

Abbots Hall Primary Academy



Play Policy

Agreed by Governors: October 2021

Alhema

Next Review Date: September 2024

Version control

Date	Version no.	Key changes from previous version
10/2021	V2	New policy

This Policy was released in:	September 2021
School Staff were consulted on this document and it was accepted by the FGB on:	October 2021
It was ratified by the Governing Body on:	<u>21/10/2021</u>

Background

Children spend approximately 20% of their life in primary school at play – that is 1 day every week. The consistently changing social environment, busier lifestyles, rise in electronic devices and increased safety awareness have led to 'play poverty' and lack of risk awareness for today's children. Many children of primary school age will not have the same opportunities to play outside of the home as their parents and grandparents did.

This makes their play opportunities in school even more vital. Abbots Hall aims to provide all of our children with many of the play opportunities that the 21st century does not.

The Charter for Children's Play (Play England) sets out a vision for play and states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school
- Adults should let children play
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision
- Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Abbots Hall Primary Academy fully recognises its duties and responsibilities to support children's playtimes while they are at our school.

Rationale

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. 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.

One of the current concerns voiced is that children's opportunities for imaginative play and its educational benefits are being limited because of the demands of the school curriculum threatening to make school playtimes shorter. As a result of implementing this policy, and in line with our school vision, we believe that children will:

- be happier
- increase self-awareness and self-esteem
- improve language and communication skills
- improve concentration
- improve their imagination, independence and creativity
- improve social skills
- be resilient, confident
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought
- be better at problem solving
- develop life skills
- improve their physical development, co-ordination and fitness.

Commitment

Abbots Hall Primary Academy recognises the importance of the need for high quality sustainable play for children, regardless of their needs and abilities, and that inclusive play is achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a real choice of accessible play opportunities. We firmly believe that play is essential for physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development.

Abbots Hall Primary Academy is committed to using this Play Policy as a key document in all decisions it makes which have an impact on children's play. At Abbots Hall, we want to help children to be *academically, socially and emotionally prepared for their own unique journey*, which reflects our school's vision and values. We believe play has a vital role in children's emotional and physical wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks. We want to ensure children make appropriate progress towards achieving our school vision through opportunities to learn and develop each of our 6 core values.

Article 31 of the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' states that children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. Abbots Hall acknowledges that every child has the right to choose the kind of play that is suitable for them whatever their age, gender or background.

Health, Safety, Benefit and Risk

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time playing. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. Therefore, play provision should aim to successfully manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from serious harm.

Research shows that the uncertainty and challenge of much of children's play is a very large part of its appeal to them, and that it also enhances the development of their brains and bodies, making them more adaptable and resilient as they grow. 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. Children should be encouraged and supported to encounter and manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk.

Managing Risk in Play Provision

'Play is great for children's well-being 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 (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 principle 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*.

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.

The Adults' Role in Play

We believe that the role of a Play Worker (any adult supervising children during play) is to 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. Playworkers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way. At Abbots Hall we will use the nationally recognised Playwork Principles as key guidance in the development of play staffing.

Environment

At Abbots Hall, we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity;
- encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things; and
- give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors.
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value.

Abbots Hall Primary Academy has entered into an agreement with OPAL Outdoor Play and Learning to support the development of the quality of our playtime provision.

Health and Safety

All activities, play areas and equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily and/or periodic basis. These checks will be kept on file.

Risk-benefit assessments for areas, equipment and activities will be held on file for inspection.

All new activities which involve potential significant risk will be subject to individual or generic assessment as part of the planning process.

All previous assessments will be reviewed as and when appropriate.

The 'Play Workers' will be responsible for the site, equipment and resources in general, which are intended to be open access.

It is the responsibility of all staff to work within agreed policy and procedures and to adhere to all control measures imposed as a result of assessments.

It is the responsibility of the Play Workers on duty to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to the Senior Staff member as soon as possible.

Monitoring

Abbots Hall will continue to use the OPAL audit tool and pupil surveys to monitor the implementation of our play policy, strategy and action plan. An annual report will be presented to governors.