**ST. BEDE’S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL**

***celebrates life and learning***



**PLAY AND RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY**

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| **APPROVED BY:** | **GOVERNING BODY** |
| **APPROVAL DATE:** |  |
| **REVIEWED:** | **ANNUALLY** |
| **NEXT REVIEW:** |  |

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##### PLAY AND RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

**MISSION STATEMENT**

**St. Bede, patron of our school, wrote:**

***“It was always my delight to learn and to teach”.***

We are a celebrating community, living the

Gospel Values, committed to educating children

in the light of the Catholic Faith.

**We journey together so that we**

***“Might have life - life in all its fullness”.***

**John 10:10**

**RATIONALE**

St. Bede’s Catholic JuniorSchool fosters a truly Christian community which works together to facilitate the growth of the whole person, and empowers each individual to experience

**“*life in all its fullness*.” (John 10:10)**

We recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. We aim to provide high quality, enjoyable play experiences for all children across school. We will do this by providing carefully considered outdoor spaces, play structures and resources that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. We will refer to our school’s mission and this play policy in all decisions that affect our children's play. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

We provide a wide range of balanced learning opportunities in a caring and stimulating environment; this extends to the learning, and positive experiences that can be achieved at play times.  We aim to seek the maximum potential development of each individual in all aspects of a child’s development.

**PRINCIPLES**

At St. Bede’s, we acknowledge Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which 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.’***

We believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We believe 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.

**PURPOSE**

We seek to attain the highest standard for all our children, in all aspects of school life. With children spending up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play, it is imperative that this time needs to be coherent and well thought out. The current climate and ever-changing society, for example, heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led children to have less time, space and permission for play in the wider public realm. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

The pupil survey of play carried out in November 2022, demonstrated that our children enjoy play times but some children stated, “*there wasn’t anything to do if you didn’t like being in the MUGA. On the playground, you would have to just walk around,”* and *“if you weren’t on the equipment it was boring.”*

We therefore believe that it is important to maximise our use of the grounds we have and to invest in quality, varied and sustainable play resources to fulfil our school’s aims of providing a safe, caring and nurturing environment where optimum learning takes place and where children can adhere to the School’s values of: ‘*Respect, Love, and Achieve*’. We want our whole school community to recognise that childhood is a place in its own right and not just a preparation for the next stage of life, therefore, play is an integral part of the children’s learning.

**DEFINITION AND VALUE OF PLAY**

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning; a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. 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 in a secure environment. At St. Bede’s, we believe that children should have the opportunity to experience different types of play, see Appendix 1 ‘Best Play’ – Play Types. By having these opportunities, our children will have the potential to reap the many benefits that play offers.

The United Nation’s Committee on the Rights of the Child defines play as: *“any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which play takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end.”*

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children return from play happy and ready to learn.

**AIMS**

In relation to play, at St. Bede’s we aim to:

* Ensure that children have access to a wide range of opportunities for play which they enjoy.
* Ensure our play setting provides a varied, challenging and stimulating environment, which encourages our children to explore, learn about and process the world around them.
* Allow children to take risks and use a balanced approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
* Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other, whilst also acknowledging that play can be both co-operative and solitary.
* Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
* Aid children’s physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
* Promote self-regulation, independence and teamwork within children.
* Build emotional and physical resilience amongst our children.
* Ensure that children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources, as long as it is ‘reasonably’ safe for them to do so, regardless of age, gender, disability, social or cultural background.
* Encourage adults to be responsive to children’s invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk-benefit assessments to weigh-up the risks and benefits of play activities, whilst helping to develop the children’s own risk awareness.

**BENEFIT AND RISK**

At St. Bede’s, we believe play has many benefits, including:

* Enhancing children’s self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, individuals and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
* Requiring ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
* Enabling children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
* Encouraging self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
* Maintaining children’s openness to learning, developing their capabilities and allowing them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

We commit to providing the children of St. Bede’s with all of the benefits of play, whilst managing any risks involved. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. In the words of 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.”* Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences.

We will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance,*‘*Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach’ (Appendix 2) as the principle document informing our approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, we will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in ‘Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide.’ In addition to written risk assessments, the school will practise dynamic risk-benefit management with children encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

**SUPERVISION**

At St. Bede’s, we understand the importance of appropriate supervision during play times. The law requires that children in school have supervision, but for primary school playtimes there are no statutory adult to children ratios. During the school day, there should be one or more adults present outdoors.

At St. Bede’s, we will use OPAL’s three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. In order to allow children to make full use of our school grounds; direct supervision is not always possible or beneficial. The majority of our playtime supervision will take the Remote and Ranging 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.

