

Belmont School Play Policy (draft)



Authorised:
(Headteacher)

Authorised:
(Chair of Governors)

Date approved:

Date for review:

Children and young people – disabled and non-disabled – whatever their age, culture, ethnicity, social and economic background, need and want to play, indoors and out, in whatever way they can

Play England 2009

1 Commitment

At Belmont School we believe that enriched, high quality play greatly affects child wellbeing and is deeply connected to child's learning and achievement in the classroom. As a school, we strive to provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. At Belmont School it is recognised that opportunities to access play extend beyond the traditional break and dinner times, and are interwoven through the school day for many of our children. Outdoor play times offer opportunities to observe different skills and learning and development goals that children may not have opportunities to demonstrate inside the classroom setting. The school undertakes to refer to the play policy in all decisions which affect children's play

2. Rationale

On average, the children spend 20% of their school week accessing self-directed time or play opportunities. At Belmont School this figure can be higher dependant on the individual needs of the pupils. It is therefore imperative that a rigorous policy is place to guide decisions that influence play provision and to ensure child-led times provide access to rich and varied opportunities to explore and learn through play.

Belmont School is an OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) School. This policy follows guidance and principles from both OPAL and Play England. It aims to influence the way we think about children and their opportunities for play. It recognises that play is integral to children's development, health and enjoyment of their lives. 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.

Belmont School recognises that children's play must be facilitated, meaning consideration must be given to the way opportunities are provided for the children to explore, manipulate, create, reflect, rest affect their environment, take risks and challenge themselves. Wherever possible, play must not be restricted by weather conditions, age or ability.

3. Definition

At Belmont School staff and children agrees that play is:

- fun, freedom, to be anything or anywhere
- should be freely chosen and directed by the child
- is very important in any child's development. Children learn by exploring and finding out for themselves and should be able to express themselves freely.
- may be messy, noisy and dirty.

4. Rights

At Belmont School we strongly believe, 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. (Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition, our school recognises that children have the rights to have opinions and be listened too. Therefore, every effort will be made to involve children when planning the types of equipment, facilities and opportunities that will be made available to them. The communication will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

5. Equality and access

Access to play should not be restricted by adverse weather conditions and every effort must be made to work with parents to provide suitable clothing for all types of play that children seek to experience at Belmont School. All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision irrespective of their gender, ability, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or age. Children will be free to define for themselves what is 'age appropriate' in their play. Children should never spend their playtimes working (unless they choose to), or being punished unless a serious behavioural breach has occurred.

6. 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. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge are 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.

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)

Comprehensive risk assessments will be reviewed and amended at least annually, and more regularly as appropriate. Responsibility for ensuring children's safety extends to all staff taking appropriate action in the event of broken, dangerous or defective equipment being identified.

The document Children's Play and Leisure Promoting a Balanced Approach produced by the Health and Safety Executive (2012) (Appendix 1) will inform decision making and the OPAL document Benefit Risk Assessment (Appendix 2) will guide how to manage our duty of care to protect and support children in taking risks. In addition to written risk assessments the school will use dynamic risk management in order to respond to the fluid nature of risk and challenge in the play environment. The school will also manage risk by building children's skills in identifying and managing appropriate risk themselves.

7. The Adults' Role in Play

Adult's role will be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. Belmont School students agreed, that the most important role of adult during playtimes is to keep them safe. The school is working with OPAL to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Belmont School. In addition to this the Belmont Play Team (Appendix 3) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, and all other staff as well as the children to implement this policy. Play Team members will support staff using the "Playwork Principles" when necessary and all staff will be given appropriate training to supervise playtimes. Teachers and teaching assistants will take on the role of Play Makers. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children. The role of supervising staff is 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. Adults can actively facilitate children's play through offering support and encouragement, asking questions and guiding children toward new ideas and concepts, demonstrating new ways to play with

equipment, mediating between children and organising and leading playground games.

All staff will be expected to adopt a 'heads up' approach when patrolling their range alongside undertaking dynamic risk management. Adults should keep their range free of hazards and litter and communicate any maintenance issues promptly. Supervising adults need to understand their range, know who is playing in it, what they are playing with and how risky their play is. The walkie-talkie should be used to support communication when supervising the free-range play.

8. Children's Role in Play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy. (Appendix 4) 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 School Council.

School Council will appoint the Playtime Pioneer, who will support maintaining and monitoring the use of OPAL equipment.

7. Environment

Belmont School is committed to offering an inviting and enriching play environment. To be able to do that, the school 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.
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value.
- 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

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 Belmont School. It consists of:

The Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
OPAL Curriculum Lead
Play Team members
Care Taker
School Council Co-ordinator
Parent Representative
Associate Governor

Belmont School

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.

OPAL Curriculum Lead

(Leads and manages strategy)

Play Team Members

(Leads and manages playtimes)

Play Makers

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

(Appendix 4)

Children's Play Policy

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

Article 31 of the UN convention on the rights of the child

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.