OUTDOOR PLAY (OPAL) POLICY

Our Mission

At St. Anne's we aim to be a caring Christian school, within the community where everyone is respected and valued. To be a school where all individuals are encouraged to build on their strengths and aspire to be the best they can be.

Our Vision

Our vision has the promise by Jesus of 'life in all its fullness at its heart. At St Anne's we believe:

- in our children and each other,
- we are uniquely created in the image of God,
- we were made to be awesome,
- that together we are family,
- we were created to live in community,
- in equipping the St Anne's family to be the best we can be,
- in our individual talents and abilities, and
- we can make a difference.

Our Values

At St Anne's CE Primary School, the following core values underpin all that we do. They are reflected in the daily life of the school and our relationships with other:

Respect, Thankfulness, Hope, Forgiveness, Love and Faithfulness.

'…let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.' *Matthew 5:16*

'I thank you because I am awesomely made…' *Psalm 139:14*

'…I come that they may have life and have it to the full.' *John 10:10*

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.

What is the Intent of Play at St Anne's?

At St Anne's school, we believe 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, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

We aim to create better, more active and creative playtimes which 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.

Aims

- 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.

How is the Play policy implemented at St Anne's?

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)

At St. Anne's Primary School, we 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, we 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'*. At St. Anne's Primary School, our vision is equipping the St Anne's family to be the best we can be by applying the risk-taking feature.

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.

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.

Ranges
Key Stage 1 playground
Meadow
Key Stage 2 playground – Physical area, Craft area, lower playground & upper playground

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.

Equal Opportunities
St Anne's CE Primary School recognises that all members of the school community are unique individuals entitled to equality of opportunity and continuing support. It is a primary school within Lancashire Education Authority. The school is situated just outside Rawtenstall, a diverse socio-economic community.

We are an inclusive school where pupils, parents, staff, governors, the local authority and local services work in partnership to meet the needs of the community. We celebrate the positive contribution made by different social, ethnic and linguistic groups. One of our core values at St Anne's is RESPECT - respect for our friends, our family, our teachers, but most importantly respecting ourselves by living out our school values each day. Our other values are:

- love
- hope
- thankfulness
- faithfulness
- forgiveness

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.

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.

A rich play setting supports safeguarding, 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.

Assembly

As new ranges are introduced to the playground, an assembly will be held to provide information regarding what the items are included, how to manage the risk involved and expectations of play.

How is the Impact of the P.E. Curriculum measured at St Anne's?

Pre/Post Assessment

To provide both qualitative and quantitative data, a survey is sent to parents, staff and pupils to gather information about playtimes. This survey will be completed at the start of the OPAL programme and will be completed again at the end of the programme. In turn, this should show an improvement in their playtimes including how safe, happy and the opportunities provided during playtimes.

A baseline audit provided by the OPAL mentor will consider all aspects of playtimes including opportunities given, equipment provided and timings. As a result, an action plan is created by the OPAL working group and will be RAG rated each term to provide next steps opportunities. This will allow continuous improvement of playtimes.

Playday

Once a term, parents will be invited into school to play with their child/children on school grounds to showcase playtimes in exchange for a loose item. During this time, the OPAL working group will be gathering information and feedback from parents to be fed back during their meetings. An assessment will be made by the OPAL working group and further planning can be made.

Feedback

It is important that playtimes are led by and developed by the children, to ensure the playground is a stimulating environment. Through the use of Play Detectives, the OPAL working group will gather feedback from the pupils of St Anne's. Play Detectives will meet once a term with Charlotte McKenna (part of the OPAL working group).

The Playteam, who supervise the playtime every lunchtime, will be constantly gathering feedback during their supervision time and to be recorded in an orange notebook. After lunchtime, the Playteam will feedback to each other and the Play coordinators. For immediate feedback, there will be an OPAL feedback form for all members of staff to complete, located in the staff room.

This policy was accepted by:

Subject Leader_____

Headteacher_____

Date of review: September 2026

Date for review: September 2027

Appendix:

Appendix 1 – Playwork principles
Appendix 2 – Risk assessments
Appendix 3 – Best Play document
Appendix 4 – The Health and Safety Guidance – Guidance on managing risk in Play and Leisure
Appendix 5 – Managing Risk in Play Provision