Our school grounds will be divided into supervision zones with an adult patrolling each area. An additional ‘floating’ member of staff will be present during each playtime to have an overview of the whole site and to offer support in specific areas, if necessary. All adults will wear high visibility jackets to enable quick identification to children, in case of an incident, and a fixed first aid area will be used for any accidents.

**THE ADULTS’ ROLE IN PLAY**

At St. Bede’s, we, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in our school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground, which will aim to further develop their playtime experiences using their voice and opinions as guidance.

We will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play, by training our play team to 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 which nurtures children’s self-directed play.

The play team’s role will be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. We are working with OPAL to help guide a strategic approach to developing play. Our Play Team (Appendix 4) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, MDAs and all other staff, as well as the children, to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. The play team 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 make a change to the play space, if needed. The play team will ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available, in their own way.

**CHILDREN’S ROLE IN PLAY**

At St. Bede’s, we believe that it is equally important for children to have a say in their play. The children have contributed to this policy and have also developed a Play Charter (Appendix 5) which summarises some of the key aspects of this policy.

It will include the rights and responsibilities of the children to:

* have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences;
* respect and look after each other, their environment, play structures and resources;
* be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour;
* ensure that all children enjoy their right to play.

The children’s Play Charter will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing OPAL assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with the School Council.

**ENVIRONMENT**

At St. Bede’s, we believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable/unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play.

We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school’s grounds to enhance play. We will use the document ‘Best Play – Criteria for an enriched play environment’ to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain (Appendix 3).

At St. Bede’s, we will:

* Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for playing and learning, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play;
* Include the children’s views and opinions when planning for play and learning outdoors;
* Ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity;
* Expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things;
* Enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value;
* Ensure that the school grounds be an integrated area where all children can play together and alongside each other;
* Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the resources available and ensure they take an active part in doing this;
* Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.

# MONITORING AND REVIEW

# This policy was written in consultation with staff, pupils and Governors. It should be read alongside other policies in school.

It will be reviewed on an annual basis in the light of training and legislation, or at the request of a member of the school community. Any amendments are agreed by the staff and the Governing Body.

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**Appendix 1**

‘Best Play’ – Play Types (pages 33 to 34)

<http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

**Appendix 2**

‘Health & Safety Executive: Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting A Balanced Approach’

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

**Appendix 3**

‘Best Play’ – Criteria for an Enriched Play Environment (page 35)

<http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

**Appendix 4**

**OPAL Working Group**

This is the team who work at a strategic level to ensure this policy is put into practise and who ensure that careful consideration is given to play times as an essential part of the school day.

The Head Teacher – Faith Tiernan

Curricular Lead for Play – Stephenie Lloyd-Green

Play Co-ordinator - Stephen Stalker

Play Champion Governor – Mary Wynne

Caretaker – Nick Ortiz

**Play Team (supervising staff)**

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground at playtimes, staff should **ALL** act as ‘Play Makers’.

However, more specifically, at lunch times, the following structure exists:

**Play Co-ordinators –** Stephenie Lloyd-Green/ Stephen Stalker

(Leads on operational delivery and resourcing)

**Play Makers –** staff and MDAs

(Support children’s’ play)

**Appendix 5**

**ST. BEDE’S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL**

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**CHILDREN’S PLAY CHARTER**

Our School’s Mission Statement states that St. Bede, patron of our school, wrote: ***“It was always my delight to learn and to teach”.*** We are a celebrating community, living the Gospel Values, committed to educating children in the light of the Catholic Faith. We journey together so that we *“****Might have life - life in all its fullness”.* John 10:10**

After consultation with the pupils, staff, governors and parents/carers, the following Play Principles are promoted within St. Bede’s Catholic Junior School:

* We have the right to play at playtimes. We have the responsibility to respect that all children enjoy their right to play, nobody’s play is more important than anyone else’s.
* We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do. We have the responsibility to make sure our decisions don’t affect others in a negative way.
* We have the right to choose who we play with. We have the responsibility to make sure that no one is forced to do something they don’t want to.
* We have the right play with lots of different things and have a well looked-after environment. Respecting that right means taking good care of the things we play with and the spaces in which we play.
* We have the right to explore, be creative and take thoughtful risks. We must therefore, think about what we are doing and talk to one of the Play Team about the risks we are taking, if they ask us to.
* If a member of the Play Team asks us to stop what we are doing because they think something may be dangerous, and/or disruptive, we must stop immediately and discuss how we can play in a way that is more positive.