



Burgh by Sands School

Play Policy

2025-2026

<i>At the time of publishing the following roles were held:</i>	
OPAL Working Group	Sarah Robson, Tracy Robson, Sheena Hetherington, Jess Nelson
Headteacher	Sarah Robson
Curricular Lead for Play	Sarah Robson
Play Coordinator	Tracy Robson
Governor Play Coordinator	Sheena Hetherington
Parent Play Champion	Jess Nelson

<i>Approved by:</i>	
Name:	Sarah Robson
Position:	Headteacher
Signed:	<i>S Robson</i>
Date:	July 2025
Review Date:	July 2026



1. Commitment

Burgh by Sands 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

At Burgh by Sands School, we believe that high-quality play is a vital part of our commitment to developing well-rounded, confident and resilient learners. Our ambitious, child-centred curriculum is designed to meet the diverse needs of every pupil, promoting not only academic success but also personal development and holistic growth. Through play, children have the opportunity to develop socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively in a way that complements and enhances their learning in the classroom.

We recognise that play contributes significantly to a child's skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them. It provides rich opportunities for problem-solving, cooperation, creativity, leadership and risk management—skills that are essential for lifelong learning and active citizenship. Our play provision is therefore a key strand of our wider educational vision, supporting children in becoming capable, confident individuals who are prepared for the challenges of the future.

As a school, we believe that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. 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."*

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. At Burgh by Sands School, 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.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school 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.

5. Rights

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

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)

Burgh by Sands 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. Risk assessments will be discussed and shared during regular assemblies across the whole school and staff meetings with our OPAL team. Please refer to the HSE Managing Risk Statement – this can be accessed via our school website.

7. Clothing

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

During the cooler and wet weather, wellies or walking boots should be worn by staff and children, especially while using the school field. 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 school uniform is designed not only to give children a sense of belonging but also to protect their 'good' clothes that they wear at home.

8. 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. Our school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in Nursery and Reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, our 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. However, where risk is greater, direct supervision will take place. Some identified SEND children, will have direct supervision by adults while playing outside.

Our OPAL Play Team have carefully mapped out the play provision within our school grounds. There will be 3 main areas of play, each supervised by one adult; the top yard, the school field and the side yard. Each area will have a focus and play that is deemed as 'high risk' has been evenly distributed between these areas to minimise risk and ensure maximum safety for our children.

On any occasion, where a member of staff is absent and cannot be replaced, any 'high risk' zones will be closed down. Low or medium risk zones will be shared with remaining staff. All playworkers are provided with a first aid bum bag which is to be worn when supervising the children on the playground. All minor first aid will be dealt with outdoors. Play Workers hold full responsibility of the replacement of first aid equipment.



9. The adult's role in play

Our 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.

Playwork Principles:

- 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 and communities.
- 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.
- 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.
- For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
- The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- 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.
- Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people.
- 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

10. 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. Our school is inclusive; we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and we are committed to ensuring all members of our community are of equal worth.

11. 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 copy of this can be downloaded from the OPAL pages of our school website. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

A rich play setting supports safeguarding, children's mental health and well-being, helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating their own rights. It increases children's social and emotional capabilities and helps develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, in all weathers, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment; something at Burgh by Sands School we see as very important for our pupils.



Appendix 1

OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Burgh by Sands School.

It consists of:

Head Teacher and OPAL Curriculum Lead: Mrs saerah Robson

Play Coordinator: Mrs Tracy Robson

Opal Play Governor: Miss Sheena Hetherington

Opal Parent Play Champion: Mrs Jess Nelson