



Oxenhope Church of England Primary School

Play Policy



Created By:	Last Reviewed:	Next Review Date:
A Jones	January 2026	January 2027

We are a community where each person is valued by God. We nurture confidence, delight and discipline in seeking the skills needed to shape life well.

Life in all its fullness; John Chapter 10 v 10.

School Vision

We provide the rich soil allowing children and adults to flourish and develop deep roots. We nurture **growth**, enabling children and adults to thrive as our Christian values blossom in their lives. We cultivate a sense of pride in our rural **community** where children and adults are **loved** and valued.

May our children flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. Psalm 144 v 12.

Throughout our curriculum and school life, along with our school vision, these three golden strands permeate through everything we do.

Community

Jesus often spoke of unity in our communities and encouraging one another on our journey. He spoke of bearing each other's burdens in love and helping those in need.

'Live in harmony with one another.' Romans 12 v 16



Love

It says in the Bible that God is Love and encompasses all that is loving and good. Jesus showed the ultimate unconditional love when he laid down his life for us on the cross. Therefore, this love should lead to a desire to love other people.

'Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us.' Ephesians 5 v 2



Growth

Just like a plant, we must endure the difficult times along with the good; but God has sent us his Holy Spirit to help and strengthen us so we can bear fruit and grow in the likeness of Christ.

'Grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2 Peter 3 v 18



Play Policy: Oxenhope C of E Primary School

1. Vision and Values

At Oxenhope C of E Primary, our approach to play is rooted in our vision for every child to flourish. Our Christian values of **Love, Community, and Growth** underpin our play policy:

- **Love:** We provide a nurturing environment where children feel safe to take risks and express themselves.
- **Community:** Play is the foundation of social cohesion, teaching children to collaborate, negotiate, and care for one another.
- **Growth:** Through play, children develop physically, emotionally, and intellectually, reaching their potential.

2. The Importance of Play: UK Research and Context

Research highlights that play is essential for development up to age 11. Key benefits identified by UK research from sources like the University of Cambridge's PEDAL Centre and Play England include:

- **Cognitive Development:** Play enhances executive functions, problem-solving, and creative thinking.
- **Physical Health:** Active play combats sedentary lifestyles and develops gross motor skills.
- **Mental Wellbeing:** Child-led play is proven to reduce anxiety and build resilience through risk-taking and problem-solving.
- **Social Skills:** Play is the primary vehicle for learning empathy and conflict resolution.

3. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Best Practice

We recognize that play is the "work" of the child. In our EYFS setting, we follow the *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers* (Department for Education, 2025), ensuring a balance between adult-led and child-initiated play.

- **Continuous Provision:** Our environment is carefully tiered to provide open-ended resources that provoke curiosity.
- **The Prime Areas:** Play is the primary tool used to develop Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social, and Emotional Development.

4. Play-Based Learning Across the Curriculum

Oxenhope is committed to extending play-based pedagogy beyond the early years.

- **EYFS and Year 1 Transition:** We utilize a "Continuous Provision" model in both EYFS and Year 1 to ensure a smooth developmental transition, allowing children to explore curriculum concepts through hands-on exploration.
- **Active Learning:** Throughout Key Stage 1 and 2, we incorporate playful inquiry into subjects like Science, History, and Maths to deepen engagement and retention.

5. Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

We are proud to be an **OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning)** school. This mentor-supported program has transformed our lunchtimes and breaktimes.

- **The OPAL Philosophy:** We believe that every child should have access to high-quality, varied play (including climbing, digging, and den building) regardless of the weather.
- **Lunchtimes and Breaktimes:** These are not just "gaps" in the day but vital educational periods where staff act as "Playworkers" to facilitate, rather than direct, children's choices.

6. Outdoor Learning and Wellbeing

Outdoor learning at Oxenhope provides a sensory-rich environment that cannot be replicated indoors. Spending time in nature can improve wellbeing and provide a "restorative environment" that lowers stress levels, directly impacting classroom focus and overall wellbeing.

7. Practical Requirements: "There is no such thing as bad weather"

To ensure every child can access the benefits of play in all seasons, we require the following:

- **Wellies:** All children must have a pair of named Wellington boots kept in school.
- **Outdoor Clothing:** Please provide a waterproof coat and, ideally, waterproof trousers.
- **Change of Clothes: Every child (EYFS through Year 6)** must have a full change of clothes (including socks and underwear) in a bag on their peg at all times. This ensures that if a child gets muddy or wet during OPAL play, they can change and continue their learning comfortably.

8. The Children's Play Charter

Our playground charter, developed with the children, outlines how we can all work together to ensure a positive and respectful play environment. We recognize that every child has a fundamental **right to play**, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31). This charter is visible around the school and discussed regularly:

- We share equipment fairly and kindly.
- We take care of the equipment.
- We treat each other including adults how we like to be treated.
- We keep everybody safe.
- We are kind to others.
- We help people if they need us.
- We allow people to join in games.
- We try to solve problems ourselves but we ask grown ups if we need help.
- We listen to one and another.
- We play safely.
- Make sure games are fair.

9. Risk and Challenge

In line with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance that encourages managing risk rather than eliminating it, we focus on balancing the need to offer risk with the need to keep children safe. We believe that "risky play" is essential for children to learn how to assess their own safety and build physical competence.

10. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this play policy is monitored through a variety of methods to ensure continuous improvement:

- **Staff Observations:** The OPAL lead and lunchtime staff regularly observe play to ensure the charter is being followed and to identify areas for development.
- **Pupil Voice:** We gather feedback from children through the School Council and informal discussions to understand what is working well and how play opportunities can be enhanced.
- **Parental Feedback:** We welcome input from parents through surveys and direct communication regarding the provision of play and clothing requirements.
- **Governor Oversight:** The policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher and ratified by the Governing Body, ensuring it aligns with the school's vision, values, and all relevant legislation.