



Upper Beeding Primary School

Outdoor Play and Learning Policy

January 2024

Upper Beeding Primary School recognises that play is an important part of a happy and healthy childhood and as a school we should provide high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children during their time with us. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a real choice of accessible outdoor play experiences.

Commitment

At Upper Beeding Primary School we are committed to using this outdoor play and learning policy to guide our planning and actions in providing excellent outdoor play opportunities for children. We believe outdoor play has a vital role in children's happiness, well-being and mental health. Positive outdoor play supports children in becoming independent, resilient, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks. Positive play also supports children in developing our core values of teamwork, kindness, creativity and curiosity. We are working with OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) to support us in developing a wide range of high quality outdoor play opportunities at Upper Beeding Primary School.

Rationale

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play, usually outdoors. Therefore this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as increased screen time, busier lifestyles, less areas for safe play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their outdoor play opportunities at school even more vital.

At Upper Beeding Primary School we believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and enjoy their environment. We acknowledge the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play: *"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."* We believe that our outdoor play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child.

Better play leads to happier children and in turn less behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, skills development, fewer accidents and more effective learning in the classroom as less staff time is spent resolving issues.

As a result of implementing this policy we believe that children will have:

- improved self-awareness and self-esteem
- improved language and communication skills
- improved concentration
- improved imagination and creativity
- improved social skills
- improved resilience, independence and confidence
- improved problem solving skills
- improved physical development, co-ordination and fitness

Definition

At Upper Beeding Primary School we define play as any freely chosen, child-directed activity which is undertaken purely for enjoyment or amusement and has no other objective. This play may or may not involve equipment or other people.

Equality and Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of race, ethnic/cultural background, gender, disability, belief, sexual orientation, age or socio- economic background.

Benefit and Risk

“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: Implementation guide, published for Play England 2012.

At Upper Beeding Primary School we will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document ‘Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach’ as the principle value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play.

We will adopt a benefits/risk approach as detailed in ‘*Managing Risk in Play Provision*’ *Implementation Guide*. *Managing Risk in Play Provision* states that risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children and young people legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment.

The Adults’ Role in Play

All staff will use and refer to ‘*The Power of Playtime!*’ when appropriate interventions are needed, but ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which supports and encourages self-directed play.

The core function of the adults in school is to create an environment which will stimulate children’s play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced adult 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. Adults 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 available to participate in the play if invited.

The school is working with an outside agency called OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Upper Beeding Primary School.



Environment

At Upper Beeding Primary School 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 the outdoor areas offer children the opportunity to investigate and explore and use their imagination and creativity

- encourage children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give the children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise a variety of play types and increase play value

Agreed by Governing Body: January 2024

Review date: December 2026