Ryedene Primary and Nursery School

'Growing together to succeed'

Play and Risk Management Policy

September 2026

To be reviewed annually or after any incident

Introduction

This policy sets out Ryedene Primary School's commitment to ensuring that all children have quality play opportunities. As a school, we will refer to this 'Play and Risk Management' 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 our children and managing the risks and benefits associated with them.

This document is intended for:

- ✓ All teaching staff
- ✓ All staff with classroom responsibilities
- ✓ Volunteers and University Students
- ✓ School governors
- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Inspection teams

At Ryedene Primary School we recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. We aim to provide high quality, enjoyable play experiences for all children across school. We will do this by providing carefully considered outdoor spaces, play structures and resources that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child.

We will refer to our school's vision and this play policy in all decisions that affect our children's play. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all our children. We provide a wide range of balanced learning opportunities in a caring and stimulating environment; this extends to the learning, and health and well-being experiences that can be achieved at play times. We aim to seek the maximum potential development for children at Ryedene Primary School and quality opportunities are key to their learning, development of strong friendships and sense of being well.

Aims

In relation to play, Ryedene Primary School aims to:

- Ensure that children have access to a wide range of opportunities for play which they enjoy, in spaces where they can lead on their play and explore their own imaginations.
- Provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment, which inspires children to explore and learn
- Allow children to take healthy risks and use a balanced approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other, but also for play to be co-operative or solitary.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Promote self-regulation, independence and teamwork within children. Children are able to work collaboratively, make decisions together and are supported in resolving conflicts, using restorative conversation.
- Build emotional and physical resilience amongst our children.
- Harness an inclusive environment that ensures children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources, as long as it is reasonably safe for them to do so, regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background.
- Encourage adults to be responsive to children's invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk-benefit assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities and develop the children's risk awareness. Adults recognise the importance of high-quality play and their role in supporting sustained shared thinking.

Benefit and Risk

At Ryedene Primary School, we believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, 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.

We commit to providing the children of Ryedene Primary School with all of the benefits of play, whilst managing any risks involved. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment.

In the words of the Health and Safety Executive: *'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'.*

Many research studies establish social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Research studies have found that the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual benefits to children of engaging with risk and uncertainty in play are substantial. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences and importantly less fearful of experiences that are new to them. Risky play or playing with uncertainty enables children to place themselves in situations that have a sense of jeopardy and risk without actually over-exposing themselves to the serious likelihood of harm (Gordon & Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007; Pellis, 2013). When creating risky scenarios, like climbing and balancing in their play, children might more accurately be described as being in control of generating the feeling of being out of control. Ellen Sandseter (2010) found that these forms of play (children called, 'scary fun') were very important to children. Children develop this scary fun in their play because it's exhilarating and thrilling, gives them a sense of pride and achievement when mastering a new challenge, and influences their self-esteem, self-confidence, and peer relationships.

Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge are not limited to physical risk but also include 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. Risk is an ever-present factor of life and therefore risk management skills are an essential life skill, the development of which is best supported through direct experience in a supportive environment.

Supervision

At Ryedene Primary School, we understand the importance of appropriate supervision during play times. The law requires that children in school are supervised, but for primary school playtimes there are no stated adult to child ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors.

At Ryedene Primary School, in order to allow children to make full use of each of our playgrounds, direct supervision is used as much as possible, especially in the younger years. Although this does not mean every child is constantly watched, every area is supervised by at least one or two adults, if not more. Children should always know where adults are if they need assistance and and will be able to see them in their playground in order to get any support needed.

Our school grounds are separated playgrounds and school field (only in warmer months) with at least two adults on duty in each area. An additional 'senior' member of staff will be present during each playtime to have an overview of the whole site and to offer support in a specific area if necessary. Adults within each playground will communicate via walkie-talkies (lunchtime only) and all duty middays will have access to first aid equipment via a bum bag. If an incident involving a child requires a phone call home, this must be reported to the class teacher and recorded on Medical Tracker. Any major injuries must follow the same procedures but also be recorded in the accident book located in the school office. All staff have basic First Aid training, with several staff having paediatric First Aid qualifications.

