

# PLAY POLICY

Issue 6

September 2025

Approved by:



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Head Teacher  
Bailey's Court Primary School

**Date:** September 2025

Authorised by:



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Chair of Full Governing Body  
Bailey's Court Primary School

**Date:** September 2025

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## CHANGE RECORDS SHEET

| Issue No. | Date           | Summary of Change          | Amended by |
|-----------|----------------|----------------------------|------------|
| 1         | July 2009      | Original policy document.  | W Preedy   |
| 2         | October 2015   | Reviewed – no changes made | A Lynham   |
| 3         | September 2017 | Reviewed – no changes made | A Lynham   |
| 4         | September 2020 | Reviewed – no changes made | A Lynham   |
| 5         | September 2022 | Reviewed                   | A Lynham   |
| 6         | September 2025 | Reviewed                   | A Lynham   |

## SUMMARY

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies. If you require further details of this policy then please refer to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- [1] Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities.
- [2] Play equipment Risk Assessment, EYFS document.

## MAIN DOCUMENT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

At Bailey's Court we recognise play as equal to formal education in terms of its fundamental role in enabling children to engage positively with the complexities of the world around them. We understand the evidence that suggests that free play has a direct positive impact on children's ability to meet formal educational goals.

Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development. Through play children explore the physical and social environment, ideas and concepts, and how to deal with situations that trouble or frighten them. In this way they learn, through experience, things which cannot be taught, for example, self-confidence, the sense of

themselves as individuals able to make choices, the ability to cope with dispute or overcome fears and much more.

## **2 GUIDELINES**

- Our provision should extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
- Provision needs to recognise the children's need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need
- Our provision at Bailey's Court should aim to manage the balance between the children's need and want to play and the need to keep them from being exposed to unacceptable risks of serious injury.
- Our provision must foster independence and self-esteem; it should foster children's respect for others and offer opportunities for independence and self-esteem.
- At Bailey's Court we foster the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding.
- We recognise that play opportunities are key in the development of children's imagination and creativity.
- Adults at Bailey's Court should find as many opportunities for learning through play as they can in the delivery of the curriculum. This is particularly key to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. (See EYFS curriculum).

## **3 ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE RISK**

In addressing the importance of play in school, we cannot divorce play activities from issues of safety and risk.

Play is critical to children's physical and emotional health. There is growing concern about the rise in childhood obesity and related disorders, along with evidence showing a growth in mental illness. At Bailey's Court we would be failing in our responsibility if we do not create opportunities that allow our pupils to explore their world through the medium of play. An essential element of this exploration is the opportunity for children to experience freely-chosen activities where possible where they can take acceptable risks and push against the boundaries of their existing capabilities. The benefits of allowing them to do this are the learning of new skills and the development of their ability independently to judge risks.

Children with disabilities have an equal if not greater need for opportunities to take risks especially as they may be denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by their non-disabled peers. In effect, in any human activity, there is an element of risk. Three factors are central to determining whether or not the level of risk is acceptable or tolerable:

- The likelihood of coming to harm
- The severity of that harm
- The benefits, rewards or outcomes of the activity.

Judgements about the acceptability of risk are made on the basis of a risk assessment. Risk assessment and management are not mechanistic processes. They crucially involve making judgements about acceptability based on an understanding of the balance between risks and benefits. See Appendix A for general risk assessment form.

- Social and psychological factors are also important in risk assessments. It is important also to take into account that risks that are acceptable in one community may be unacceptable in another.
- Almost any environment contains hazards or sources of harm and in many cases the existence of hazards can be justified because they are impossible to remove (for example the playground steps).

- Where the existence of a hazard can be justified, measures – through, for example, signage, training and highlighting the hazard to the children, should be taken to manage it. Steps must be taken to ensure that risks are controlled as far as is reasonably practicable while allowing the potential benefits to be delivered.
- Everyone in the school community is responsible for assessing and managing the level of risk of children at play.
- The school community, including parents, need to understand that although any injury is distressing, the exposure to risk and injury and the experience of actual minor injuries, is a universal part of childhood. These experiences also have a positive role in child development.
- When children sustain or witness injuries they gain direct experience of the consequences of their actions and choices and through this an understanding of the extend of their abilities and competences.
- Adults at Bailey's Court acknowledge the need to balance children's growing ability to assess and manage risk and to assess the broad range of risks and hazards they may encounter.

## **4 CONCLUSION**

Play provision is first and foremost for children and if it is not exciting and attractive to them it will fail. Our outdoor play provision at Bailey's Court includes climbing equipment of varying heights. Safety in play provision is not absolute and cannot be addressed in isolation. Compromises may sometimes need to be taken between exciting and attractive play opportunities and making these opportunities as safe as possible. These compromises are a matter of judgement based on social attitudes, broadly-based expert opinion based on current best practice. They should be firmly rooted in objectives concerned with children's enjoyment and benefit and should take in to account the concerns of parents.

# Play Policy

## APPENDIX A: RISK ASSESSMENT - BLANK FORM

Risk Assessment – [entertitle]

Bailey's Court Primary School

| 1. Location                   |                               |                     |  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Subject Area:                 |                               | Assessment date:    |  |
| Department:                   | n/a                           | Re-assessment date: |  |
| Risk assessment team members: |                               |                     |  |
| Details of location:          |                               |                     |  |
| Site:                         | Bailey's Court Primary School |                     |  |
| Accountable Manager:          |                               |                     |  |

| 2. Details of Further Action Necessary |        |     |      |
|----------------------------------------|--------|-----|------|
| Task                                   | Action | Who | Date |
|                                        |        |     |      |
|                                        |        |     |      |
|                                        |        |     |      |

| 3. Summary of Risks (with controls in place) |                                 |                           |          |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Assessment of risk                           | Low / Medium / High / Very High |                           |          |
| Risk to pregnant workers?                    | Yes / No                        | Risk to disabled workers? | Yes / No |

| 4. Evaluation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| This assessment is an accurate statement of the known hazards, risks and precautions. I certify that these will prevent or, if this is not possible, control the risk, subject to 3 above, and that users will be adequately trained and supervised. |       |
| Signature of accountable manager:                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Date: |

| List the hazards related to the activity or work being assessed. |                                     |        |      |           |                                               |        |      |           |                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|--------|------|-----------|------------------|
| Risks to the School                                              | Identify Risk of Incident Occurring |        |      |           | Identify Risk of Impact of Incident Occurring |        |      |           | Control Measures |
|                                                                  | Low                                 | Medium | High | Very High | Low                                           | Medium | High | Very High |                  |
|                                                                  |                                     |        |      |           |                                               |        |      |           |                  |
|                                                                  |                                     |        |      |           |                                               |        |      |           |                  |
|                                                                  |                                     |        |      |           |                                               |        |      |           |                  |