St. Joseph's Play Policy-draft

Commitment
Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. St. Joseph's School is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

Rationale
At St. Joseph's, 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.

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.*"

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.
- Play contributes towards the recommendation from the Chief Medical Officer that all children are active for at least 60 minutes a day (30 minutes of which should be in school).

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.

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.

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)

The 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.

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

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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.

Supervision Guidelines

Inside
X2 adults until 12:30pm (one of whom will be a member of SLT)
At 12:30pm, one of the adults from outside swaps with an adult inside and the other two adults come outside

Outside
1 adult on main playground
1 adult at bottom of field supervising large loose play and rope swings
1:1 MDA's supervising their individual children
From 12:30pm - additional adults outside, supervising football area

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.

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 wellbeing 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.

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Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

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 wellbeing of children.

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.

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.

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. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

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Curricular lead for play job description

The curricular lead for play is responsible for driving all play-related initiatives forward within our school. In one form entry schools, they will be in SLT or an experienced teacher. This post requires one hour a week during the first year of the OPAL Primary Programme and one hour a fortnight after that.

The curricular lead for play is the person who has responsibility for the school's play action plan and the inclusion of play in the school improvement plan.

The curricular lead for play will report to:

- SLT
- Governors
- PTA

What the role entails:

- Evaluating and monitoring play within the school.
- Being responsible for, supporting and managing the play team and their professional development.
- Managing the play coordinator and their professional development.
- Reviewing and updating the school's play action plan at least three times a year.
- Working closely with the play coordinator to deliver the school's play action plan.
- Carrying out observations of playtimes once every half term.
- Liaising with service support and/or the business manager regarding the maintenance and improvements of the outside area.
- Liaising with the play coordinator and the play team regarding the ordering and replenishing of loose parts and resources for play.
- Work with the play coordinator to ensure regular play team meetings are held to train in playwork practice and improve play at the school.
- Incorporating pupil voice for play into the school's communications plan
- Liaising with the play coordinator to ensure regular play assemblies are conducted using OPAL's CINI format.

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St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School – Play Coordinator Job Description

Job title:	Play Coordinator	**Reporting to:** Headteacher
Contract / hours:	11 hours per week	

Purpose
The play coordinator will support and facilitate meaningful and productive child-initiated play during the school day **in accordance with the play policy.**
Line management:
The post holder is responsible to the headteacher and curricular lead for play for fulfilling the duties set out in this job description.
Statutory requirements:
The post holder will have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the safety and welfare of children in accordance with the schools' safeguarding incorporating child protection policy; anti-bullying policy; behaviour policy; and in line with the school's values and mission statement.
Responsibilities
Ensure wellbeing of pupils

- Ensure that all play team staff are completing their main duties to a high standard and that all staff are facilitating play development.
- Ensure that you and your play team have read the play policy and are fully supportive of it.
- Ensure the safety, welfare and general conduct through appropriate application of the school's policies and procedures.
- Establish safe and proper behaviour, by appropriate intervention or referral to senior staff, as appropriate.
- Identify and report any unauthorised visitors on school premises.
- Complete any relevant documentation required by the school in relation to incidents occurring during the lunchtime break period.
- Participate in OPAL/team around the child (TAC)/medical meetings, as required.
- Ensure you and your play team are aware of children's special medical conditions and the relevant precautions and treatments necessary.
- Take any immediate action to attend to sickness or accidents by carrying out minor first aid and summoning relevant assistance.
- Report any major accidents or bumped heads to the class teacher, headteacher and pastoral leader and record in the accident book.

Ensure a diverse range of playable resources are provided for, and are accessible to, all children

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- Ensure there are sufficient resources to promote each of the 'play types' as listed in the play policy.
- Check the quality and condition of resources and repair or remove any resources that are not of a suitable condition.
- Ensure resources are stored appropriately.

Discuss resources with the children (school council) and use their views to create development plans

Organise and carry out the replenishment of resources through:

- Securing funding from internal or external sources.
- Purchasing resources as required.
- Coordinating appeals within school and local communities for resources.
- Collecting resources from sources such as the Scrapstore.

Provide support and training for other school staff or pupils as required

- Build play team members expertise and practice.
- Organise and support pupil playground leaders with their role.
- Facilitate peer led play opportunities.
- Provide suggestions for playmaker activities and games.

Ensure enriching play events or opportunities are created

- Discuss and plan with pupils/staff and school council.
- Implement planned activities which promote play development.
- Review activities to promote self-evaluation and play development.

