

Kensington Primary School Play Policy

Updated: June 2025

Next Review: June 2028

1. Commitment, Culture, and Rationale

At Kensington, we are committed to ensuring that every child experiences high-quality, inclusive, and meaningful play every day. Play is at the heart of how we build relationships and support children to be healthy, happy, and love learning.

We recognise that children's right to play is fundamental to their development and wellbeing. As part of the OPAL Primary Programme, we support the vision that:

“Every child in every school has an amazing hour of high-quality play every day – with no exceptions.”

We are committed to embedding this play policy into all decisions affecting children's play and to providing the leadership required to deliver and sustain excellent play provision across the school.

2. Definition and Value of Play

Play is defined as behaviour that is:

- Freely chosen
- Personally directed
- Intrinsically motivated

Play has no predetermined outcome, is individually controlled, and is driven by the interests of the child. It is essential to children's:

- Physical health
- Emotional resilience
- Social interaction
- Intellectual growth
- Creativity and imagination

We believe that play fosters the confidence, independence, and joy that underpins effective learning in the classroom and life beyond school.

3. Aims

Our play provision aims to:

- Create varied, inclusive, and stimulating environments
- Offer opportunities for imaginative, physical, creative, social, and exploratory play
- Enable children to take appropriate risks and challenges
- Promote positive relationships and teamwork
- Develop emotional and physical resilience
- Foster respect for others and for the environment
- Support children's right to relax and play, as enshrined in Article 31 of the UNCRC

4. Benefit and Risk

We believe that a healthy approach to risk is essential for children's growth and development. Risk-taking is a normal and beneficial part of play. We follow the guidance from:

"Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide" (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

"Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach" (HSE, 2012)

We practise dynamic risk management, supporting children to assess and manage risk for themselves in environments that are "as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible."

5. Supervision

We recognise OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote, and Ranging. Our approach is rooted in:

- Encouraging independence and trust
- Ensuring adults are visible and approachable
- Supporting safe and enriching experiences without over-control

Supervision is developmentally appropriate and reflects the play needs and maturity of our pupils.

6. The Adult's Role in Play

Adults at Kensington facilitate—not direct—play. Their role includes:

- Creating environments rich in possibility
- Observing, listening, and responding when invited
- Enabling children to extend their own play experiences
- Modelling inclusive and respectful behaviour
- Maintaining a calm, consistent presence that fosters trust and safety

All staff involved in play support will be trained in line with the Playwork Principles (see Appendix).

7. Environment

We will continue to develop our outdoor environment to:

- Include natural elements, loose parts, and flexible resources
- Encourage creativity, exploration, and physical challenge
- Be inclusive and accessible for all pupils

Children will be involved in shaping, using, and caring for the space. Through this, they develop a sense of responsibility, ownership, and stewardship of the environment.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Play at Kensington is for everyone. We are committed to inclusive practice that removes barriers and ensures all children can participate fully—regardless of age, background, gender, ability, or identity.

Our provision reflects the diverse needs of our school community and promotes belonging, respect, and understanding.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Play provision is reviewed annually using:

- The OPAL audit tool
- Pupil voice and surveys
- Observations and staff feedback

Updates are reported to governors and embedded into the school development cycle.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if required, by the OPAL Lead and Senior Leadership Team.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Playwork Principles

Appendix B: HSE Managing Risk Statement (2012)

Appendix C: Types of Play

Appendix D: OPAL Audit and Monitoring Tools