

Wheelwright Lane Primary School



Active Play Policy 2026-2028

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Purpose and Aims
3. Benefit and Risks
4. Supervision
5. The Adult's Role in Play
6. Children's Role in Play
7. Equality and Diversity
8. Environment

Appendix A The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version

Appendix B Health and Safety's Executive's Guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure

Appendix C Benefit Risk Assessment Record Sheet

Appendix D Wheelwright Lane's Play Principles

Appendix E Wheelwright Lane's Children's Play Charter

Appendix F 16 Play Types

Appendix G Best Play – What Play Provision Should Do for Children

Appendix H Adults Roles

1. Introduction

Wheelwright Lane Primary School recognises that play, especially outdoor play is at the heart of healthy, full development for children and is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we are developing our outdoor provision and plan to provide a rich play setting where all children will have access to stimulating environments. We aim to achieve this by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play.

At Wheelwright Lane we are committed to using our school vision and this 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. Purpose and Aims

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'.

Wheelwright Lane Primary School recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes the right to play, recreation and leisure (Article 31) and the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be planned for to ensure high quality and varied provision is made available. Changes in society such as improved technology have led to 'play deprivation' for many children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. 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 come in from play, happy and ready to learn.

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 deprived speech and language. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types (Appendix F).

In March 2024, we surveyed different stakeholders for their views on play time, they highlighted the need for enhanced play opportunities. Some of the comments were; 'I'd like my child to have the opportunity to play with children from different year groups', 'the children need more resources' and 'that further equipment/opportunities would enhance the play and the learning environment'. Other comments included, 'children need more access to play, be with nature and given challenging opportunities' and 'children need to learn to be children, make their own decisions and not be scared all the time'.

At Wheelwright Lane, we believe play has many benefits therefore we aim to:

- We will encourage children to develop their communication and social skills to be excellent collaborators. Activities will be accessible to all and create opportunities to develop friendships, mutual respect and cater for all needs and disability.
- Our play provision promotes positive wellbeing and mental health. This will lead to healthy minds, bodies, high self-esteem and enjoyment in our children.
- Children will be encouraged to explore their natural curiosity through enriched and sensory opportunities to enable the development of creative play.
- Adults will facilitate our active play in a respectful, supportive manner and participate if or when required to do so.

These support our school motto and our learning behaviours. (See our school's Relationship Policy).

School council members have stated the following from the children's viewpoint:

- We will support each other with remembering our motto, 'Be Kind, Be Safe and Be Fair' when playing. We believe that everyone should have 'amazing play every day'.
 - Be Kind -Respect and look after each other their environment and equipment.
 - Be Safe -To take responsibility of their actions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour.
 - Be Fair - Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody.

4. Benefit and Risk

'Play is great for children's wellbeing 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.'

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (2012)

Feedback from our different stakeholders conducted in March 2024 linked to risk benefit was one hundred percent positive with comments such as, 'please let children be children...and able to climb trees. If children can get up, they can get down!' and 'children are able to assess their own risks'. More comments linked to children assessing their own risks included, 'this is important for social growth and providing a rounded education', 'we trust that you will create an age-appropriate environment' and 'please make sure every child gains the developmental experiences that everyone needs but isn't getting from home anymore. I remember having great fun as a child'.

Wheelwright Lane uses the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) (Appendix B) as its principle guiding document in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum number of enriching 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 will practice a dynamic risk management approach to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs. This approach will encourage the children to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

At Wheelwright Lane we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. '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'. Risk assessments will be reviewed on an annual basis or sooner if required. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

'Health and Safety Executive 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)

5. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision, but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adult's present outdoors. Wheelwright Lane recognises that direct supervision is not possible or beneficial. Supervision will ensure that children can quickly find an adult (adults will wear hi-vis vests), and that adults will patrol large sites areas to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

6. The Adult's Role in Play

Adults in school are committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in our school at Wheelwright Lane. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision on offer which will include regular play assemblies, School Council meetings, surveys and use of pupil voice.

The 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 supports key stage 2 pupils acting as playleaders to help guide play at Wheelwright Lane. In addition to this, Wheelwright Lane will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, support staff, the local governing body and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy.

Lunch time supervisors will ensure that a wide range of play opportunities are available to children across the 16 play types and will make a change to the play space if needed. Lunchtime supervisors will ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way. Lunchtime supervisors and pupil playleaders can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn and are also available to participate if required.

7. Children's Role in Play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy (Appendix E). In it will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children which they will need to do to follow the 'relationships policy':

- Be Kind -Respect and look after each other our environment and equipment.
- Be Safe -To take responsibility for our actions and be mindful of risks and to report dangerous or unsafe behaviour and equipment.
- Be Fair - Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody.

This will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with the School Council. Our relationship moto and incorporating our 5 core learning behaviours into play.

8. Equality and Diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's needs we will ensure all children, (regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special needs,) can develop, build strong relationships and enjoy playtimes/outdoor learning.

9. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play.

We will use the 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play.

Appendix G - <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

At Wheelwright Lane we will:

- Our active playtimes will provide an enriched environment where there are a multitude of opportunities for different play types to occur.
- We will provide an exciting and stimulating environment for and a level of support where children can: assess and manage risks; test boundaries by conquering risks; and build resilience and boundaries.
- We will view our outdoor space as an extension of the classroom and will support with a transfer of skills linked to our zones of regulations. We acknowledge children will experience a range of emotions such as scared/confident, brave/cowardly, in/out of control, liked/disliked, powerful/powerless.

Appendix A

The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version
See PDF attached

Appendix B

Health and Safety's Executive's Guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

See PDF attached

Appendix C Benefit Risk Assessment Record Sheet

Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet – Wheelwright Lane adopts a risk-benefit approach to manage our duty of care to protect and our duty of care to provide for children's needs

See PDF attached

Appendix D Wheelwright Lane's Play Principles

See PDF attached

Appendix E

Wheelwright Lane's Children's Play Charter

At Wheelwright Lane we understand the importance of exceptional behaviour. To support this aim we will strive to offer our children outstanding play opportunities. 'Amazing play every day for every child'

At Wheelwright Lane, we have three rules that are used every day. These are: 'Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Fair'

We agree that everyone should have 'amazing play every day'.

We make sure that we follow our motto:

- Be Kind -Respect and look after each other their environment and equipment.
- Be Safe -To take responsibility of their actions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour.
- Be Fair - Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody.

Appendix F 16 Play Types Poster

Appendix G Best Play – What Play Provision Should Do for Child

See PDF attached

Appendix H Training – Adults Roles

Active playtime training has taken place on the following dates:

- MDS 05/24
- LSA/Support staff 06/24
- Parents drop-in meetings – 1/0724/4/07/24
- Teachers 05/24
- Lunchtime supervisors 28/09/26

Policy Agreement: September 2026

Policy

Updated: September 2027

Renewal: January 2029