

Be Happy and Shine

OPAL

Policy

OPAL commitment

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.

OPAL Rationale

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play. Therefore this time needs to be coherent and planned for. 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. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

The OPAL 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"*.

The Department for Education guidance regarding PSHE emphasises that schools should seek to show children 'the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle'. The school acknowledges that it is crucial for children to have access to equipment that encourages children to be more active.

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Definition of 'play'

Play is the work of children. It consists of those activities performed for self-amusement that have behavioural, social, and psychomotor rewards. It is child-directed, and the rewards come from within the individual child; it is enjoyable and spontaneous.

Intent

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.

We aim to enable our children to:

- 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 team work within children.
- To build emotional and physical resilience.

Implementation

Better play leads to happier children and in turn less behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, skills development, fewer accidents and more effective learning in the classroom as less staff time is spent resolving issues.

At Percy Main we will strive to:

- Implement the new equipment gradually and systematically. When introducing new equipment, time in assembly will be given to demonstrate how to carefully use and look after the equipment.
- Be informed by the children and work with the children to create a space that is exciting, engaging and enthuses children. They will feel safe to take risks and explore their world.
- To work in partnership with parents and the community making use of local expertise.
- Build projects collaboratively, respecting existing boundaries.
- Facilitate and encourage play.
- Enforce clear expectations regarding the implementation and care of the equipment.
- New and existing equipment will be monitored to ensure longevity and safety.

Impact

Evidence of impact on the children includes:

- Children engage with the environment which ensures that children play and learn through varied and first hand experiences of the world around them.
- Children come into class following play times with a better attitude and approach to learning. OPAL states that 'pupils are now in a much better frame of mind for learning as soon as they re-enter the classroom.'
- Play is therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment. Better play will lead to happier children with stronger friendships as a result of teamwork at playtimes.
- Children will be more confident in taking risks, developing an 'I can' attitude and increasing emotional and physical resilience.
- Increased respect for property throughout the school, ensuring that equipment is looked after and children value the resources they have.
- Better quality play with happier children will lead to fewer accidents and issues between children. Children will develop their ability to share and manage feelings and behaviours.

Health, Safety, Benefit and Risk

Children should be encouraged and supported to encounter and manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments.

Percy Main Primary will use the Health and Safety Executive's 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach' (2012) as its primary guidance source in decisions related to risk and play. (Appendix 1) The school will use a 'risk benefit' approach to balance its duty of care to protect and its duty of care to provide.

Adults' role in play

We are committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground. The adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting but ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play. Adults may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are playing at the back of the school field and behind the hill. It is expected that adults will move around throughout lunchtime/ playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Adults can then check in on the children's play throughout lunchtime. Adults will also be expected to ensure that equipment is being used properly to prevent injury to children and damage to the equipment.

Appendix 1:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>