



King's Cross Academy

Play Policy

Ratification and Monitoring

Ratified date:	June 2026
Review date:	June 2029
Website?	YES
Policy drive?	YES
Master Policy S/S	YES

Approval

Headteacher	Stephen Mitchell	23rd June 2026
Chair of Quality of Education Committee	Allan Atlee	23rd June 2026

Internal Monitoring

Steve Modini	Assistant Headteacher	June 2026
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1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. This policy particularly refers to outside play under the OPaL (Outdoor Play & Learning) scheme. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide, maintain, and continually reflect on quality play provision for all of our children.

There are key members of staff with specific responsibility for play in their job description, they are:

- Curricular lead for play
- Play Coordinator
- The play team - all teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors are members of the play team who support play during lunch time and break times

These individuals along with parent ambassadors and selected governors form the OPAL working party.

2. Rationale

Kings Cross Academy seeks for children to love learning together. We recognise that play is a large proportion of the children's day and that this time should be utilised to help empower and develop the children in our care to reach their full potential. We believe that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. Through doing this, they can begin to develop the skills to become lifelong learners

Our vision for excellence at KCA is made up of the following themes, which underpin all core decisions related to the school and the children in our care. The promotion of play and play experiences is key to supporting the development of these themes

- Teaching pupils how to learn
- Supporting children to discover their interests
- Building cross curricular links into a creative curriculum
- Creating a technology rich environment
- Fostering a culture where lifelong learning is embraced

We are undertaking the OPAL Primary Programme because “... *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.*” (The OPAL Programme rationale)

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. Some of the benefits of play include, but are not limited to:

- 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 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 maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play often involves a lot of different resources and spaces and children learn the value in taking care of belongings and spaces
- Play allows children to have agency and ownership over their own learning, allowing them to understand that their choices an impact on themselves and others
- Play involves considered risk taking and provides a safe environment for children learn this vital life skill
- 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 allows children the opportunity to engage with children who might be different to them and, through play, they can begin to understand the value in treating others with kindness and equality

4. Aims

In relation to play, our school aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide varied, challenging and stimulating environments.
- 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.
- 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.

- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

5. Rights to Play

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)

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'*.

We see risk-taking and challenge as key in empowering children to change the world. Through facilitating risk-taking and challenge within play, we are actively promoting the practice and embodiment of our values of excellence, openness and responsibility.

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.

HSE Managing Risk Statement

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. The school 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, 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 Site Map

8. 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.

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. All decisions carried out on play will be guided by the school's equality policy which can be found on the website.

10. 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 'Best Play' document to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain.

A quality play provision environment offers all children and young people the opportunity to freely interact with, or experience, the following:

- Other children and young people - with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out, and resolve conflict
- The natural world - weather, the seasons, bushes, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud
- Loose parts - natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished
- The natural elements - earth, air, fire and water

- Challenge and risk taking - both on a physical and emotional level
- Playing with identity - role play and dressing up
- Movement - running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling
- The senses - sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights
- Feelings - pain, joy, confidence, fear, anger, contentment, boredom, fascination, happiness, grief, rejection, acceptance, sadness, pride, frustration.

11. **Monitoring and Review**

This policy is scheduled to be reviewed every three years but, it is understood that, with the changing nature of play and the physical playground space, there may be need to review the school play policy earlier.