



School Policy Document
Play Policy

1. Background and Context

Pinner Park Primary School was formed following the amalgamation of Pinner Park Junior School with Pinner Park Infant and Nursery School in April 2019. Following the amalgamation, the school's staff and governors sought to review many aspects of the school's work, including our approach to play.

The school engaged with stakeholders, including parents, staff and pupils, in order to ascertain our needs and actions.

When speaking with parents and pupils voice, many were positive about the play experience in school, but we also identified areas for improvement.

Feedback from students (for example, 'there is not enough to do', 'we need more things to play with', 'the playground needs an extra things', 'we can only play football and basketball') highlighted the need to improve the overall play experience and our play resources at the school.

Embedded in children's play experiences at Pinner Park lies our school's expression of what is important to us:

Learning | Character | Community

We work together, as a school community, to empower and inspire each and every child to be an outstanding student who enjoys learning, to develop character, and to become a respectful citizen who makes a positive impact.

2. 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.'

Pinner Park Primary School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we 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 Pinner Park 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 those of Pinner Park's Ready Respectful Safe and Kind directive that is promoted in all of our learning environments

3. 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 behavioural incidents. In addition, 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 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.

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 Pinner Park the children and staff believe 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 develops the children's ability to make decisions- assessing the risk and weighing it up with its benefit
- 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 as long as it is safe- regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background
- play is something you choose to do and it is fun
- play 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 Pinner Park 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)

Pinner Park will use the [Health and Safety Executive’s guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure](#) 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 to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

6. Adults’ Role in Play

We, as a school community, 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 regular play assemblies- both whole school as well as in class- Smart Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice platforms.

Adults’ 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 (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Pinner Park. In addition to this the Pinner Park Play Team (Appendix 1) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, SMSAs and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. The Play Coordinator(s) and SMSAs 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. This includes 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 and the equipment and toys.
- to be aware of consequences 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 Smart Council.

8. Environment

At Pinner Park 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 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
- Ensure that outdoor play activities can proceed in most weather conditions by implementing appropriate precautions, expectations, resources and clothing

Appendix 1

Structure of adult roles in practice

OPAL Development Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Pinner Park. It consists of:

OPAL Lead	Lucy Jenkins
Play Coordinator	Chandni Shah
Assistant Play Coordinators	Tilly Ormand, Azizur Chowdhury
Site Supervisor	Kenny Gregori
Class Teachers	Cassandre Brazel, Niamh Seward
Teaching Assistants	Suky Lotay, Sarah Saunders, Janet Hannigan
SMSAs	Margaret Street, Aneela Wasif, Sarah Saunders
Parent / Governor	TBC

Pinner Park 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:

OPAL Lead	Leads and manages strategy
Play Coordinator	Leads and manages playtimes
Assistant Play Coordinator	Supports play coordinator in their key stage
Play Makers	Support children's play as describe in section 5