

Play Policy



Policy Folder: Pastoral

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At Lantern Lane, our goal is to provide an environment that nurtures confidence, achievement, respect and enthusiasm (C.A.R.E) in all aspects of life.

Commented [BP1]: Links to Intent Statement

We are committed to a collaborative approach with all members of our school community, working hard to cultivate a safe and stimulating learning environment, extending from the classroom into the wider community.

We recognise the importance of the need for high-quality sustainable play for children, regardless of their needs and abilities, and that inclusive play is achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a real choice of accessible play opportunities.

We recognise that high-quality, sustainable play is essential for all children. True inclusion is achieved by providing outdoor spaces that have been consciously designed to offer a diverse range of accessible opportunities for every child.

As an OPAL school, we share their vision: "that every child in every school has an amazing hour of high-quality play every day – with no exceptions."

Commented [BP2]: Links to the OPAL values

Play is at the heart of holistic development, serving as a vital foundation for physical health, emotional well-being, and spiritual and intellectual maturity. Therefore, we are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain high-quality play provision for all our children.

2 - Background

With play accounting for up to 20% of the school day, this invaluable time requires intentional and strategic planning. Modern societal shifts (including increased traffic, an overreliance on electronic devices & technology, and a decline in safe public spaces) have contributed to 'play poverty.' Consequently, the high-quality play opportunities we provide at school have never been more crucial.

Commented [BP3]: Links to challenges faced in modern society

Meaningful play opportunities foster happier students and significantly reduce behavioural issues. By cultivating a positive attitude toward school and improving social skills, meaningful play results in fewer accidents and allows staff to focus on progressing learning in the classroom rather than spending crucial learning time resolving conflicts.

Play England's Charter for Children's Play (2009) sets out a vision for play and states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school
- Adults should let children play
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision
- Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Commented [BP4]: Direct links to Play England's Charter for Play

Here at Lantern Lane, we fully recognise our duties and responsibilities to support children's playtime while they are at school.

Commented [BP5R4]: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609a5802ba3f13305c43d352/t/60a4c634499714081107fe49/1718621808342/charter-for-childrens-play.pdf>

3 - What is 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"

Commented [BP6]: Quote from Government's Play Strategy

It is important that play meets the four components of a child's development:

- Physical: Enhancing motor skills, coordination, and overall fitness.
- Intellectual: Stimulating cognitive growth, curiosity, and imagination.
- Educational: Reinforcing academic knowledge and practical understanding.
- Social: Cultivating core values, self-perception, and essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and effective communication."

Commented [BP7]: Links to the 4 components of child development

At Lantern Lane Primary School, we determine high-quality play to be an experience where:

- Creativity and Collaboration Thrive: Children are encouraged to be inventive and work together.
- Adults are Responsive: Staff actively engage with and support children's play-based invitations and needs.
- Diversity is Embraced: Play is valued whether it is a quiet, solitary pursuit or a vibrant social activity.
- Curiosity is Sparked: The environment invites deep investigation and hands-on discovery.
- Well-being is Central: We recognise that play brings joy—and happy children are the most effective learners.

4 - The Benefits 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. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types [Appendix 1], e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

Extensive early childhood research confirms that play is a cornerstone of education and lifelong learning. Studies demonstrate that play-based experiences enhance problem-solving abilities while providing a vital framework for social interaction and acquisition of language. By engaging in diverse play types [Appendix 1], children are empowered to experiment, innovate, and safely challenge their personal boundaries within a range of scenarios.

Through the implementation of this policy, we anticipate that our students will develop:

- Emotional wellbeing: Greater happiness, heightened self-awareness, and improved self-esteem.
- Cognitive & Academic Skills: Enhanced concentration, creative thinking, and imaginative problem-solving.
- Social & Communication Excellence: Advanced language skills, effective negotiation, and collaborative teamwork.
- Character & Resilience: Increased independence, confidence, and the ability to navigate challenges with resilience.
- Physical Health: Improved motor skills, coordination, and overall physical fitness.

5 Benefit and Risk, Health and Safety

"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 (Play Safety Forum, 2012).

Commented [BP8]: Quote from Play Safety Forum 2012

"Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury" - Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

Commented [BP9]: Quote from Play Safety Forum 2012

A fundamental component of play is the freedom for children to engage in self-directed activities that involve managed risk. By encountering acceptable challenges, children move beyond their current capabilities and cultivate the vital ability to judge risks independently. Restricting these opportunities can inhibit development, leaving children less prepared to navigate the complexities and hazards of the wider world.