Playground Risk Assessment (including Fixed Play Equipment)

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?
Volume of pupils on playground	Children bumping into each other during the normal course of play or pushing each other from standing surfaces at height.	• The law requires that children in school are supervised, but for primary school playtimes there are no stated adult to child ratios – our ratio pupils and staff regularly monitored to ensure sufficient supervision. • Staggered lunch times from 12:00 – 1:35pm for use of dinner hall and numbers of children on playgrounds • Playgrounds are separated into year groups / key stages: ✓ EYFS ✓ Year 1 ✓ Year 2 ✓ Year 3 / Year 4 ✓ Year 5 / Year 6 • When possible, Lunchtime Clubs are offered to reduce volume of pupils	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Ongoing, weekly, daily

Supervision on playground	Children bumping into each other during the normal course of play or pushing each other from standing surfaces at height.	• Staff are positioned at stations on the playground that they only leave when notifying another member of staff. These areas are considered where the most risk could occur (climbing, ball play, train and target wall) • Staff all have radios and communicate with one another, for first aid and calls for classes in for dinner • At least 1 member in each year group of staff always carries a first aid kit about their person • Hazard checks made playground/field both break and lunchtime • Pupils to be made aware of what considered as a playground hazard	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Ongoing, weekly, daily
Unsafe condition or use of equipment & furniture	Children hurting themselves on broken equipment leading to cuts or bruising during the normal course of play	• Pre-use checks of play equipment by school logged • Weekly inspections of play equipment by school recorded • Play equipment given an annual safety inspection by competent company • All furniture is kept in good condition i.e. free from splinters, loose joints, protruding bolts or screws etc • The supervision assessment accounted for the risk of injury using the play equipment and any defaults reported immediately and taken out of use • Staff supervising the use of play equipment understand safe use • Checks for vandalism-broken glass and sharps or animal litter	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Ongoing, weekly, daily

		• Playground surface maintained in good condition to minimise slips and trips • Check free from ice before use in winter • Kept free from build-up of leaves in autumn • Pupils made aware of safe use, what to do if they find equipment broken and who to report to immediately.			
Wet playtimes	Children bumping into each other or slipping during the normal course of play in wet conditions	• Wet Play Rota for all classrooms – ensuring staff supervision • Allocated Playtime Lead or Senior Midday who makes the decision around wet play in liaison with SLT • Use of radios and/or emails to communicate with other members of staff • First aider available at all times • Pupils reminded to wear correct clothing both coats, shoes etc. • Weather to be assessed to allow pupils to have time outside safely. • Continued assessment in icy, stormy thunder and lightning conditions	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily
Hot playtimes	Dehydration of pupils, sun stroke and burning of skin Hot surfaces	• Pupils required and reminded to wear sun hats, suncream and cover up. • Sheltered areas provided or alternative sat down activities provided in the shade	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	During Summer Months
Keeping dry		• Children will only be able to use areas where they can become muddy/wet if they have appropriate clothing • Areas that this type of clothing is worn will be limited in numbers / sectioned off	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff	During Winter Months

		to ensure it is safe and or supervised • If too wet to be outside without suitable clothing, 'wet play' will take place		Support Staff	
First Aid		• Staff are trained in first aid. Should an incident occur, they will take a child to a qualified first aider. • Staff member on scene of incident to assess and log the injury. • Major injuries or minor are both recorded on Medical Tracker • Major injuries are also to be recorded in the school accident book located in the main office • Pupils with Major injuries – parent/carers are telephoned • Staff use radios at lunchtime to ensure adequate levels of staffing available or can call for assistance. This is be done via phone or email during breaktimes	Constant monitoring taking place	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	
Manual Handling	Pupils and staff injuring themselves from lifting incorrectly	• Pupils are told how they should move equipment around the playground – through assembly or by staff out on duty • A number of staff have Manual Handling training that supervise break/lunchtime duty	Schedule of training / posters and information sent to all staff	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily
Keeping the playgrounds tidy	Slip, falls, trips from items laying around un-used.	• Pupils are encouraged to tidy and pick up items when they have finished with them • The whistle is blown 4 minutes before the end of lunch allowing for lining up and a tidy. • All staff support pupils with this task • Midday staff complete a 'sweep' of the playgrounds for discarded items at the		Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily

