

# Bricknell Primary School



## OPAL Policy



## 1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children. Play is 20% of children's school week, making this element of school extremely important and essential towards children's learning and development.

## 2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. 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.

The OPAL programme rationale is that *"... better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life."*

At Bricknell Primary School, the play curriculum has been expertly tailored to enable pupils to become resilient, co-operative and managed risk-takers. Our committed OPAL team and dedicated play workers will ensure that pupils are given opportunities to gain important skills and knowledge to develop their learning journey through the means of play. The aspirational curriculum here at Bricknell Primary School is at the forefront of the core values of play; with each aspect of the curriculum wheel being expertly woven throughout targeted strategies during all opportunities for play.

### Aspirational Curriculum Strands:

- **Communication** – *Children will be provided with meaningful opportunities across a range of scenarios to develop team skills, along with learning to compromise and problem solve.*
- **Enterprise** – *Children will set goals and learn to take managed risks, to inform future planning for independent play. Children will adapt ideas to build upon previously acquired knowledge, gained through play.*
- **Co-operative and Collaborative** – *Children will be appropriately scaffolded to ensure they understand how to voice their own opinions and contribute well to team tasks; no child should be unheard. Adults understand when to guide play and when to encourage independence.*
- **Personal Skills** – *Children will, over time, become accustomed to regulating their own emotions through positive play experiences. Negotiation remains a key core skill, in which the children will develop their ability through peer grouped problem solving.*

- **Resilience and Ambition** – Children will become self-reflective of their own ideas and subsequently learn to improve these, by welcoming constructive criticism from their peers and acting upon this.
- **Imaginative and Inquisitive** – With carefully selected materials for play, children will experiment with their own concept of play and adapt creative ideas throughout their play journey.



### 3. The Value of Play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and different ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.

- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables 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.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

### 3.1 Definitions of play:

*The following definitions give an insight into the importance of play, and why it is needed to develop children holistically.*

- *"Play is a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner." – Johan Huizinga (Homo Ludens, 1955).*
- *"Children's play is characterised as an activity that is (a) "desired" by the child whom is playing, (b) "always involves an imaginary situation," and (c) "always involves rules" (which are decided upon by the players)". (Lev Vygotsky, 1978).*
- *"The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens." (David Lloyd George, 1926).*

### 3.2 Our vision for play

Here at Bricknell Primary, we have high expectations for play. We believe that play should be free with calculated risk to develop children as active risk takers who are aware of their environment. We strive for all areas of play to be evident in our play areas, to enable children to reap the many benefits this can provide. Play is an extremely important element of children's school life and should therefore be carefully planned for. Play at Bricknell connects with the following key policies:

- *PSHE – Play at Bricknell encompasses the key and second order concepts listed in the PSHE policy. This clear link can be seen with the key concepts: Celebrating Difference and Relationships. Second order concepts for this subject; such as resilience and responsibility, are prominent when children are playing.*
- *Behaviour – Children are expected to show green standard behaviour whilst playing, in line with the behaviour policy. Adults have a duty to act in line with this policy whilst supervising children's play.*

#### 4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment for all children.
- Allow children to take risks and use a rational approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments that 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 teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

#### 5. Rights

Our 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 take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Article 31 of the Unicef Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. From this, PlayEngland created The Charter for Children's Play which clearly states that:

- Children should have spaces to spend adequate time playing at school.
- Adults should always let children play, this is a non-negotiable.
- Children greatly value and benefit from staffed play provision.
- Children's play is augmented by expert play workers.
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play, this should always be provided when needed.

#### 6. 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)**

**The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document '*Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach*' (September 2012) as the principle value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play.** In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in '*Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide*.

Risk-taking is a vital feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter calculated risks as part of a

stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments, the school will practice dynamic risk management with children, inspiring them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them. All staff are aware of the risk-benefit assessment and have access to this. Please see **appendix 1** for further information.

## **7. Supervision**

The law requires that children in school have supervision, however, for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: direct, remote and ranging. Except for new children in reception, the school does not believe direct supervision is beneficial. Supervision will follow a guideline so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can patrol the sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

The school facilitates the use of OPAL equipment during the hours of 9am-3:15pm Monday to Friday. We do not recommend children using this equipment outside of school hours and if parents/carers wish to let their children do so, parents/carers will have full responsibility for this.

## **8. The Adult's Role in Play**

The school will help children maximize the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles (**Appendix 2**). Staff will refer to and use these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play. The Playworker's core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. Adults should participate in play, only if invited or needed; they should know how and when to intervene.

