



Play Policy

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Review frequency:	Annual
Next review date:	Spring 2026
Reviewed by:	Mrs L Beckley

This policy was presented to the FGB on 14 May 2025 and will be reviewed in Spring 2026, or sooner if required.

Mission Statement

St Anselm's is a community of faith, serving local families and providing a Catholic education. We strive to work in partnership with parents and carers to:

- Inspire children to be ambassadors of Jesus through meaningful prayer, thoughtful reflection, exploration of the Gospel and acts of service;
- Ignite a love for life-long learning by encouraging and challenging children through purposeful learning opportunities;
- Include and value everyone, recognise and celebrate uniqueness and promote self-appreciation and mutual respect;
- Empower children to be ambitious, confident and aspirational now and in their vision for the future;
- Provide an environment where positive wellbeing and mental health ensures everyone feels safe, happy and loved as children of God.

Introduction

At St Anselm's, we believe that play is a fundamental part of childhood and an essential aspect of children's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Our commitment to play is supported by our participation in the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) programme, ensuring high-quality, inclusive, and engaging play opportunities for all children.

We are committed to providing strategic and operational leadership to ensure the sustainability of quality play provision across our school. This policy will be referred to in all decisions that affect children's play, ensuring a whole-school approach that recognises play as a vital element of children's education, wellbeing, and overall development.

Rationale

We believe that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience, and affect their environment. Play should be welcoming and accessible to every child, regardless of gender, background, ability, or circumstances.

The OPAL Primary Programme states that “...better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff, and a healthier attitude to life.”

By embedding OPAL principles into our school’s values, we are fostering a culture where play is seen as a vital component of learning and development.

Definition and Value of Play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child, and freely chosen by the child. It is essential for their health, wellbeing, and overall development. Play provides its own purpose and may or may not involve equipment, rules, or interaction with others.

We believe play offers many benefits, including:

- Supporting physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual development.
- Enabling children to explore their environment and engage with different ideas and concepts.
- Enhancing self-esteem and social skills through freely chosen interactions.
- Encouraging self-confidence, decision-making, problem-solving, and creativity.
- Allowing children to experience and manage a range of emotions.
- Keeping children open to learning, building resilience, and pushing their boundaries.

Aims

Our school aims to:

- Promote a culture where play is valued as vital for children’s wellbeing and learning.
- Ensure all children have daily access to high-quality, varied, and challenging play experiences.
- Provide environments that stimulate creativity, exploration, and problem-solving.
- Encourage children to take ownership of their play while developing risk-awareness and independence.
- Support staff in understanding the importance of play and their role in facilitating it.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Build emotional and physical resilience through diverse play opportunities.

Right to Play

- We recognise every child’s right to play, as outlined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Play is a fundamental part of our school culture and embedded within our ethos and values.
- Children’s voices are valued, and their input is considered in shaping our play provision.

Play Provision

- Play is child-led, allowing children to explore, create, and engage in self-directed play activities.
- A wide range of play opportunities are provided, including active, imaginative, social, exploratory, and risk-taking play.
- Loose parts and open-ended materials are made available to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.
- Outdoor play is prioritised, with children encouraged to play in all weathers unless conditions are unsafe.

Risk and Challenge in Play

- We recognise the importance of '*risky play*' in helping children develop resilience, confidence, and risk-management skills.
- Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision. Children are encouraged to assess risks themselves and make informed choices.
- We use a risk-benefit approach, ensuring that the benefits of play experiences outweigh potential hazards.
- The school follows the Health and Safety Executive's guidance *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach (2012)* and *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)*.

Supervision

- The law requires that children in school have supervision, but there are no specific ratios for primary school playtimes.
- The school follows OPAL's supervision models: Direct, Remote, and Ranging.
- Except for reception children who require closer supervision during their transition, the school does not believe direct supervision is beneficial.
- Staff use remote and ranging supervision to allow children freedom while ensuring their safety.

The Role of Staff in Play

- Staff act as facilitators rather than directors of play, observing, supporting, and enhancing play experiences as needed.
- Staff are trained in Playwork Principles to ensure their interactions support children's natural play instincts.
- Playworkers and staff provide children with access to new materials and tools while fostering a positive play culture.
- Adults are available to participate in play if invited but do not interfere unnecessarily.
- Staff model positive play behaviours and support children in resolving conflicts.

Inclusion and Equality

- Play is accessible to all children, regardless of age, gender, background, disability, or additional needs.
- Our play provision is designed to ensure every child feels safe, valued, and able to participate.
- The school promotes an inclusive environment, celebrating diversity and different play styles.

Parental and Community Engagement

- Parents and carers are informed about the importance of play and encouraged to support our play ethos.
- The wider community, including local businesses and organisations, is encouraged to contribute to play provision through donations, volunteering, and partnerships.

Environment

- We believe a rich play setting should provide stimulating environments where children feel free to explore and engage in meaningful play.
- The school is committed to continuously improving the quality and diversity of its outdoor and play spaces.
- We use the guidance from *Best Play* to shape our play provision.
- Our outdoor spaces are designed to encourage imaginative, social, and active play, supporting children's overall development.

Implementation and Review

- This policy is reviewed annually to ensure it aligns with best practices and the evolving needs of our school community.
- Feedback from children, staff, and parents is actively sought to inform improvements in play provision.
- The school leadership team is responsible for overseeing the implementation and continuous development of our play policy.