

St Augustine's Outdoor Play and Learning Policy



Our school mission statement:

“Joyfully, we at St. Augustine’s Catholic School, celebrate our love for God, our love for ourselves and our love for each other as we play, learn and pray together”

Play is at the centre of our mission statement, and we want to make sure that every child is receiving the best possible playtime.

Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children’s play. Playworkers work alongside SLT and governor, Dr Ines Banas, to commit to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all 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.”*

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 helps support children's resilience and perseverance so that children develop a positive work ethic.
- Our mission statement recognises the importance of play, alongside prayer and learning

1. 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 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.
- Ensure that the fundamental movement skills (FMS) are further developed through a variety of different activities
- Give the children the chance to be reflective on what they enjoy about playtimes, giving them more of a voice in how they are developed in the future, showing good leadership skills

2. 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 and keep them safe and ensure they are respectful to each other.

Our Golden rules are:

We follow Jesus' ways- 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

We show this using three words. We are: **Respectful, Ready and Safe.**

Showing respect during playtime means a positive relationship with the lunchtime staff and LSAs who make up the play coordinators. Showing respect for our peers: taking turns, helping each other, abiding by the rules of the area.

Being ready means, we listen to each other and support our peers when on the playground. We respond to play coordinators when they are trying to help us learn.

Being safe means, we listen during OPAL assemblies to ensure that we know how to use the equipment on the playground properly so that we allow for some elements of risk but ensure that hazards are avoided. We look out for each other to keep each other safe.

3. 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 St Augustine we want to expose children to risk-taking in an environment where they can learn and be supported in how to manage that risk. Out on the playground, children are exposed to risk even when there is no equipment to play with. Even when running there is the risk of falling over and grazing a knee. Risk is something that cannot be avoided, even in adult life. Children need to be aware of risks and accept that they are part of life. It is how they learn from risks that will benefit the children and support their resilience and perseverance in the future.

4. Supervision

Each OPAL area will have adult supervision. We recognise OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Lunchtime supervisors will keep an eye on their designated area, be visible to the children if they need help and will intervene with help, if

needed, if excess levels of risk are emerging. Lunchtime supervisors oversee each area, encouraging play and ensuring that the rules of each area are followed.

5. 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 (see appendix). 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 lunchtime supervisor'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. Playworkers can enrich the child's play experience both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in promoting the culture of play. They are also available to participate in the play, if invited, e.g. dancing in our music area, helping with ideas in the den building area.

6. 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. (see appendix for Xavier equality policy).

7. 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. This environment helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating their own rights. It is our hope that it will increase children's social and emotional capabilities alongside developing a love for, and enjoyment of the outdoors. We also believe that it is a key foundation for encouraging care of the environment.

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

Appendix

[Children's play and leisure - HSE pocket guide to play work.pdf](#)

[Xavier Equality Policy - 9C6517EAE35934A27177FB0BE701674.pdf](#)