



Our school Christian Values: **Respect**, **Self-worth/Perseverance**,  
**Love**, **Kindness**, **Forgiveness**



# Wittersham CEP School Play Policy



“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”  
Plato

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Wittersham CEP School recognises that sustainable, high quality play opportunities are a children's right and are essential for children's well-being and balanced development. These inclusive play opportunities are accessible to every child regardless of age, gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

## **1. Rationale**

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years 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, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play deprivation' for many of today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and ready to learn.

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development which is vital for all are children and in particular for children with deprived speech and language and EAL learners. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries in a safe environment.

We surveyed the children and our parents in October 2018 for their views on playtime. Many were positive about the playground opportunities but some of the children's comments included; 'We would like some music to listen to and more equipment to build dens with', "Could we have water play on the playground?" "I would like playtimes to be more adventurous and open."

Parent's suggestions included: outdoor kitchen area, den area, tunnels, tyres, collaborative building opportunities, dressing up and role play, use of the field with wellies in the winter, sandpit, climbing opportunities. One parent said, "They need to be given the equipment and the opportunities, as well as the freedom to explore, get dirty, make mistakes and even occasionally hurt themselves. This teaches them how to take calculated risks, make decisions and be responsible for those choices."

## **2. Commitment**

**Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'A child has the right 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.'**

Wittersham CEP School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we are committed to gradually and systematically implementing provision for consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces and equipment that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. At Wittersham we are committed to using this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children. We believe 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.



### 3. Definition of Play

Play is recognised as any activity that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated and that actively engages the child. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live. This 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); and

Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances). **Appendix 1** lists possible types of play to give adults a common language to use.

At Wittersham the children and staff think that:

- play allows children to be creative and co-operative
- adults' roles in great play is to be responsive to children's invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities and develop the children's risk awareness.
- play may be solitary or social
- play invites investigation and exploration which may test boundaries
- play makes children happy and happy children are healthier children who in turn can learn better
- children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources and as long as it is safe regardless of age, gender, social or cultural back ground
- play is something you choose to do and that it is fun!
- play enables children to process their experiences of the world

### 4. Links to Learning

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

As a result of implementing this policy we believe that our children will:

- be happier;
- increase self-awareness and self-esteem;
- improve language and communication skills;
- improve concentration;
- improve their imagination, independence and creativity;
- improve social skills;
- be resilient, confident, good problem solvers;
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought;
- be better at problem solving;
- develop life skills; and
- improve physical development, co-ordination and fitness.

### 5. Benefit and 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.

At Wittersham 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)

Wittersham will use the Health and Safety Executive’s guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) and 'The Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision' as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to 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. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (**Appendix 2**) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

## **6. Adults’ Role in Play**

We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

Adult’s role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL ([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Wittersham. In addition to this the Wittersham’s Play Team (**Appendix 3**) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, MDLs and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. Midday Leaders will take on the role of Play Leaders. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: 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. Play Leaders ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

## **7. Children’s Role in Play**

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy. (**Appendix 4**) In it will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other their environment, equipment and toys.
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody

This children’s policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of on-going assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council.

## **8. Environment**



At Wittersham we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground be an integrated area where all children from Reception to Year 6 can play safely.
- teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this.
- promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.



## Appendix 1

### Play Types

There are acknowledged to be a number of different play types (around 16) which provide adults with a common language for describing play. There are in no particular order.

- 1 Symbolic Play – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of depth eg using a piece of wood to symbolise a person or an object or a piece of string to symbolise a wedding ring.
- 2 Rough and Tumble Play – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. This type of play allows children to participate in physical contact that doesn't involve or result in someone being hurt. This type of play can use up lots of energy.
- 3 Socio-dramatic Play – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature eg playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.
- 4 Social Play – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended eg any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols ie games, conversations, making something together.
- 5 Creative Play – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. Allows children to design, explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. They can use lots of different tools, props, equipment. It can have a beginning and an end, texture and smell eg enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake. Self-expression through any medium, making things, changing things.
- 6 Communication Play – play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. mime / charades, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, whispering, pointing, debate, street slang, poetry, text messages, talking on mobiles / emails/ internet, skipping games, group and ball games.
- 7 Dramatic Play – play which dramatises events in which the child is not a direct participator eg presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.
- 8 Locomotor Play – movement in any or every direction for its own sake eg chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.
- 9 Deep Play – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear eg light fires with matches, make weapons, conquer fear such as heights, snakes, and creepy crawlies. Some find strength they never knew they had to climb obstacles, lift large objects etc eg leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike on a parapet, balancing on a high beam, roller skating, assault course, high jump.
- 10 Exploratory Play – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects eg engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.
- 11 Fantasy Play – This is the make believe world of children. This type of play is where the child's imagination gets to run wild. Play, which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way that is unlikely to occur eg playing at being a pilot flying around the world, pretend to be various characters/people, be where ever they want to be, drive a car, become be six feet nothing tall or as tiny as they want to be the list is endless as is a child's imagination.



- 12 Imaginative Play – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply eg imagining you are or pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting a dog which isn't there.
- 13 Mastery Play – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments eg digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.
- 14 Object Play – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements eg examination and novel use of any object eg cloth, paintbrush, cup.
- 15 Role Play – play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature eg brushing with a broom, dialling with a telephone, driving a car.
- 16 Recapitulative Play – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.



**Appendix 2**

Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet



Risk Assessment Date.....

Assessed by.....

	Description of Activity, Principle or Object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or Utility Or Related Policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action Date





### **Appendix 3**

#### **Structure of adult roles in practice**

##### **OPAL Team**

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Wittersham. It consists of:

The Head Teacher  
Lead teacher for play  
Play Leader (Lead Midday leader)  
Site Manager  
Pupil Voice Co-ordinator  
Governor Play Champion  
Parent Representative

##### **Wittersham Play Team**

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. Adults aim to follow the principles of playwork When on the playground at playtimes staff all should act as Play Makers. We have appointed a Lead Midday leader in recognition of the school's investment in OPAL and our commitment to its success. A senior leader aims to be out at lunchtime play every day to facilitate safe play opportunities with pupils.

#### **The Principles of Playwork**

School can benefit greatly by using the skills knowledge and principles of the playwork sector in areas of workforce development related to free play opportunities.

These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole.

They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people.

They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.



5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

## References

<http://www.playengland.org.uk>

Play England is a registered charity, no. 1150216, and a Company Limited by Guarantee, no. 07880687.

<http://www.hackneyplay.org>

Hackney Play Association, Charity No. 1145960.

<http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk>

Hughes, B. (2002) A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types, 2nd edition, London: PlayLink.



Appendix 4

Children's Play Policy

We have the right to have fun at playtimes. We have the responsibility to make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this.

We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do. We have the responsibility to make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.

We have the right to choose who we play with. We have the responsibility that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to.

We have the right play with lots of different toys or equipment and have a well looked after environment. We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment.

We have the right to explore be creative and take thoughtful risks. We have the responsibility to think about what we are doing and talk to a play maker about the risks we are taking if they ask us too.

