



Durham Trinity School & Sports College

PLAY POLICY

**“The Child has the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities”
– Article 31, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

Commitment

Durham Trinity School and Sports College came together on one site in November 2014. The school building is purpose built for SEND pupils in mind with generous outdoor space which is a blank canvas with limited resources and play opportunities available. The outdoor space requires developing to create a space where children can learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through play.

Since January 2018 Durham Trinity School and Sports College joined the OPAL school improvement programme to support the development of play. It is important to develop the school grounds to provide high quality play opportunities and environments for pupils from 2-19yrs of age, to develop their skills and relationships that can be transferable to the classroom and curricular subjects.

This is an 18 month programme to strategically plan the environment, staff roles and responsibilities and the play offer across the school day. A working party is now established involving all roles; from the Headteacher, Play Governor, Key Stage leaders, to teaching assistants to drive this school initiative forward.

This policy will ensure all staff support and develop play opportunities across the school day; developing skills and promoting positive relationships across the school whilst keeping all stakeholders safe.

Rationale

This policy sets out the school’s commitment to ensuring that quality environments for play and informal recreation are available to all its children, and aims to improve the way we think about, and provide, opportunities for play. The school believes that all children no matter how old or what SEND they have, they all need opportunities to play which allows them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment.

As it stands nationally pupils are more reliant on different technologies to be entertained and the number of obese children across the country is on the increase as well as there being a significant increase in self harm and mental health disorders. In a world of technologies play has become limited and children are experiencing play deprivation which can limit their concentration levels, cognitive development, ability to build relationships and it increases their stress levels affecting their emotional wellbeing. At Durham Trinity we value the play and believe it is paramount that time and opportunities are provided to allow pupils to develop skills to learn and explore about the outdoors, improving their health and wellbeing, becoming more active whilst developing important skills such as resilience, risk taking, creativity, turn taking whilst learning about relationships; skills that will support pupils beyond Durham Trinity and into their adulthood.

The Value of Play

Play enables children to learn through experience that cannot be taught. Through exploring and testing ideas children learn:

- About their bodies and themselves as a person
- About how to get on with people
- About the physical world around them

As a school we recognise the value of play and aim to develop a wide range of outside play environments to meet the needs of all of our children. Play is satisfying and freely chosen by the child. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. We aim to ensure children's choice over their experiences is promoted in our grounds.

The school recognises that the impact of modern society on children's lives has significantly restricted their opportunity to play freely and has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment. It is therefore committed to encouraging the creation of high quality 'compensatory' play opportunities which are appropriate, accessible, stimulating and challenging for all of our children.

Durham Trinity School and Sports College believes that play:

- Is innate. It can be physical, imaginative, creative, and explorative, stretches perceptions and encourages all areas of development.
- Should happen in all weather, apart from extremely hazardous conditions.
- Is taking managed risks and being challenged—as it will help children to make informed and adapted decisions in play and life.
- Is sometimes getting bumps and scrapes.
- Involves rolling around, getting dirty and being hands on.
- May need to be modelled and supported by adults due to a wide range of special educational needs within the school.
- Above all, should be fun, enjoyable, memorable and exciting experience.

Aims

At Durham Trinity School and Sports College we aim to:

- Provide a safe learning environment where children are challenged and stimulated.
- Allow pupils to take risks
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their skills of getting on with each other
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development
- Provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- Promote independence and team work within children.
- Continue to keep children at the heart of decisions – To consult children on the decision making on the planning, design, creation and supervision of play opportunities.

- Model and develop basic play skills encouraging pupils to think and play creatively using resources.

Learning Opportunities

At Durham Trinity School and Sports College we aim to provide the following learning opportunities:

- The physical world e.g. earth, air, fire and water
- Man-made, natural, recycled and re-usable materials
- Challenge in relation to the physical environment
- Movement e.g. running jumping, climbing, balancing
- Emotions e.g. learning about oneself and others, sadness/gladness, rejection/acceptance, frustration/achievement, boredom/fascination, fear/confidence.
- The operation of the five senses through sounds, textures, tastes, smells and sights
- Social interactions - enhancing self-esteem and understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g. within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- Making choices, problem solving, being creative,
- Achieving and also coping with failing,
- Communication and negotiation skills,
- Change e.g. building/demolishing, transforming the environment and experiencing the seasons.

Equality and Access

Durham Trinity School and Sports College have a range of play areas; small fenced play areas, sports field, MUGA, and a large back field with an orchard. Durham Trinity aims to provide all pupils access to a range of play opportunities. Due to the range of special educational needs the access and type of play needs may vary from one child to another. Nevertheless the play offer provided will be appropriate to the needs of the pupils; ensuring wheelchair accessibility whilst ensuring a smaller sensory space is provided for pupils with significant sensory needs. The play offer will be regularly monitored and reviewed in terms of which areas of the outdoor space is being utilised and how pupils are being supported to fulfil the school aims around the play offer.

Pupils and staff should be outside playing in all weather, apart from extremely hazardous conditions. Spare wellingtons and waterproofs will be provided to ensure no child is restricted to only playing outdoors in a fine weather. However classroom support staff will liaise with parents and the class teacher when making a decision on the health needs of the child when determining if a pupil stays inside at playtime.

Play and Risk - Managing Risk in Play Provision

‘Play is great for children’s well-being 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’.

Health & Safety Executive

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. Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills.

‘Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk children’s development is inhibited, undermining their capacity to deal with the wider unsupervised world.’

- South Gloucestershire Council Play Policy: Play Safety Forum Position Statement

It is the school’s responsibility to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. This policy sets out the school’s overall objectives for children to take acceptable risks in their play. The school recognises the challenge that this new thinking brings in accordance with the Durham County Council health and safety guidelines.

Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change/development in play provision/equipment or child circumstances takes place. Caretakers will continue to carry out their play equipment checks, identified staff (Play Coordinators) will carry out daily checks of the play equipment whilst it is every member of staff’s responsibility to check and assess the safety of equipment and activities during outdoor play. When new equipment is introduced, classes will be identified to model how to use and play appropriately via the presentation of photos and videos of them playing, which will be presented during assemblies. This is hoped to support pupils to play safely and appropriately with resources. Staff are expected to model how to play and use resources appropriately through a positive approach.

Supervision will be a priority due to the wide range of special educational needs across Durham Trinity School including pupils with complex medical conditions. Staff will be identified within their key stages which pupils need close supervision by trained staff to meet their medical needs.

‘Risky play also develops children’s executive function, the parts of the brain in charge of decision making...the only way to learn to make good decisions is by practising making decisions’.

OPAL 2018

Ratified by FGB: 20th June 2018

To be reviewed summer term 2019.