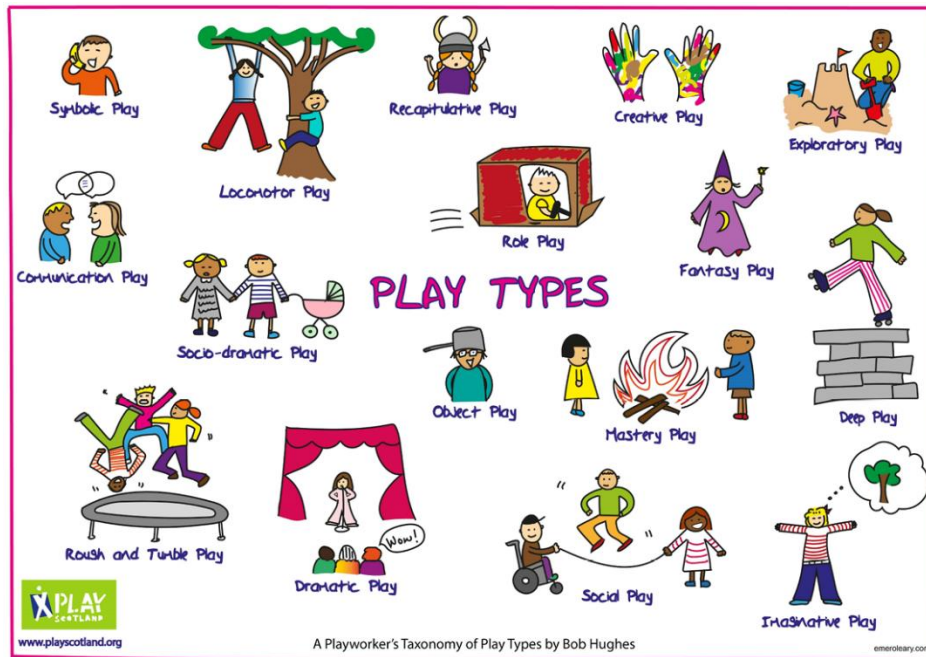
- Emotions e.g., learning about oneself and others, sadness/gladness, rejection/acceptance, frustration/achievement, boredom/fascination, fear/confidence.
- Social interactions - enhancing self-esteem and understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g., within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- Making choices, problem solving, being creative.
- Playing with loose parts, tyres and other multipurpose objects.
- Achieving and also coping with failing.
- Communication and negotiation skill

Four Components of a Child's Development:

Play activity meets the four components of a child's development:

- Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness)
- Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination)
- Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes)
- Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

Types of Play



Risk

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 successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

'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: Implementation guide is published for Play England 2012

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children and young people legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. OPAL have developed the five-part R.A.P.I.D. response to managing risk in school.

R.A.P.I.D Response to Managing Risk In School

1. Risk-Benefit Assessment - we will look at our environment and practices at least annually, and also when significant changes take place, and keep a written record of the areas using the risk-benefit log. Our assessments will cover hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury.
2. Assemblies - Our play assemblies will be held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play. A brief written log will be kept noting risks discussed and how they will be managed. Regular assemblies will be delivered when new equipment is introduced into the school environment.

3. Policy - this policy will form the basis for all staff understanding and decision making about managing risk in play.

4. Inspection - all fixed playground equipment will have an annual inspection. Ongoing visual inspections will be carried out by a member of staff and a record kept.

5. Dynamic Risk Management - all staff will be aware of the changing nature of play. They should support children to assess and manage risk as much as possible for themselves, but they should also be vigilant and take action if they think that risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by staff when required should balance the reduction of likelihood or severity of harm whilst preserving as much of the benefit of the play as possible and empowering the children to manage future risk as much as possible. Dynamic risk management in playwork requires that staff maintain 'relaxed vigilance'. This means that the quality of play will suffer if the adult's attitude is one of hovering, anxious over-attention. There should be an assumption that most play is not dangerous and that children can develop a high degree of competence, given practice, over time. However, staff should also be vigilant, they should be aware of the kinds of play and resources being used in their zone, who is playing and what the likely risks are.

Additional Considerations

If staff think that serious harm (meaning death, life-long debilitating injury or hospitalisation), is imminent or probable they should intervene to either stop or manage the risk. If they think that serious harm is possible but not probable, they should remain vigilant. If serious harm is very unlikely then they should probably focus their attention elsewhere or act to further improve the quality of the play offer. Dynamic risk assessment has been introduced to all members of staff as part of a school, Inset Day- regular communication with lunchtime supervisors.

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. 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. 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 settings 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)

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>

Supervision and the Adults Role in Play

The school will help children maximize the benefits they can gain from play using staff who are informed by and work to the Playwork Principles. We believe that the role of adults during play is 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. All adults will ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

We recognise OPAL's remote and ranging models of supervision, children will have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds that can sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. Our

supervision style allows children to 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.

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Clothing

We would advise that all children come prepared for outdoor/ all weathers play.

- During the colder and wet weather wellies or walking boots should be worn by staff and children when using the digging pit and mud kitchen.
- Children should 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. A uniform is designed to give children a sense of belonging but also a way to protect their 'good' clothes they wear at home.

Staff Professional Development and Support

The OPAL Primary Programme is an 18-month school development project to improve playtimes for all of our children. It is a mentor-supported school improvement programme which addresses all of the areas schools must plan for if they want to strategically and sustainably improve the quality of their play opportunities. As part of this programme staff have received:

- 2 hours of training around the importance of play
- 1 hour of Risk training
- The play team use the OPAL training videos which give an overview of play types to support their knowledge and understanding of play.
- The OPAL working team will continue to meet termly to discuss the development points set by our OPAL representative.

Reviewed: January 2025, September 2025, September 2026

Next Review: September 2027