Research indicates that the inherent uncertainty and challenge of play are what make it so compelling for children. These experiences are vital for both neurological and physical development, fostering resilience and situational adaptability.

Crucially, 'risk' extends beyond physical boundaries; it encompasses the social and emotional challenges of forging new friendships, engaging with diverse perspectives, and building the determination to trial new experiences where success is not always guaranteed.

At Lantern Lane, we believe children should be empowered to navigate and manage risk within an environment that is as safe as is necessary, rather than an environment completely devoid of risk. Alongside formal risk-benefit assessments, the school will utilise dynamic risk management; this approach involves staff working alongside children to help them identify and mitigate challenges in real-time, providing a supportive safety net for their growing independence.

Risk-taking is a fundamental feature of any high-quality play environment. Our provision is designed to offer children managed challenges that stimulate growth within a secure framework. As outlined in 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".

Our school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach' (September 2012) [Appendix 3] as the principal 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 (Play Safety Forum, 2012).

- Inspection & Maintenance: The Play Team conducts daily safety checks on all activities, play areas, and equipment. Additionally, the Site Team oversees annual professional inspections of all fixed and engineered structures. Records of all checks are maintained in the school office.
- Risk-Benefit Assessments: For activities deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of serious injury or harm, the OPAL Curriculum Lead and OPAL Play Coordinator conduct formal risk-benefit assessments. These documents aim to justify the developmental value against the managed risk and are maintained in the school office.
- Operational Oversight: Managed by the Play Coordinator, the Play Team is responsible for the general safety and organisation of the site, equipment, and open-access resources, as well as any staff-led activities.
- Staff Accountability: All staff members are required to operate within the school's agreed policies and strictly adhere to the control measures identified in risk assessments.
- Reporting & Resolution: Every member of the Play Team is responsible for identifying hazards and ensuring that any deficiencies are rectified immediately. All concerns must be reported to the Play Coordinator as soon as possible.

6 - The Adults' Role in Play

Lantern Lane Primary School empowers children to maximise the rewards of play via a team of trained staff, guided by the Playwork Principles [Appendix 2]; our staff apply these principles to determine when and how to intervene, ensuring they facilitate an environment that prioritises and nurtures authentic, self-directed play.

The primary role of the playworker is to cultivate a stimulating environment that broadens a child's access to diverse play experiences. Through careful environmental design and the ability to utilise varied resources, skilled playworkers enrich the play environment while fostering a positive, inclusive culture for all children. By introducing new materials and tools, they act as catalysts for exploration and learning, remaining available to join in the play, only when invited to do so by the children.

Led by the Play Coordinator, our Play Team is dedicated to providing a diverse spectrum of play opportunities. By continually observing and analysing play patterns, staff can make informed decisions on when to adapt the environment or provide a carefully chosen intervention. At Lantern Lane, we are committed to maintaining an inclusive space where every child is empowered to engage with the available opportunities in their own unique way.

7 - OPAL [Outdoor Play and Learning]

Lantern Lane Primary School has partnered with OPAL [Outdoor Learning and Play] to elevate the quality of our play provision. Through a strategic plan, we will transform our grounds into a dynamic landscape that children can continually create and reinvent. Our goal is to establish a fully integrated play environment that brings together students from Foundation through to Year 6.

7.1 Loose Parts

Studies show that varied play environments inspire deeper exploration and learning. At the heart of our provision are 'loose parts': adaptable and attractive materials that children can change and move as they see fit. These resources are housed in designated areas across the grounds and within our dedicated OPAL Play storage sheds.

7.2 Monitoring

Monitoring the impact of our play provision is essential. We will use pupil feedback and the OPAL audit framework to track our progress against the school's play strategy. These findings will be summarised in an annual report to presented to governors.

7.3 Physical Environment

We view our outdoor environment as a vital natural resource for both play and learning. Through collaborative planning with our students, we ensure our grounds provide a rich landscape for investigation, creative problem-solving, and imaginative discovery. By granting children the autonomy to manage and enjoy these spaces, we empower them to develop a deep sense of respect for the environment and a genuine care for the natural world.