## **9. 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, thrive and build strong relationships.

## **10. 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.

## **Appendices**

### **1 – Risk Assessment HSE Guidance**

### **2 – Playwork Principles**

### **3 – Children’s Survey**

### **4 – Parent/carers Survey**

### **5 – Types of Play**

## Appendix 1 - 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach' HSE.



Health and Safety  
Executive

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

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. 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 danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks<sup>1</sup> and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

#### Recognising the benefits of play

*Key message: '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'.*

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

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The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])



about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer bench marks that can help.

8. Striking the right balance *does* mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance *does not* mean:

- All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
- Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
- Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
- Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
- Mistakes and accidents will not happen

**What parents and society should expect from play providers**

*Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.*

10. Play providers<sup>2</sup> should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

- The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
- Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful
- Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

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<sup>2</sup> Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday layschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

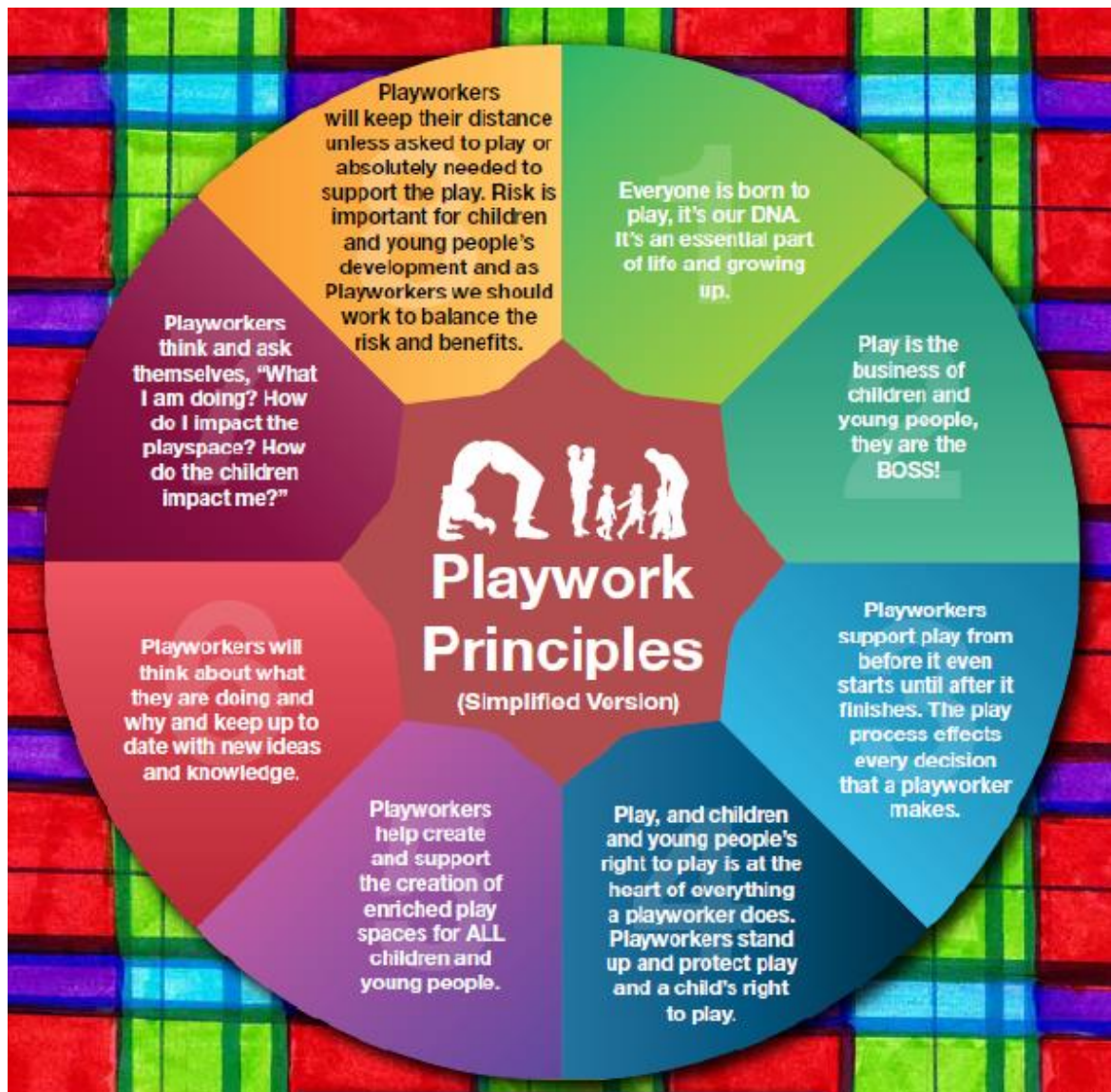
#### **If things go wrong**

*Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'*

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.
15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

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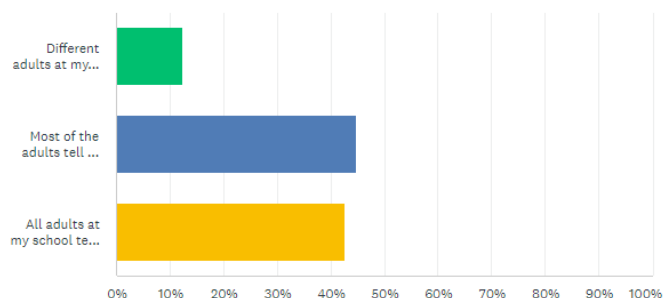
## Appendix 2 - Playwork Principles



## Appendix 3 – Children’s Survey Results

### Consistent messages from adults at playtimes (policy)

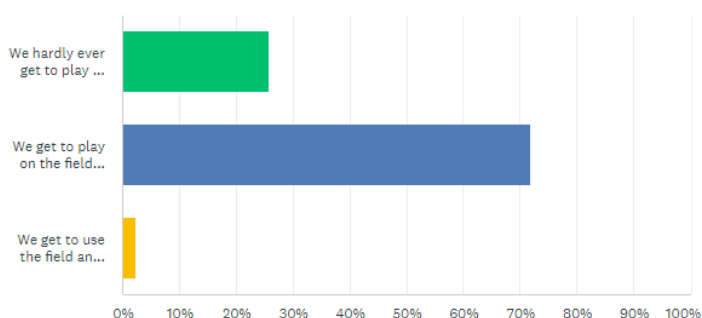
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Different adults at my school tell me different things about what I can and can't do at playtimes (not happy)	12.47% 47
Most of the adults tell me the same things about what I can and can't do at playtimes (medium)	44.83% 169
All adults at my school tell me the same thing about what I can and can't do at playtimes (happy)	42.71% 161
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>377</b>

### Playing on the field and in the bushes (access)

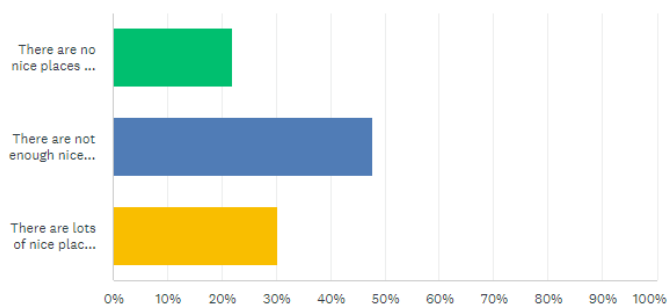
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
We hardly ever get to play on the field and in the bushes (not happy)	25.73% 97
We get to play on the field and in the bushes on dry summer days only (medium)	71.88% 271
We get to use the field and bushes at every playtime all year (happy)	2.39% 9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>377</b>

### Nice places to sit at playtimes (spaces)

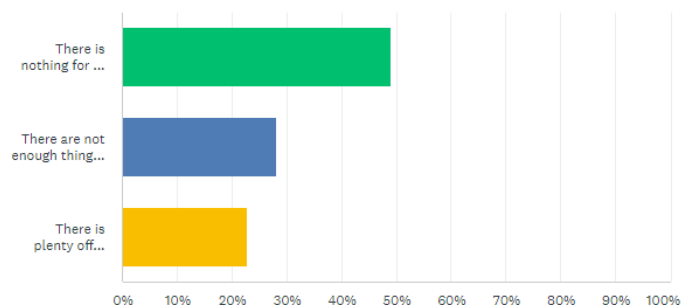
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
There are no nice places to sit at playtimes (not happy)	22.02% 83
There are not enough nice places to sit at playtimes (medium)	47.75% 180
There are lots of nice places to sit at playtimes (happy)	30.24% 114
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>377</b>

### Things to play and build with (loose parts)

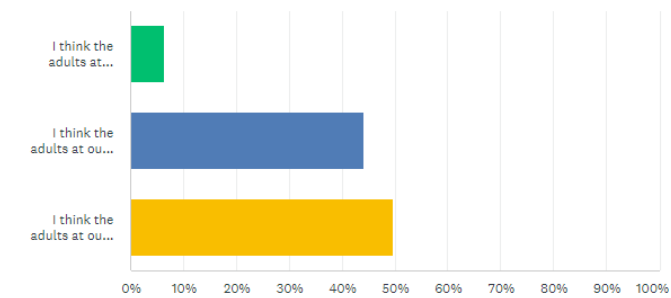
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
There is nothing for me to use if I want to make up a game or build something (not happy)	49.07% 185
There are not enough things to use if I want to make up a game or build something (medium)	28.12% 106
There is plenty off stuff around for me to play with if I want to make up a game or build something (happy)	22.81% 86
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>377</b>

