Woodlea

Play Policy

Reviewed by	Headteacher & Governors
Reviewed in	Autumn 2026
Status & Review Cycle	Every 2 years
Next Review date	Autumn 2028

Vision - Ready for Life

Our vision at Woodlea Primary School is to get every child Ready for Life. We don't just prepare children for exams; through our three core aims, we seek to develop children holistically so that they are ready to face the wider world at secondary and beyond.

Aims

We achieve our Vision through our three core aims:

Enable individual academic success

Develop creative skills through broad learning experiences

Foster an emotional understanding of ourselves and others

Values

We seek to achieve these aims by exhibiting our four school values. Children at Woodlea are:

Respectful

Caring

Resilient

Curious

Aspirational

Reflective

Equality and Access

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

This policy will be closely monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and a working party and reviewed based on the needs of the adults and children in the school.

The Headteacher retains overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. Operational responsibility for play provision, risk-benefit assessments, incident reviews and staff training is delegated to the school's designated Play Lead, supported by the Senior Leadership Team.

The school will make reasonable adjustments to ensure children with SEND are able to access meaningful and challenging play opportunities. Individual risk-benefit planning and additional support may be provided where appropriate to maximise participation whilst maintaining independence and developmental challenge.

All parts of play provision can be accessible. Please see our Accessibility Plan which can be found on the school website.

Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and 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. The 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".

The Value of Play

Play underpins the EYFS. It also underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. For most children their play is natural and spontaneous although some children may need extra help from adults. We want these benefits to apply to all our children whilst at play at Woodlea.

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. 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.
- Learn how to play new games.
- Making choices, problem solving, being creative.
- Achieving and also coping with failing.
- Communication and negotiation skills.
- Motor Skills

The Adults Role in Play

The school will help children maximize the benefits they can gain from play by provision of trained staff who are informed by and work to the Play work Principles.

• Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

• Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and ideas.

• Encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices.

• Play is critical to children's physical and emotional health and enables them to explore and develop the balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.

• Free play can have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to reach their potential

Aims: The school aims to address the provision of improved play opportunities:

• To ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.

• To allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to these risks and their benefits.

• To provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.

• To enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.

• To aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

• To provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.

• To provide a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.

• To promote independence and teamwork within children.

• To build emotional and physical resilience.

Benefit and Risk

'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.

The school will manage play risks in a sensible and proportionate manner, recognising that exposure to challenge and uncertainty is an important part of children's development. The aim is not to eliminate all risk from play, but to identify and manage significant risks of serious harm whilst preserving opportunities for exploration, independence and resilience. The school will use a risk-benefit approach informed by Department for Education health and safety guidance, the Health and Safety Executive publication 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach', and the principles in 'Managing Risk in Play Provision'.

Managing Risk in Play Provision:

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play and helps children develop judgement, confidence and resilience. The school will provide stimulating and challenging opportunities in which foreseeable benefits are weighed against the likelihood and severity of harm. Staff will distinguish between acceptable risks, which children can recognise and learn to manage, and hazards presenting a significant risk of serious harm, which must be removed or controlled. Alongside documented risk-benefit assessments, staff will use dynamic risk management and involve children, where appropriate, in identifying risks, considering consequences and choosing safer ways to continue their play. Adults will intervene when the risk of serious harm is not adequately controlled, a child cannot make an informed judgement, or the safety and rights of others are affected.

Risk-benefit assessments will be completed for significant play environments, resources and activities. They will be reviewed annually, following significant changes to provision, following serious incidents, or where monitoring indicates emerging concerns. The assessment process will focus on significant risks and developmental benefits rather than attempting to eliminate all uncertainty from play.

First Aid

Lunchtime staff carry first-aid bags and can summon assistance promptly. Children who need first aid will be supported by a trained first aider in an appropriate location; they will not be sent to the office unaccompanied where their condition or age makes this unsafe. Emergency services will be contacted without delay when required.

First-aid equipment is available in the school office, classrooms and meeting rooms, with additional provision positioned to support outdoor play where identified by risk assessment. Supplies are

checked and replenished regularly. The school maintains an appropriate number of suitably trained first aiders, and training is renewed within the required timescales.

