



# OPAL Play Policy



*DARE TO KNOW, DARE TO BE WISE*

## 1. Commitment

Oasis Academy Clarksfield is committed to using this policy and the Play Charter in all decision which have an impact on children's play.

Oasis Academy Clarksfield is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

### **OPAL Leadership Team:**

**Principal:** Miss Morrish

**OPAL Curriculum Lead:** Mr Prendergast (Deputy Principal)

**Play Co-ordinator:** Miss Seed (Experienced Nursery Teacher)

**Play Team member:** Mrs Iqbal (Senior Midday Supervisor)

**Play Team member:** Mrs Sohail (Midday Supervisor)

**Play Governor:** Mr Hussain (HUB Council member)

## 2. Rationale

Children spend 1.4 years of their primary school attendance in playtime. This time is valuable and needs coherent planning. Changes in culture and society have led to 'play poverty' in childhood which has numerous negative impacts.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, Article 31, recognises that schools have a legal and moral obligation to ensure that all children in their care have good access to high quality play opportunities, and that educational environments should play a major role in fulfilling these obligations.

Play England drew up The Charter for Children's Play which sets out a vision for play and states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school
- Adults should let children play
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision
- Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Therefore, at Oasis Academy Clarksfield, we believe that all children need opportunities for 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.

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.*"

This rationale aligns with Oasis Academy Clarkfield's ethos and our 9 habits. The Oasis 9 Habits are a set of principles that promote personal growth and development. They are an invitation to a way of life characterised by being compassionate, patient, humble, joyful, honest, hopeful, considerate, forgiving and self-controlled. The 9 Habits are actively promoted and practiced at Oasis Academy Clarkfield and have been the key to transformation in our schools and community work.



### 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.

Based on research about effective play and its benefits, Oasis Academy Clarkfield believes that play has many benefits, including:

- Being critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Enabling children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.
- 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.
- 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.
- Encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

## 4. Aims

In relation to play, Oasis Academy Clarksfield aims to:

- 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.

These aims align with the Vision and Values which are promoted throughout the entire academy. At Oasis Academy Clarksfield, we take pride in our ambition to:

- Create a happy, stimulating, caring learning environment where risk taking and challenge is encouraged
- Awaken and nurture a love of learning that will last a lifetime and provide everyone with the skills to pursue that learning independently and collaboratively
- Enable everyone to reach the highest standard of which they are capable, academically and in other fields such as sport, arts and culture
- Encourage all learners to develop their own interests, passions, enthusiasms, creativity and individuality
- Help learners to understand and care about the world in which they live, and to believe in their ability and responsibility to change that world to make it better
- Empower learners to develop a strong sense of right and wrong, good and bad, equality and justice. Give them the inner strength to act according to these values
- Provide learners with the skills and understanding to live a healthy, successful life, physically, emotionally and spiritually
- Foster respect, tolerance and love for others, regardless of race, gender, religion or difference, within a framework of equality of opportunity and fairness
- Help learners to appreciate human achievements and aspirations and to believe in their own potential to attain great things
- Promote a feeling of pride and confidence in learners' identities; as individuals, as members
- of our academy, as part of the local community and as citizens of the world

## 5. Rights

Oasis Academy Clarksfield 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 to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

## 6. Health, Safety, Benefit and risk

Research shows that the uncertainty and challenge of much of children's play is a very large part of its appeal to them, and that it also enhances the development of their brains and bodies, making them more adaptable and resilient as they grow. 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.

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.

*'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)

**Oasis Academy Clarksfield 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)*. We also use **The Play England and DCSF guide *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*** (Ball D, Gill T and Spiegall B, 2008), which is endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive and RoSPA, provides useful advice on implementation of this statement.

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 Oasis Academy Warndon will practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

## 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. Oasis Academy Clarksfield 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, Oasis Academy Clarksfield 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.

## **8. The adult's role in play**

Oasis Academy Clarksfield 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.

## **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 special needs, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

As recipients of the 'Investors in Diversity Award', our OPAL approach builds on the work that is fully embedded into academy life.

## **10. Environment**

Oasis Academy Clarksfield believes 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](http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf)