Plat Douet School Play Policy



September 2025

There is no better activity for learning and development than play

(Doherty and Hughes,2014)

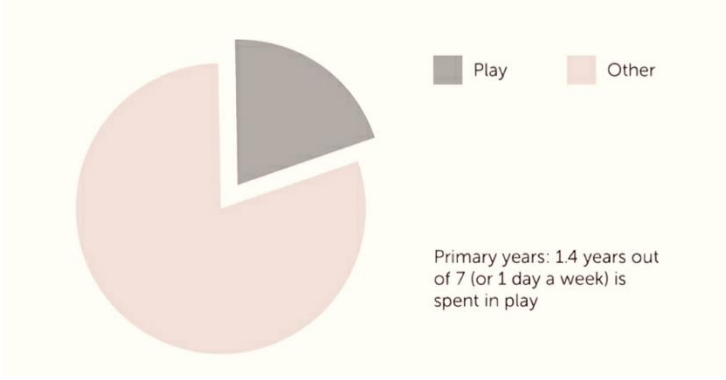
1. Commitment
Plat Douet School undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale
Plat Douet 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, sexual orientation, (Do you want to leave this in? Unnecessary for primary?) economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. We believe that providing high quality play provision at Plat Douet School will support our children to achieve through challenging play opportunities, aspire to be their best by learning resilience and determination, show respect through considering others and caring for resources, and foster a sense of community through co-operation, involvement, and teamwork.

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."*

3. 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.



A large proportion of children's school days is spent at play and we believe that playtimes should be valued as a learning opportunity in line with any other part of the school day.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

● Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging, inspiring, environment.

● Allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits which equips our pupils for life.

● Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other by nurturing a safe and supportive play community where everyone is treated with respect and in which spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged.

● Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other, providing opportunities to show courtesy and good manners, to celebrate different views, to look after property and belongings, and to be responsible for their actions and words/

● Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual, moral, and intellectual development.

● Provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively and creatively.

● Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum while learning about the world around them, allowing opportunities to set high standards, develop optimistic attitudes, and demonstrate resilience and determination when faced with a challenge.

● Promote independence and teamwork within children, through play opportunities which encourage co-operation and contributions of others.

● Build emotional and physical resilience by providing challenging and engaging environments which encourage chances to experience problems to be solved and achievements to be celebrated.

5. Rights

In 2013 the UN published General comment 17 on the children's right to play. It has been the legal duty of Nations to implement the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes Article 31 which states; **"Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.** General Comment 17, section 58 (g), reprimanded developed Nations for **"poor recognition given by States to Article 31,"** and stated **"Educational environments play a major role in fulfilling obligations under article 31."**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 as a Rights Respecting School to take these rights seriously and listen to and act on children's views on their play.

https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/

https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/778539?v=pdf

6. 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. Plat Douet School believes that when play is varied, challenging and inspiring, every individual will be enabled to reach their fullest potential to the highest possible standard and allow all pupils to 'be the best they can be'.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/assets/docs/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf

7. 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.

Direct	Remote	Ranging
Supervisors will be able to see all areas of the sight and all children during play and will remain in close proximity to the children. Some play features in these areas may offer semi-hidden opportunities. This supervision style will be most often employed in Nursery and Reception.	Supervisors will be located at a relatively static location, some distance from the activity while allowing for a clear view of the play area. This style allows adults to be present and to dynamically risk assess an activity so are able to respond rapidly, offering guidance and support as needed, without interrupting the play.	Supervisors will move around the play area usually around a designated area. The distance from pupils will vary. Supervisors will have designated area to cover and will adjust their level of attention, switching to a remote supervision style as required based on the type of play and dynamic risk assessment of play.

Due to the size of Plat Douet's outside area and having areas that provide more opportunities to be hidden from view we will have 6-7 members of staff on duty during lunchtime play, each allocated to an area of the play space. There will also be additional staff available to provide 1:1 support as needed, to further allow lunch staff to support children's play.

8. 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, though playworkers must never become fully engrossed in play; that is the role of the child. Playworkers will always remain attentive to the rest of the environment.

Roles of an adult

- **Noticing -** Being keen observers of children skills and using this data for planning further learning/play.
- **Encouraging -** Providing challenges, minimal constructive feedback and a safe environment.
- **Naming -** Being explicit about skills and naming materials/resources.
- **Waiting -** Being patient. Giving time and space for children to solve their own problems, make their own choices and mistakes. Not interfering, waiting for them to invite you to play.
- **Taking the children's lead** - Showing authentic interest in children's play/ideas/interests. Not instigating play.
- **Questioning -** Asking genuine questions about their thinking and decision making.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cm7IfAEsjqI

https://playwork.foundation/the-playwork-principles/

9. 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 additional needs, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy a welcoming, supportive and accepting school experience.

10. 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

Play times are the ideal location for building relationships, learning reasonable risk-taking, achieving goals, learning skills, and managing feelings when things go wrong. Play helps kids develop the physical, mental, and emotional skills they need for lasting confidence and self-acceptance.

A sense of community and belonging is important for children. However, some children find making friends more difficult than others. If a child feels like an outsider among their peers, they might worry about their ability level or popularity status compared to the other kids. However, you can help kids overcome their fears to feel a sense of accomplishment and community belonging through providing engaging and exciting play environments including a variety of social spaces. Play with others helps children

learn and practice valuable social skills, such as turn-taking, getting along, agreeing on mutually decided rules, sharing, accepting and understanding diversity, and resolving conflict.

A rich play setting also supports safeguarding by creating an environment which, helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, increases children's social and emotional capabilities and helps develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment. These opportunities align with The Six Principles of Safeguarding Children.

The six principles of safeguarding children are:

1. **Empowerment** – empowering children so they're confident enough to make decisions.
2. **Prevention** – by putting policies and procedures in place to protect children.
3. **Protection** – supporting and defending a child's rights.
4. **Proportionality** – making the right decisions and ensuring the correct response to a child's needs.
5. **Partnerships** – forming partnerships with the local community to make sure everyone has a part to play in safe and effective care.
6. **Accountability** – on an individual and organisational level, to see that all concerns are addressed, and children are protected.