



# Play Policy

Agreed by governing body – 4/10/21

Compassion  
Forgiveness  
Friendship  
Trust

## Ackworth Howard Church of England (VC) Junior and Infant School

### Educating for 'life in all its fullness.'

Providing opportunities for growth in mind, body and spirit through inspirational and innovative education underpinned by a deeply Christian ethos. Those who learn and work here will develop confidence, embrace creativity and enhance their knowledge and skills so that they can experience 'life in all its fullness.' (John 10:10)

#### 1. 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.'

Ackworth Howard School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we aspire to provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. At the Howard School we are committed to using our school vision and 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. These skills link closely to our Christian vision of providing opportunities to develop the mind, body and spirit.

#### 2. 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 EAL learners and those children with deprived speech and language. 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 in September 2021 for their views on play time, they highlighted

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the need for improvement. Many were positive about provision, but some children felt we could do more to open up all areas of the school grounds particularly the field and forest school areas throughout the whole year and that there are not enough things to use if they want to make up a game or build something.

### 3. 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 which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- provide a range of environments which 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.

### 4. Definition of Play

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as:

***'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. 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).

**At the Howard School 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

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and as long as it is safe regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background

- play is something you choose to do and that it is fun!
- enables children to process their experiences of the world

### 5. Risk and Benefit

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.

***‘Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children’s development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world’. (DCFS)***

At the Howard School 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)**

We 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)) (**Appendix 1**) 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, Pupil Leader 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

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([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at the Howard School. In addition to this the Howard Play Team (**Appendix 3**) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. Teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors will take on the role of Play Makers. 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 Makers 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 ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with pupil leaders.

### 8. Environment

At the Howard School 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 throughout the age ranges 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.

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.

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

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**Appendix 1**

**CHILDREN’S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH**

[Microsoft Word - Document2 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

**Appendix 2**

**Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet**

**Risk Assessment Date..... Assessed by.....**

Date	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 the Howard School. It consists of:

- The Head Teacher – Mr. M. Walker
- Play Co-ordinator – Mr. D. Barstow
- Play Leader – Mrs. E. Thorpe
- Premises – Miss. H. Clough
- Pupil Voice Co-ordinator – Mr. M. Walker
- Parent Representative / Associate Governor – Mrs. R. Fisher

**Ackworth Howard Play Team**

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground at playtimes staff all should act as Play Makers.

However more specifically at lunch times the following structure exists:

**Play Co-ordinator**  
(Leads and Manages Strategy)

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### **Play Leader**

(Leads and manages playtimes)

### **Assistant Play Leader**

(Supports play leader and steps up in their absence)

### **Play Makers**

(Support children's' play as describe in paragraph 5)

### **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 and have a well looked after environment. We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.

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.