8. Our positive approach

We believe that establishing positive, constructive relationships between staff and children is essential for children to be successful learners and make accelerated progress. To foster such relationships our lunchtime supervision focuses on establishing caring relationships, praise and 'catching children being good'.

8.1 Our school rules

We have three key rules across school which we expect all children to follow:

- *Care for each other*
- *Care for our learning*
- *Care for our school & community*

Midday supervisors should refer to our school rules & play charter when rewarding positive behaviour & managing any negative behaviour.

Please note:

Playfighting and rough play are not allowed.

Children should not be in any classroom unsupervised.

Children should walk inside school.

8.2 Relationships & Rewards

Establishing positive relationships with pupils is important for us at Lantern Lane. Greeting children with a smile goes a long way! In the dining hall, circulate around and speak to the children, praising them for following our Golden Rules and provide them with support if needed. When outside, move around your area of supervision and speak to children and encourage them to engage in constructive activities.

House points: Midday supervisors should give out house point stickers for children who follow our school rules and codes during lunchtime. The expectation is that each midday gives out at least two stickers every day.

Golden welly award: Each week, our play team choose two children – one from EYFS/KS1 and one from KS2 – who have set a good example to others and displayed excellent 'play' behaviours and CARE values. The awards are announced in our weekly CARE assembly.

8.3 Meaningful consequences

When things go wrong, remember to:

- Speak calmly – do not shout.
- Unless in an emergency, get to where the problem is rather than 'shouting over' to children
- Talk to children at their level & be mindful of your body language.
- Allow children to be heard calmly, without interruption.
- Avoid confrontation and making immediate demands on a child if they are upset or angry, but do not ignore bad behaviour.
- Label the behaviour and not the child (e.g. "It's dangerous to run in the corridor someone could get hurt" and not "You are very silly")

Warning

Most incidents where children do not follow our golden rules, can be managed by reminding the children of the rule they need to follow or resolving minor disagreements between children.

If a child doesn't respond to a first warning, remind them again that they need to stop that behaviour and explain that this is their final warning.

Reflection station

If the behaviour is repeated again, explain to the child that they need to go to our 'Reflection Station' to help fix the problem. Walk to the reflection station with the child and calmly explain to the staff member what has happened. Depending on the situation, it may be better to do this away from the child to avoid further confrontation. The child will spend 5 minutes at the reflection station and engage in a restorative conversation. If the child isn't able to engage in this conversation, they will be given further time to calm down before re-engaging.

If the child refuses to go to the Reflection Station, go there and explain to the staff member what has happened and that the child has refused to come. Often, children will make the right choice when given time and space to do so.

Unacceptable behaviour

There are some types of behaviour which will result in a child being asked to go to the Reflection Station immediately. These include:

- Hurting others
- Swearing & offensive language
- Discriminatory language (e.g. sexist, racist or homophobic language)
- Sexualised behaviour
- Bullying

The child will spend 10 minutes at the reflection station and engage in a restorative conversation and meaningful consequences agreed. If the child isn't able to engage in this conversation, they will be given further time to calm down before re-engaging.

These incidents will be recorded & class teacher and parents/carers informed. Incident logs are reviewed regularly by SLT. Incidents relating to discriminatory language, bullying, sexualised behaviour will be recorded on CPOMS and reviewed by the DSL & SLT. All serious incidents are immediately reported to SLT; our behaviour policy and other related policies will be followed.

Repeated incidents

If a child is repeatedly not following the school rules at lunchtime; additional support, personalised rewards/sanctions, and involvement from senior leaders/parents & carers/external agencies may be introduced, following our behaviour policy. Childrens' progress will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

9. Safeguarding & Child Protection

At Lantern Lane, we are alert to the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect. Therefore, staff are instructed to follow our Child Protection Policy and follow our safeguarding reporting procedures if a child's behaviour over lunchtime raises any safeguarding concerns.

10. Restorative conversations

Using a restorative approach means we are solution focussed and use meaningful consequences, tailored to the incident and those involved. Meaningful consequences can include, but are not limited to; a sincere apology followed by an act of kindness; loss of privileges; further loss of playtime/lunchtime. We focus on the need to take responsibility for finding a constructive way forward for all concerned. Such approaches encourage children to think not only of the consequences of their behaviour on themselves but also to consider the impact of their actions on others.

