
Play Policy

2024/25



Kindness



Focus



Creativity



Responsibility



Collaboration

New Wave Federation Play Policy

Connecting to Our Vision and Values

At the New Wave Federation, our vision is to create inclusive, inspiring and dynamic learning environments where every child thrives academically, socially and emotionally. Our values — **Collaboration, Creativity, Focus, Kindness and Responsibility** underpin everything we do, including our approach to play.

We believe that play is integral to children's development and well-being. It allows them to develop the skills, confidence and curiosity they need to flourish in school and beyond. This policy reflects our commitment to ensuring that playtime is safe, inclusive and enriching for all children in our care.

1. Commitment to Play

The New Wave Federation is dedicated to embedding this Play Policy into all aspects of school life, ensuring that children have access to high-quality play opportunities every day. We commit to:

- Prioritising play in decision-making processes;
- Providing the leadership, resources and training necessary to support and sustain excellent play opportunities;
- Continually reviewing and improving our play environments to reflect the needs and voices of our children.

By doing so, we aim to foster a school culture where play is valued as an essential part of childhood, contributing to happier, healthier and more engaged learners.

2. Rationale

The New Wave Federation recognises that play is a universal right, as outlined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. All children, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances, deserve opportunities to explore, create and grow through play.

Aligned with our values, we ensure that our play environments are welcoming and accessible to all. We embrace the philosophy of the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) programme, which highlights that better, more active and creative play times lead to:

- **Happier, healthier children** who are better equipped to learn;
- **Improved relationships** and fewer behavioral challenges;
- **More positive and resilient school communities** where staff and students thrive.

We are committed to creating play opportunities that reflect our value of **Creativity**, enabling children to imagine, innovate, and explore freely.

3. Definition and Value of Play

Play Defined:

Play is any self-directed activity that brings joy, creativity and satisfaction to the child. It may involve others or be entirely independent, structured or spontaneous.

Value of Play:

At New Wave Federation, we value play as a cornerstone of childhood and recognise its contributions to physical, emotional and intellectual growth. Play embodies our values in the following ways:

- **Focus:** Play supports sustained engagement and focus, fostering persistence and determination;
- **Creativity:** Play encourages exploration, innovation and problem-solving;
- **Responsibility:** Through play, children learn to manage emotions, overcome challenges and adapt to new situations.
- **Kindness:** Play enables children to connect across differences, building empathy and understanding.
- **Collaboration:** Play strengthens teamwork, communication and negotiation skills.

Our staff actively facilitate these outcomes by creating environments that inspire play and by supporting children as they explore and learn.

4. Aims of the Play Policy

In line with our vision and values, the New Wave Federation aims to:

- Create **varied, stimulating and inclusive environments** for all children.
- Allow children to take risks, encouraging them to develop their problem-solving and resilience.
- Foster **respect** for one another and the natural and built environment.

- Support children's **physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth** through play.
- Offer diverse opportunities for imaginative, exploratory and curriculum-linked play.
- Build teamwork, independence and self-confidence in our pupils.

We believe that playtime is an extension of the classroom—a space where children's curiosity, creativity and connections can continue to grow.

5. Rights and Listening to Children

The New Wave Federation upholds children's rights to play and to be heard (Articles 31 and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

We are committed to listening to children's voices, involving them in decisions about play provision and ensuring that their experiences are joyful and fulfilling. By engaging with children directly, we ensure that their play reflects their interests, cultures and imaginations.

6. Risk and Benefit in Play

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'

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

New Wave Federation 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 an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. 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 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'.

In addition to standard risk/benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

7. Supervision

Aligned with our value of **Collaboration**, supervision during playtime is a shared responsibility among trained adults who understand the importance of fostering safe, inclusive and enriching play experiences.

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 adults present outdoors. New Wave Federation recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: *Direct*, *Remote* and *Ranging*. With the exception for new children in reception, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Adult supervision will adopt both remote and roaming approaches, enabling children to easily locate an adult while allowing adults to patrol extensive areas to better understand the types of play and levels of risk that may occur.

8. Adults' Role

Adults at the New Wave Federation play a key role in facilitating high-quality play experiences by:

- **Creating environments** that stimulate curiosity and exploration.
- Encouraging independence while offering guidance when necessary.
- Acting as role models for respectful, inclusive behavior.
- Supporting dynamic risk-taking and problem-solving.
- Listening to children's ideas and incorporating their feedback into play provision.

Guided by the Playwork Principles, adults strive to create spaces where children feel safe, valued, and free to express themselves. The playworker's core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced playworker is capable of enriching the child's play experience both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in terms of

the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

9. Environment

The New Wave Federation is committed to providing **rich, diverse play settings** that are safe yet challenging. Our school grounds are continually enhanced to reflect our values of **Creativity** and **Inclusivity**, offering opportunities for children to:

- Engage with natural elements and open-ended materials.
- Explore imaginative, physical, and social play.
- Build connections with peers and the environment.

We are guided by the principles of the [‘Best Play’](#) framework and continually review and adapt our grounds to meet the needs of all children.

Policy Review and Implementation

This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects the needs of our school community and the evolving understanding of play’s importance in child development.

At the New Wave Federation, we are dedicated to fostering a culture where play is celebrated as an essential and joyful part of childhood.