		end of lunch • Caretaker's daily tasks include tidying the playgrounds and emptying bins			
Trees / bushes	Falling branches, trees. Toxic trees/shrubbery can cause poisoning	• The School Site Manager keeps a check on bushes and trees and will contact the Property Maintenance company to have them cut or removed when necessary • Pupils are encouraged to wash their hands after playing outside or touching branches.	Staff awareness / Frequent Monitoring	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily
Poisonous plants/nettles	Pupils, toxic plants and stung by nettles	• Staff must supervise children at all times when in playgrounds and on the field • Staff to ensure area is safe and free from nettles • School Site Manager and Caretaker keep a check on bushes and trees and will contact the Property Maintenance company to have them cut or removed when necessary • Teach pupils awareness of poisonous plants	Reminders of safe plants and poisonous species for staff and children	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily
Gates and boundaries	Fear of intruders out of hours or during school time. Damaged boundaries allowing unwanted animals or humans into the school grounds	• Gates are locked, and staff members keep a check on gates and fences when on duty • Site Manager checks each morning the condition of gates/locks to ensure no one has tampered with them • Regular checks of boundary fences completed by Site Manager and Caretaker • Daily checks of Forest Area for signs of intruders / vandalism out of school hours	Frequent Monitoring	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily
Wooden climbing frames and castles	Children bumping into each other during the normal course of play, or pushing each other from standing surfaces at height	• Ropes and wood inspected daily while in use • Annual inspections and remedial works carried out as and when needed • Safe play – age-appropriate heights monitored when climbing, at all times	Frequent Monitoring / equipment taken out of action if necessary	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily

		• Staff do not lift pupils up and only support in an emergency when accessing the climbing equipment. • Do not allow pupils to jump from height • Pupils not allowed to sit on top of the rails, hang down or be upside-down • 1 member of staff to view area at all times • Radios to be used at all times during lunch • Inappropriate pupil behaviour during unstructured play is not allowed – staff to provide reminders and consequences when necessary			
Use of outdoor play equipment	Children bumping into each other during the normal course of play or pushing each other from standing surfaces at height.	• Equipment to be checked regularly by adults • Broken equipment to be taken out of action and discarded • Pupils to pick up and put back equipment when not in use • Adults to assist with picking up of equipment in high populated areas to prevent slips, trips or falls	Frequent Monitoring	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily
Netball / Basketball posts	Children bumping into each other during the normal course of play, or pushing each other from standing surfaces at height Balls uncontrolled and hurting others	• Staff members monitor this area when in use • Pupils taught safe play i.e. no pushing or pulling of others or their clothing • Please ensure younger pupils are able to participate in a safe way or direct to age related basketball area on the playground • No kicking of the basketballs or netballs • Posts to be stored safely away when not in use • During adverse weather such as high winds, these are not to be used and are to	Frequent Monitoring	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	Daily

		remain stored			
Playing field	Children bumping into each over during the normal course of play, pushing pulling each other, stray balls, stray branches from trees and falls from climbing	• The Field will be made available when safe to use on dry days • Checks for dog/cat waste and dead animals • Check for mole hills and burrowing animal holes • Checks or cracks and holes due to dry ground • No digging allowed on the field • 1 member of staff per year group (at least) at all times and ratio of pupils monitored throughout • Radios to be used at lunchtimes • Field is not to be used at break times • First aider available at all times • Rough play is not permitted; no 'play fighting' • Footballs to be kept at a safe height and in one area • Key stage 1 engagement with football matches to be monitored for safety • No climbing on goal nets or posts • Hand washing in place after play	Frequent monitoring before / during play	Head Teacher Senior Leaders Site Manager Caretaker Teaching Staff Support Staff	During late-spring / summer months