



# Play Policy

The policy will be reviewed and revised where necessary.

Signed ..... Headteacher Date .....

This policy was endorsed by the Board of Governors at their meeting on

Signed ..... Chair of Governors Date .....

Date for Review: .....

## **1. Commitment**

**Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:**

**‘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.’**

Longvernal Primary School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. At Longvernal we are committed to using our school vision and this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children. We believe play has a vital role in children’s health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

## **2. Rationale**

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. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led to ‘play deprivation’ for many of today’s children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

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 playtimes, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play feeling happy and ready to learn.

# Longvernal Primary School

## Outdoor Learning Leaders



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 which is vital for all our children and in particular for EAL learners and those children with delayed speech and language. 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 within a safe environment.

We surveyed the children in July 2018 for their views on playtime. Many were positive about the playground but some children's comments included:

*'there is not enough to do,'*

*'we need more things to play with,'*

*'the playground needs extra things,'*

*'it needs more resources'.*

These comments by children highlighted the need to continually improve our play resources and opportunities at Longvernal. Pupils were therefore asked to discuss play in PSHE lessons in class and put forward ideas through their School Council representative. The School Council then shared ideas with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors at School Council which informed some purchases, communications with Play Leaders and the subsequent OPAL review meeting.

### **3. Definition of Play**

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as:

*'Encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.'*

This activity meets the four components of a child's development:

Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness);

Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination);

Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes); and

Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork these enhance).

***At Longvernal the children and staff believe that:***

- ***play allows children to be creative and co-operative***
- ***adults' roles in great play is to be responsive to children's invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities and develop the children's risk awareness.***
- ***play may be solitary or social***
- ***play invites investigation and exploration which may test boundaries***
- ***play makes children happy and happy children are healthier children who, in turn, can learn more effectively***
- ***children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources and as long as it is safe regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background***
- ***play is something you choose to do and that it is fun***

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- *play enables children to process their experiences of the world*

#### **4. Risk and Benefit**

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. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

*Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world.' (DCFS)*

At Longvernal 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, 2012)**

Longvernal will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) (**Appendix 1**) as its principal guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enrichment opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (**Appendix 2**) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

#### **5. Adults' Role in Play**

**We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.**

Adults' roles 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](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Longvernal. In addition to this, the Longvernal Play Team will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. The play team will take on the role of Play Team 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. Play Team Makers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

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## Outdoor Learning Leaders



### **6. Children's Role in Play**

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy ('play charter'-see Appendix 3.)

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, equipment and toys.
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council.

### **7. Environment**

At Longvernal we shall:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing 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
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground be an integrated area where all children from Nursery to Year 6 can play safely.
- teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this.
- promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.



### Appendix 1

#### CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

See PDF attached

### Appendix 2

See attached example Risk Assessment

### Appendix 3

## Our Play Charter

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We have the right to ensure everyone enjoys playtime by making sure:

- ✓ We have different 'play stations' to help children choose their style of play.
- ✓ We share the Playpod toys and help put them away.
- ✓ We don't allow rough play because not everyone enjoys this type of play.
- ✓ We're friendly to others by letting them join in.
- ✓ We include everyone in our games.
- ✓ In the winter, we put on our waterproofs and wellies when we play on the field.
- ✓ If we have problems, we try to sort them out between ourselves and if we need to, we then talk to an adult.
- ✓ We take care of our play equipment and the natural environment.
- ✓ We always tell the truth.
- ✓ We help people if they need us.
- ✓ We treat other people how we would like to be treated.
- ✓ We try to make opportunities for challenge and risk in our play.
- ✓ We say sorry if we have made a bad decision.