Any head bumps must be reported to parents via a bump note and email and children wear a bumped head sticker; this will be completed by the member of staff dealing with the child.

All first-aid treatment, accidents and significant near misses must be recorded using the school's agreed reporting system. Parents or carers will be informed in accordance with the school's first-aid and accident procedures. The Senior Leadership Team will review serious incidents and recurring patterns to determine whether supervision, equipment, the environment, staff training or a risk-benefit assessment needs to change. The school will make any report required under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 and will follow its safeguarding procedures where an incident raises a welfare concern.

Supervision

The school recognises OPAL's models of direct, remote and ranging supervision. Supervision arrangements will be determined through ongoing risk assessment, taking account of children's ages and needs, the activities available, site layout and visibility, weather and ground conditions, and the competence and deployment of staff. Adults will remain available and accessible throughout playtimes, monitor changing conditions and intervene where necessary to prevent significant harm. Enhanced or more direct supervision will be provided where an individual assessment identifies that it is required.

The Adults' Role in Play

Staff will use and refer to 'The Principles of Play work' when appropriate interventions are needed, but ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play. The lead play-worker's core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play-worker 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. Play-workers 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 available to participate in the play if invited. The lead playworker will work alongside other supervising staff to ensure the principles of play are being implemented. This can also include training others to become play workers too.

Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should give every child access to a stimulating environment that is free from unacceptable risk whilst offering opportunities to explore, make choices and test their abilities through freely chosen play. Reasonably practicable controls will address significant hazards without removing the challenge and uncertainty that give play developmental value.

Clothing

We would advise as staff that all children come prepared for outdoor/ all-weather play.

During the colder and wet weather wellies or outdoor shoes should be worn by staff and children when walking on the school field or in the woods.

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. A uniform is designed to give children a sense of belonging but also a way to protect their 'good' clothes they wear at home.

Playground Angels

To support children to be active in their play, we use Playground Angels to implement guided playtime activities.

Playground Angels are Year 6 Children who carry out this important role to ensure playtimes at Woodlea are happy and productive. Playground Angels undertake training to develop their skills in leadership and organisation. They ensure games and activities are enjoyable, inclusive, safe and fair. During morning and lunch break, games and activities are on offer for all children.

Playground Angels support participation, inclusion and the organisation of games under the supervision of school staff. They do not replace adult supervision, provide first aid, make decisions about significant risk or manage significant incidents; these responsibilities remain with school staff. Safety, conflict, bullying, injury or welfare concerns must be referred promptly to an adult.

The activities they facilitate are on a rota and change throughout the year to allow for variety and to reflect the change in the environment over the seasons. These may include: Scootfit, Football, Hockey, Tennis, Table tennis, Badminton, Netball, Basketball and Dance.

This means that children are well-provided for at break times with activities and sports to participate in, leading to a positive active playtime experience for all which enables the children to return to the classroom regulated ready to learn.

Not only do Playground Angels ensure organisation of activities, their roles are also to encourage younger children to take part in games, help develop friendships, develop teamwork skills, build self-confidence and self-esteem, develop social skills, aid with conflict resolution and promote physical activity.

Woodland areas and loose-parts resources will be inspected at intervals proportionate to the level of risk and following significant weather events, site work or reported damage. Damaged, unsuitable or unsafe materials will be removed from use promptly. Significant defects and remedial actions will be recorded where appropriate, and specialist advice will be obtained where staff do not have the necessary competence.

Woodland and Loose Parts

At Woodlea, we are privileged to have a wonderful woodland outdoor environment where children immerse themselves in imaginative play as well as being able to explore the environment actively.

To enhance this environment even further, we have invested in play time provision with the purchase of Loose Parts equipment. This contains an assortment of equipment which the children can use freely to construct, to role play, to create and explore. Research has shown that this kind of equipment and play:

- Boosts imagination and creativity

- Develops social and emotional skills
- Develops critical thinking, problem-solving and negotiation skills
- Strengthens independence and sense of self
- Enhances cognitive abilities
- Develop fine and gross motor skills
- Develop hand-eye coordination
- Build vocabulary