



KIRK FENTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Play Policy

Approved: September 2025

Review date: September 2026

Rooted in Christian belief, our vision is for everyone in our school community to be valued and respected for who they are.

Through cultivating a love of learning, every individual will have the opportunity to shine and flourish - together.

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16



Commitment

The school is committed to prioritising play in all decisions affecting children, providing leadership to ensure quality play provision for every child.

Rationale

Children spend around 20% of school time playing (1.4 years of primary education). As this is a significant amount of time, this needs careful consideration and planning as this period has the potential to provide enormous benefits for children. As a school, we believe that better play means: happier children, more focused learning, more developed social skills, a development of imagination, an improvement in behavior and an all-round happy school. We believe that better play is essential for physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development and will ensure that our provision enables children to have endless opportunities to explore play.

Aims

Through play, we aim to:

- Provide freedom to explore their environment.
- Encourage safe risk-taking using a common-sense approach.
- Build resilience and self-regulation.
- Promote independence, teamwork, communication and negotiation skills.
- Support children in balancing their right to act freely with their responsibilities to others.
- Encourage independent choices and responsibility for outcomes.
- Foster creativity and imagination.
- Promote respect for self, others and the environment.
- Support holistic development: physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual.

Definition of Play

Play is child-directed, freely chosen and intrinsically motivated. It helps children build confidence, problem-solving skills, creativity, emotional regulation and a love of learning.

For children, play should be:

- **Self-directed** – children choose what and where they play, and set their own goals.
- **Intrinsically motivated** – children play to gain experiences, whether enjoyable or challenging; all experiences have value.
- **Freely chosen** – children decide what to play, who to play with and for how long.

As a school, we recognise that children need opportunities to get dirty, make noise, make a mess, explore, express themselves and sometimes be out of direct adult gaze.

Children's Rights

We uphold the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31) and commit to ensuring access to quality play environments, sufficient time for rest and play, creative opportunities, and active, participatory learning.

Risk and Play

"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 up in cotton wool."

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (2012)

At Kirk Fenton CE Primary School, we believe that risk-taking is essential for children's growth. It helps them build resilience, adaptability and the ability to seek out new experiences. Play should offer opportunities to challenge themselves, judge risks and understand their limits within a safe environment.

Alongside formal risk-benefit assessments, we practise **dynamic risk management**, encouraging children to identify and manage risks themselves.

To manage risk we will:

- Train staff to supervise and enhance play.

- Make risks visible and understandable to staff and children.
- Support staff to balance safety with challenge through professional judgement.
- Carry out comprehensive risk assessments annually, or when circumstances change.

We adopt a **risk-benefit approach**: the advantages of managed risk usually outweigh the possible harms. Without risk, children would never learn to walk, climb or ride a bike.

Supervision

Legally, children must be supervised at primary school playtime. While no set ratios exist for Years 1–6, in the Early Years the required ratio is 1:30.

At Kirk Fenton CE Primary School, we believe constant direct supervision is neither possible nor beneficial. Instead, we ensure that the number of adults is appropriate for the number of children and that supervision supports, rather than restricts, self-directed play.

Supervision will take three forms:

- **Direct** – an adult is in close proximity.
- **Remote** – adults are visible and easily reachable.
- **Ranging** – adults patrol the area, observing play and identifying emerging risks.

Our aim is to maintain safe, supportive supervision while allowing children the freedom to explore and play independently.

Adult Role

At Kirk Fenton CE Primary School, staff are trained in and guided by the Playwork Principles. Their role is to support, not direct, play—intervening only when appropriate and always aiming to nurture self-directed play.

The core function of a playworker is to create an environment that stimulates and enriches play. Skilled playworkers enhance children's experiences through:

- thoughtful design of the physical environment,

- providing access to new materials and tools, and
- fostering a positive, supportive culture.

Playworkers may join in play when invited, but their primary role is to enable children to explore, learn and create through their own choices.

Clothing

We strongly advise that all children come prepared for all-weather play.

- Cold/wet months – children should wear wellies and waterproof coats, especially when accessing areas beyond the playground.
- Warm months – children are expected to bring sun cream and hats.

Children are responsible for managing their own outdoor clothing before play. While outdoor play may result in mud, appropriate clothing will help reduce this.

Inclusion and Equality

Play provision will be inclusive and accessible for all, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or ability, supporting every child to reach their potential.

Environment

We believe every child should have access to a stimulating play environment that is free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks, offering opportunities to explore through freely chosen play.

We are committed to continually improving the quality and diversity of our school grounds to enhance play

Appendix

Please also see:

4.6 GUIDANCE Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (1).pdf