Restorative format:

- Restorative conversations work best when adults spend less time on the problem and more time on the resolution.
- The conversation should only be for the children/people involved.
- Only one person talks at a time and normally the first person is the one that has been 'harmed'.
- No interrupting.
- Listen carefully to each other and be respectful.
- WHY questions should be avoided as they are a high functioning question.



- Perspectives will be considered e.g. What happened on the playground? My truth, your truth and THE TRUTH, all from same situation but different perspectives.

11. Supervision areas

It is important that midday supervisors wear the hi-vis vests provided to ensure they are visible to children. When on duty, staff should circulate and take the opportunity to socialise with children, whilst maintaining an overview of the play area and spotting potential problems before they escalate. Members of staff all have a designated area. By working within this area, the children know where the adults are and supervision is spread across the playground.

12 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In accordance with Article 31 of the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of the Child', we recognise that every child has the fundamental right to relax, play, and participate in a diverse range of recreational and artistic activities. Lantern Lane Primary School is committed to upholding this right by ensuring all students (regardless of age, gender, or background) have the autonomy to engage in play that is personally meaningful and suitable for them.

Commented [BP10]: Links to Article 31 of the UN Rights of the child

At Lantern Lane Primary School, we are committed to an environment free from harassment, discrimination, or inequality. We ensure that no student is disadvantaged by their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, or belief system. We view diversity as a core strength and reject discrimination in all forms. Recognising that every child and their family is unique, we tailor our educational approach to reflect their diverse life experiences and empower them as individuals. Our teaching strategies are continuously reviewed to remove barriers to success, ensuring full alignment with our Equalities Policy and Equality Objectives.

Commented [BP11]: Links to LL Policy

13 - Policy Review & Linked Policies

This policy will be reviewed formally by the OPAL Curriculum Lead every 3 years.

Linked Policies:

Relationships & Behaviour Policy

Child on child abuse Policy

First Aid Policy

14 - Notes

- 1) 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])
- 2) Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

15 – Appendices

Appendix 1: Play Types

There are acknowledged to be around 16 different play types which provide playworkers, managers and trainers with a common language for describing play. They are in no particular order.

- **Symbolic Play** – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of depth e.g. using a piece of wood to symbolise a person or an object or a piece of string to symbolise a wedding ring.
- **Rough and Tumble Play** – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. This type of play

allows children to participate in physical contact that doesn't involve or result in someone being hurt. This type of play can use up lots of energy.

- **Socio-dramatic Play** – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.
- **Social Play** – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended e.g. any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols i.e. games, conversations, making something together.
- **Creative Play** – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. Allows children to design, explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. They can use lots of different tools, props, equipment. It can have a beginning and an end, texture and smell e.g. enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake. Self-expression through any medium, making things, changing things.
- **Communication Play** – play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. mime / charades, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, whispering, pointing, debate, street slang, poetry, text messages, talking on mobiles / emails/ internet, skipping games, group and ball games.
- **Dramatic Play** – play which dramatises events in which the child is not a direct participator e.g. presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.
- **Locomotor Play** – movement in any or every direction for its own sake eg chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.
- **Deep Play** – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life-threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear e.g. light fires with matches, make weapons, conquer fear such as heights, snakes, and creepy crawlies. Some find strength they never knew they had to climb obstacles, lift large objects etc e.g. leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike on a parapet, balancing on a high beam, roller skating, assault course, high jump.
- **Exploratory Play** – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects eg engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.
- **Fantasy Play** – This is the make-believe world of children. This type of play is where the child's imagination gets to run wild. Play, which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way that is unlikely to occur e.g. playing at being a pilot flying around the world, pretend to be various characters/people, be where ever they want to be, drive a car, become be six feet nothing tall or as tiny as they want to be the list is endless as is a child's imagination.
- **Imaginative Play** – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply e.g. imagining you are or pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting a dog which isn't there.
- **Mastery Play** – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments e.g. digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.
- **Object Play** – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements e.g. examination and novel use of any object e.g. cloth, paintbrush, cup.
- **Role Play** – play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. brushing with a broom, dialling with a telephone, driving a car.
- **Recapitulative Play** – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.

Appendix 2: The Playwork Principles

These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for Playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and Playwork and provide the Playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

- 1) All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- 2) Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- 3) The prime focus and essence of Playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
- 4) For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
- 5) The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- 6) The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- 7) Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- 8) Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.

Appendix 3: HSE 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 risks¹ 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 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 benchmarks 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 providers² 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
- 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.