OPAL PLAY POLICY

Davington Primary School

1. Commitment

Davington Primary School is committed to providing high-quality play opportunities that support children's wellbeing, development, independence and enjoyment of school. The school will refer to this Play Policy when making decisions that affect children's play and will provide the leadership and resources needed to develop and sustain an OPAL approach.

2. Rationale

Davington Primary School believes that play is an important part of children's experience of school. Our OPAL approach will give children greater freedom to choose where, how and with whom they play, while providing a varied and stimulating environment in which they can explore, create, communicate and take appropriate risks.

The school wants playtimes to provide opportunities for children to develop imagination and creativity, resilience, communication, cooperation and team-building skills. We want children to mix across year groups and to have access to different types of play so that every child can find something that interests and motivates them.

Our approach reflects the Davington Values. In particular, play should enable children to take pride in themselves, look after our school, always try their best, be polite, work as a team, treat each other with respect, have fun, and recognise that everyone deserves to be happy and safe.

3. Definition and Value of Play

Play is understood as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

At Davington Primary School, we believe play:

- supports children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development;
- provides opportunities for imagination, creativity, exploration and problem solving;
- develops communication, cooperation, negotiation and teamwork;
- supports children to develop resilience and confidence by experiencing challenge and managing setbacks;
- helps children build relationships across different year groups;
- gives children opportunities to make choices and develop independence;
- allows children to experience a broad range of play, including physical, imaginative, creative, social and quieter forms of play;
- contributes to children's happiness, wellbeing and positive attitude towards school.

4. Aims

Through our OPAL approach, Davington Primary School aims to:

- provide a varied, challenging and stimulating play environment;
- give children greater freedom to choose where, how and with whom they play;
- reduce unnecessary adult-directed play while ensuring children are supported when they need it;
- provide opportunities for imaginative and creative play;
- encourage children to communicate, cooperate, negotiate and build teams;
- support children to develop resilience, independence and confidence;
- enable children from different year groups to play and develop relationships together;
- provide a range of play opportunities so that every child can access play that interests them;
- encourage children to respect each other and the school environment;
- provide appropriate opportunities for risk and challenge;
- support children's physical and emotional wellbeing;
- make playtimes enjoyable and inclusive for all children.

5. Rights

Davington Primary School recognises the importance of children's right to play, recreation and leisure and their right to be listened to on matters that affect them. Children's views will inform the ongoing development of our OPAL provision, including through pupil voice and the School Council.

6. Benefit and Risk

At Davington we recognise that appropriate risk and challenge are an important part of play. Our aim is not to eliminate all risk, but to distinguish between acceptable risk that contributes to learning and development and unacceptable danger that requires action.

The school will adopt a risk-benefit approach to play provision. Children will be encouraged, where appropriate, to recognise risks, make sensible decisions and develop their ability to manage risk, with adults providing support and intervention where necessary.

7. Supervision

The school currently operates a one-hour lunchtime, including 20 minutes allocated for eating in the hall. When OPAL is introduced, children will continue to have their allocated eating time, but the outdoor play environment will be shared across the school rather than being separated by key stage.

The intention is that children from Reception to Year 6 will be able to access the outdoor environment together. This will create opportunities for children to mix across year groups and develop relationships through shared play.

Current lunchtime staffing consists of class teaching assistants supporting their classes, four midday play leaders outdoors and two midday staff in the hall. The precise supervision model for the OPAL launch will be confirmed as part of implementation planning.

8. The Adult's Role in Play

Adults have an important role in creating an environment in which children can play safely, confidently and independently. The OPAL approach does not mean that adults are passive or uninvolved; rather, adults will avoid directing children's play unnecessarily and will facilitate children's own ideas and choices.

Adults will observe play, be available to children, support problem solving and intervene when necessary to safeguard wellbeing or prevent unacceptable behaviour. Adults will encourage children to communicate, negotiate and resolve manageable difficulties for themselves wherever appropriate.

The Play Coordinator, will lead the development and coordination of the school's OPAL approach and will support staff in understanding their role in facilitating high-quality play.

9. Equality and Diversity

Davington Primary School is committed to ensuring that all children can access meaningful and enjoyable play. Our OPAL provision will offer a range of play opportunities so that children with different interests, abilities, confidence levels and needs can participate.

The school will consider accessibility and inclusion when developing play spaces, resources and routines and will make reasonable adjustments where required.

10. Environment

Davington Primary School already has a range of outdoor spaces and resources which provide a strong foundation for the development of OPAL play.

- Two fields

- The Beach – a large sandpit
- A pirate ship play frame
- An adventure trail
- Play equipment
- Table-top activities

The school will continue to develop the variety and quality of its play environment so that children can choose from a broad range of experiences. Development will focus not only on fixed equipment but also on how spaces and resources can support imaginative, creative, physical, social and exploratory play.

11. Lunchtime Play Arrangements

The OPAL approach will be introduced with the intention that children have access to the shared outdoor environment throughout their lunchtime, alongside their allocated 20-minute eating period.

Children will be encouraged to make their own choices about play. They will not be expected to take part in adult-led activities unless they choose to do so. Adults will support children to access different areas and resources and will help children understand expectations for safe, respectful and responsible play.

The school recognises that the introduction of OPAL will be a process. Arrangements will be reviewed as staff and children become familiar with the new approach, with adjustments made in response to observations, pupil voice and staff feedback.

12. Davington Values in Play

Our play provision provides a practical opportunity for children to live out the Davington Values:

- **Take pride in ourselves:** Children develop confidence, independence and a sense of achievement.
- **Look after our school:** Children learn to care for shared spaces and resources.
- **Always try our best:** Children are encouraged to persevere, experiment and try new things.
- **Are polite to everyone:** Children communicate respectfully and consider others.
- **Are a team:** Children cooperate, collaborate and include others in play.
- **Treat each other with respect:** Children negotiate, listen and recognise different needs and preferences.
- **Like to have fun:** Play is enjoyable, engaging and valued for its own sake.
- **All deserve to be happy and safe:** Children should feel included, secure and able to enjoy play without unnecessary barriers.

13. Monitoring, Review and Pupil Voice

The OPAL approach will be monitored by the Play Coordinator and school leadership. The school will seek the views of children and staff and will use observations, feedback and relevant behaviour or wellbeing information to evaluate the impact of the provision.

The School Council will provide an important route for gathering children's views about their play experiences and identifying opportunities for further development.

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as the school's OPAL provision develops.

14. Related Policies and Documents

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid arrangements
- Educational Visits / Risk Assessment procedures
- OPAL risk-benefit guidance and Playwork Principles