



BELMONT SCHOOL

(Additionally Resourced Mainstream School)

Play Policy

JULY 2025



<p>UNCRC Article 19 - Every child has the right to protection Global Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages Global Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities Reduce inequality within and among countries.</p>	
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Date Ratified	15 th July 2025
Review Date	July 2026

Play Policy

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." Plato

"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity."

Kay Redfield Jamison

Belmont School is committed to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children. As a school, we aim to improve the way we think and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for the physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development of all children.

In a time where outdoor play environments and opportunities are on the decline, our school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play.

We believe that play has a vital role in promoting children's happiness and wellbeing should be planned collaboratively with the children. Our Play Policy encourages our children to be respectful of each other and the environment in which they are playing and therefore fully embraces our Mission Statement:

'Every child, every day make us Stronger Together.'

Rationale

Children spend 1.4 years of their primary school attendance in playtime. This time is valuable and needs careful planning. Better play means happier children. Happier children mean fewer behaviour that challenge; a more positive attitude to school, lessons that are more effective, core skills development, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary problems, fewer accidents and happier staff.

Play has a vital role in children's happiness and wellbeing and promotes independence, confidence, imagination, adaptability and the ability to self-assess risks.

At Belmont School, we believe that play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

Play England created 'The Charter for Children's Play', which sets out a vision for play and states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school;
- Adults should let children play;
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision;
- Children's play should be enriched by skilled playworkers;
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play.

Links to Learning

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

What is Play?

Play is any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light-hearted. It may produce something, or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children the opportunity to be creative and make decisions. Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

We recognise that play may need to make a noise, get children dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe the role of the adults is to facilitate the play process, enabling the children to show respect to one another, make the right choice and do their best.

Vision and Aims

Belmont School will:

- Provide children with a play setting which is enjoyable, stimulating and challenging
- Allow children to take risks
- Provide children with a range of play opportunities that will support their learning across the curriculum and about the world around them.

All children will have the opportunity to:

Explore the world around them through playful experimentation

Develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving

Build resilience and self-confidence

Think creatively

Be independent and take responsibility for themselves and others

Flourish through activities that build physical health

Thrive emotionally; allowing the balance between acting freely and allowing everyone to have their rights.

Grow in confidence, developing the necessary skills to self-assess and manage risk

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

- Be happier
- Increase their self-awareness and self-esteem
- Develop better language and communication skills
- Improve their levels of concentration
- Improve their imagination, independence and creativity
- Improve social skills
- Develop their understanding of their emotions and how to self-regulate
- Become more resilient, confident and better problem solvers
- Take more risks, whilst also reflecting on how to do this as safely as possible
- Develop their negotiation skills and independence of thought
- Develop life skills; and
- Improve physical development, coordination and fitness.

Respecting Rights - United Nation Convention on the Right of the Child

“All children have the right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities”
(Article 31)

Belmont School is a rights respecting school. All children as right holders have the right to relax and play, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. As duty bearers, we have a responsibility to provide high quality opportunities for our learners to develop self-confidence, resilience, problem solving and imagination through play. We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Benefit, Risk assessment and play

'Play is great for children's wellbeing 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: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. As outlined in the play sector publication 'Best Play', play provision should aim to *'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm'*.

Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge risk independently and learn new skills. All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore their limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences.

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012).

Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school will be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever a significant change or development in play provision and or equipment or child circumstances takes place.

The benefit risk assessment at Belmont School is reviewed annually in line with the Play Policy.

To manage the levels of risk we will follow the following guidelines:

- Recognise the need for professional judgement in setting the balance between safety and goals
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children
- Design spaces where the risks of hazards are clearly apparent
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed
- Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

Environment and Clothing

To be able to enjoy the space and activities children should always come to school with a waterproof coat. We try to keep all the school play spaces open all year so the children will play on the field even in the winter months.

In the winter, children are expected to wear wellington boots and waterproofs on the field, in poorer weather. A welly store has been created by the school field and families have been asked to provide/donate wellies for use at playtimes.

Hand washing facilities are provided both in classroom and toilet areas.

Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

We may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when in the bushes or den building, however Play Leaders are designated to an 'area' daily. It is expected that staff will move around throughout playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Staff can then check in on and facilitate the children's play throughout playtime. All staff will follow the school's behaviour policy over lunchtimes and playtimes with the aim of solving conflict by working alongside children where possible. For further details, please see school's Behaviour Policy.

The adult's role in play

The school will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

The play leader's core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play leader 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. Play leaders 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 also available to participate in the play if invited.

Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided. Play opportunities will hold no barriers to any of the children within our school.

Review

This policy will be closely monitored by the OPAL Play Team, SLT and governors.

A working play group, led by the head, composed of play leader, lunchtime supervisor and play governor, will take responsibility for managing the action plan for play.
This policy has been shared by the whole school community.
This policy is under continuous review in line with our OPAL Journey.