Create opportunities for play to support the social and behavioural development of pupils

- Ensure a rich and varied set of play opportunities is available to all children.
- Provide engaging playwork interventions for pupils who find positive behaviour choices challenging.

Resources and support:

This post will carry an entitlement to appropriate support from the headteacher and P.E. leader.

Review:

The job description sets out the principle responsibilities for the post but does not describe each of the tasks that it may be necessary to carry out.

The job description may be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the post-holder in order to address the changing circumstances of priorities within the school.

Knowledge, experience and training:

Essential:

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- Prior experience of working with children in an educational or playwork setting is essential.
- Relevant qualifications or experience of working with children.

Desirable:

- Playwork level 2 or above.

Signed: Date:	Postholder	Signed: Dated:	Headteacher

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St. Joseph's Opal Play Parent Champion (Voluntary Role)

The parent play champion will:

- Observe and assess playtime within the school at least once a year;
- Sit on the OPAL working party and attend development meetings (held at least termly)
- Promote the OPAL programme to parents and carers.
- Encourage family engagement in outdoor play initiatives.
- Support fundraising and resource collection campaigns for play equipment and loose parts.
- Help recruit volunteers for OPAL events and projects.
- Gather feedback from parents and share suggestions with the school's OPAL team.
- Act as a positive ambassador for play within the school community.
- Assist with organising play-themed family events and workshops
- Support the ongoing resourcing of loose parts from parents and the wider community.

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OPAL Play Governor Role Description (voluntary role)

Purpose of the Role

The OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) Play Governor is the designated member of the governing body who supports, champions and monitors the school's OPAL programme. The role helps ensure that high-quality play opportunities are recognised as an essential part of children's development, wellbeing and learning.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Act as the governing body's advocate for OPAL and high-quality play.
- Promote the importance of play as part of the school's vision and values.
- Support the school's long-term commitment to the OPAL programme.
- Ensure play is considered within relevant school policies and strategic plans.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Meet regularly with the OPAL Lead and senior leaders.
- Monitor progress against the school's OPAL action plan.
- Review evidence of the impact of OPAL on pupils' wellbeing, behaviour, engagement and physical activity.
- Report back to the governing body on progress, successes and areas for development.

School Visits

- Undertake occasional monitoring visits to observe playtimes and outdoor provision.
- Speak with pupils, staff and play team members about their experiences.
- Celebrate effective practice and identify opportunities for further development.

Championing Pupil Voice

- Ensure pupils' opinions and ideas are considered in the development of play provision.
- Encourage opportunities for children to participate in decision-making about outdoor play environments.

Supporting Resources and Sustainability

- Understand the resource needs of the OPAL programme.
- Support fundraising opportunities and community engagement where appropriate.
- Encourage links with parents, local businesses and community organisations that may contribute materials or support.

Health, Safety and Risk Management

- Understand OPAL's approach to risk-benefit assessment.
- Ensure appropriate governance oversight of health and safety arrangements.
- Support a balanced approach that enables children to experience challenge while remaining safe.

Personal Qualities

The OPAL Play Governor should:

- Be enthusiastic about children's play and wellbeing.
- Have an interest in outdoor learning and development.
- Be able to provide both support and challenge.
- Communicate effectively with staff, pupils and governors.
- Promote inclusive provision for all children.

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Time Commitment

- Attend relevant governor meetings.
- Meet with the OPAL Lead at least once each term.
- Participate in at least one monitoring visit each academic year.
- Review OPAL progress reports and documentation as required.

Success Indicators

The OPAL Play Governor will be successful when:

- OPAL remains a strategic priority within the school.
- Pupils report positive play experiences.
- Playtimes are inclusive, active and engaging.
- Governors receive regular updates on OPAL progress.
- The school demonstrates sustained commitment to high-quality outdoor play and learning.

Reporting to: Chair of Governors and Governing Board
Working closely with: Headteacher, OPAL Lead, Senior Leadership Team, Pupils and Parent Play Champions.

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St. Joseph's School Opal Play Charter

We have the responsibility to make sure everyone enjoys playtime by making sure:

- We have fun.
- We choose what we play.
- We share equipment and take care of it.
- We are kind to everyone and let others join in our play
- We keep everybody safe, we think about and manage risks so that everyone stays safe.
- We are encouraged to sort out problems ourselves, but can ask adults for help if we need to.
- We apologise if we have made a poor decision.
- When it is wet, we wear our wellies and coats to play.
- We all help to tidy up.

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