## Adults involvement in playtimes (staff training)

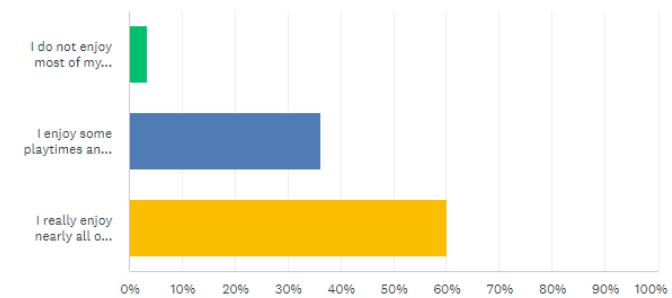
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I think the adults at playtimes mainly stop us doing things (not happy)	6.37%	24
I think the adults at our playtimes could do more to make playtimes more enjoyable (medium)	44.03%	166
I think the adults at our playtimes help us have a really great playtime (happy)	49.60%	187
TOTAL		377

## Enjoyment of playtimes

Answered: 377    Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not enjoy most of my playtimes very much (not happy)	3.45%	13
I enjoy some playtimes and do not enjoy others (medium)	36.34%	137
I really enjoy nearly all of my playtimes (happy)	60.21%	227
TOTAL		377



## **Appendix 4 - Parents Survey**

Question 1									
	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not so important	Not at all important	Total			
How important do you think playtime is for our children?	53	14	0	0	0	67			
Percentage	78%	22%	0%	0%	0%				
Question 2									
	Brilliant	Good	Neither good nor bad	Bit boring	Horrible	Total			
How much does your child enjoy school playtimes?	20	28	12	8	1	69			
Percentage	29%	41%	18%	12%	1%				
Question 3									
	Too short	Just right	Too long	Total					
Do you think playtime at our school is:	20	47	0	67					
Percentage	30%	70%	0%						
Question 4									
	Yes	No	Total						
Do your children have the same opportunities you did?	28	40	68						
Percentage	41%	59%							
Question 5									
	Every day	Few times a week	Once a week	Few times a month	Once a month	Less than once a mont	Total		
How frequently do your children play outdoors?	8	36	11	7	3	3	68		
Percentage	12%	54%	16%	10%	4%				
Question 6									
	Life is too busy	Weather	Traffic	Nowhere to go	My neighbours might compl	Total			
What mostly stops your outdoor play?	29	48	15	9	3	104			
Percentage	28%	46%	14%	9%	3%				

### **Appendix 5 - 16 Common Types of Play**

- Communication Play - *Can be subtle or loud. It involves a large amount of movement and performing.*
- Creative Play – *Imaginative and often messy! Children will be free to use materials to bring their creativity to life.*
- Deep Play – *Involves some measure of risky behaviour. It is worth noting that each child will have a different approach to this type of play, as each child will find different views on what they deem to be frightening.*
- Dramatic Play – *Gives children the opportunity to have an audience. This play does not imitate children's every day lives, but events they have experienced as spectators.*
- Exploratory Play – *Largely centred on children using the environment around them. This play enables them to see what happens as a consequence of their actions.*
- Fantasy Play – *Gives children the chance to express their thoughts and emotions. It is limitless and gives children a sense of power.*
- Imaginative Play – *Involves children pretending to do something or be someone. This can be inanimate objects or even animals, too!*
- Locomotor Play - *Improves their co-ordination and strength through opportunities to climb, run, crawl, pull, push and swing.*
- Mastery Play – *Can be destructive and constructive. Children will build, then destroy, developing ideas of creation and manipulation.*
- Object Play – *Children will explore new items and test their purposes.*
- Recapitulative Play – *Embracing the past. Examples are building dens and using blankets for shelter.*
- Role Play – *This involves exaggerated versions of the people that the children choose to imitate. Children will experiment with roles they have come across in real life situations.*
- Rough and Tumble Play – *Often misunderstood by adults. Can be seen as rolling, tickling and wrestling. Helps to build trust in relationships.*
- Social Play – *Any type of play that enables children to develop their social interaction skills.*
- Socio-dramatic Play – *Involves two or more children re-enacting scenes from their own life.*
- Symbolic Play – *Children will use their imagination and turn an ordinary, everyday object into something completely different.*