

Play Policy

Crawley Down Village C of E School



Approved by: Quality of Education Committee

Date: 22 May 2025

Next review due by: May 2027

Play Policy

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that '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.'

Commitment

This policy sets out our school's commitment to ensuring that quality environments and opportunities for play are available for all children. At Crawley Down Village School, we aim to provide a rich choice of carefully considered spaces and equipment that is accessible for all children. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children. We believe that our school values together with this play policy will create children who are creative, imaginative, social and able to assess risks independently.

We believe play supports our school values to develop children who are:

- collaborative and creative learners
- respectful citizens to each other and the environment around them
- confident individuals who challenge themselves and manage risks
- independent decision makers

Rationale

Play enables children to learn through experiences that cannot be taught, and is a fundamental aspect of developing the whole child. Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be coherent and planned for. We believe that all children need opportunities to play which allows them to explore, manipulate and experience their environment.

Changes in society have led to more children becoming at a risk of 'play deprivation', this makes the offering of play opportunities at school more vital. Crawley Down Village school recognises the contribution free play has on children's overall development, wellbeing and health. With better quality play opportunities provides a more positive attitude and impact with behaviour and in the classroom; improving children's learning and development. We believe that play should be child led and enable all children to have opportunities to manage risks and challenge themselves through free choice. As a school we provide a rich, inclusive environment of opportunities for children to explore and engage with.

We surveyed the children in December 2022 for their views on play time with the following results:

- 100% said 'there are not enough places for us to play.'
- 100% said 'they want to build but there isn't anything to build with.'
- 50% said 'they don't enjoy playtimes.'

Definition of play

Play enables children to be exposed to experiences and learn skills outside of the classroom. At Crawley Down Village School children and staff believe play has many benefits including:

- Develop communication and social skills
- Learn how to play new games
- Work collaboratively as a team
- Learn to take risks
- Problem solving
- Develop motor skills
- Develop imaginative skills

Risk and Benefit

For optimum child development, children should be provided with opportunities to experience freely chosen activities and challenge themselves where they experience success and failure. Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast.

At Crawley Down Village School we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

'HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers'. (HSE, 2013)

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the enriching opportunities and promote children to manage risks for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it can be, rather than avoid risks.

Crawley Down Village school will use a risk-benefit assessment guidance on Managing Risk in Play (Appendix 1) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs. Our risk benefits will involve all children during regular play assemblies.

Adult's role in play

The adults at Crawley Down Village School are committed to supporting the children. We aim to facilitate their learning through play and ensure play is a valued and exciting part of children's school day. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground, which will include play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

Adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Crawley Down Village School.

In addition to this the Crawley Down Village School Play Team will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, MMS and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. The play team will ensure that the environment is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Learning Support Assistants and MMS will take on the role of Play Makers. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed.

Children's role in play

- Children will have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experience.
- Children will show respect to others, play equipment and the environment.
- Children will play safely.
- Ensure playtimes are fun for everyone.

Children's role in play will be visible in each classroom. These will be shared and explained to all children regularly through play assemblies and classroom dialogue.

Play at Crawley Down Village School

At Crawley Down School our play provision:

- Is Inclusive
- Is Child led
- Provides opportunities to take and manage risks
- Encourages collaboration and responsibility
- Is exciting and fun