

Mo Mowlam Academy Play Policy

OPAL's RAPID approach to risk is an essential part of the OPAL Primary Programme
No school should offer the kinds of play that OPAL promotes without a robust and continually updated RAPID plan.

"Health and safety law in Great Britain has an enduring principle – that those who create risks are best placed to control them, and that they should do so in a reasonable and sensible way."

Dame Judith Hackitt HSE Chair 2015

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| R: | Risk-benefit assessment |
| A: | Assemblies focused on playtime |
| P: | Policy for play ratified by your governors or equivalent |
| I: | Inspections carried out regularly |
| D: | Dynamic risk management embraced by all staff |

The purpose of **risk-benefit assessments** is to enable you to provide challenge, progression, excitement, creativity and fun in your play environment. They cannot and will not provide complete 'safety' and this is not their purpose. They can help you to think about, predict, and manage the most serious and most likely potential causes of harm.

OPAL's approach follows best practice advice from the Health and Safety Executive, The Play Safety Forum, Zurich Municipal Insurance, and local authority health and safety advisory teams.

OPAL has developed the five-part **R.A.P.I.D. response** (see box above) to managing risk in your school approach to play, which should be followed alongside the guidance on managing loose parts and other more risky play outlined in pack 6 and 6A of your OPAL ePack.

Definitions

- **A play policy** sets out the values and principles which a group of people agree that they hold in common and that will inform the decisions that they make.
- **A play strategy** sets out priorities and objectives for action by which these principles will be put into practice.
- **A play implementation or action plan** sets out the specific actions and improvements to be undertaken and will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

What is Play?

Play is any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children an opportunity to be creative and make decisions.

Here at Mo Mowlam Academy we recognise that play may need to make a noise, get dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe the role of the adults is to support the play process. Children will also have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

Through our belief in children's rights, we aim to:

- Provide a secure, caring environment where all children are happy, intrinsically motivated, relaxed and able to reach their potential.
- Children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and have fun.
- Adults respect this right by providing opportunities for creative, exciting play, use conflict resolution to support children and supporting children who have additional needs at playtime.
- Children have the right to assess risk and tidy equipment away.
- Adults respect this right by assessing risk daily, encouraging children to assess risk also and helping children to tidy up.
- Adults respect this right by developing new opportunities for play, listening to children's ideas about play and supporting children who have additional needs to access play.

Commitment and Rationale

This policy sets out Mo Mowlam Academy's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children.

As a school we aim to improve the way we think and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

The school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play.

Our Aims

Our school aims are:

- To provide children with a play setting which is both stimulating and challenging.
- To allow children to take risks
- To provide children with a range of environments which will support their learning across the curriculum and about the world around them.

We aim to give the children the opportunity to:

- Explore the world around them through playful experimentation
- Develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving.
- Encourage resilience and self-confidence.
- Think creatively
- Develop independence and take responsibility for themselves and others.
- Develop physical health
- Develop emotional health, allowing the balance between acting freely and allowing everyone to have their rights.
- To develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk.

Benefit and Risk

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities.

Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge risk independently and learn new skills. All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences.

Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.

Play England Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change or development in play provision/equipment or child circumstances takes place.

To manage the levels of risk we will follow the guidelines below:

- Recognise the need for professional judgment in setting the balance between safety and goals.
- All staff should self-assess and manage risk, e.g. red tape should be used to section off play areas or equipment which are deemed to be 'high risk.'
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children. Mo Mowlam Academy Play Policy
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.
- We may not be able to see every child all of the time.
- All staff are assigned a zone on a termly rotation and it is expected that staff will move around throughout the playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing.

First Aid

All lunchtime staff have close access to a First Aid room with basic First Aid equipment. Designated staff are First Aid trained and we have at least one First Aider on site throughout the school day.

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

If an incident involving a child requires a phone call home this must be discussed with the SLT. All First Aid incidents should be recorded in the accident books kept within the first aid bum bags.

Clothing

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

During the colder and wet weather wellies or walking boots 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.

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 SLT and the OPAL working party and reviewed based on the needs of the adults and children's in the school.

The policy will be reviewed in line with the SEND code of practice to ensure all children are able to access the play provision (this may mean with support for some children).

Environment

- Our caretaker performs regular health and safety checks of the area.
- The OPAL working party and other staff will check for risks/ dangers when they are outside with the children.
- Children will be made aware of possible risks and help to manage those by alerting staff to them.
- The playground will be divided into zones to help staff supervise children and to keep a sensible risk/ benefit management system in place i.e. not all 'riskier' items together.

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