



Break and Lunch Outdoor Play Policy

	Date
Consultation & Engagement (Staff, Pupils, Parents etc)	September – October 2025
Next consultation/review date:	October 2027
Ratification	
<i>On behalf of Board of Governors</i>	

Break and Lunchtime Outdoor Play Policy

St Eugene's Primary School aim to enhance the quality of outdoor free play opportunities at school through:

- Supporting outdoor play.
- Establishing and maintaining a high profile for free play.
- Relating play issues directly to the school's values and ethos.
- Ensuring that decision making at all levels within the school includes consideration of those decisions that impact on children's opportunities to play.
- Applying this Break and Lunchtime Outdoor Play Policy consistently.

Furthermore, to ensure that play is a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers, and governors we will:

- Involve children, staff (including teaching and supervisory staff) and parents in play development work.
- Use the school prospectus to promote our play policy.
- Keep the whole school community informed of play developments.
- Undertake relevant play and risk management training where possible.

Our Play Values

- We recognise the child's right to play.
- We value the opportunity for Play and recognise the many benefits it offers children.
- We value the play environments available within our school and will strive to ensure that they are maintained and accessible to all our pupils.
- We accept and value the concept of providing risk and challenge in play provision as set forth in the 'Managing Risk in Play Provision Implementation Guide'. This includes the need to incorporate 'risk benefit' assessments into our play provision.
- We value the role of our staff in providing the best play opportunities we can for our pupils. (This incorporates our recognition of the need for the adults to implement behaviour management guidelines when required).

Our Understanding of Play.

Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It can provide children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically. It also provides a rich context for the development of children's language, imagination; creative thinking and can encourage positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Play should be seen as an integral part of children's education – it is a natural and enjoyable way for children to learn. At St Eugene's Primary School, the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the curriculum and for all key stages.

We believe that the provision and planning for outdoor play must reflect the diversity and richness of the experience and developing interests of the children.

“Some opportunities for learning can only happen outside. The experience of a change in the weather, finding a colony of ants under a big stone, making a large-scale construction with huge cardboard cartons or painting on great big strips of wallpaper – all of these motivate children in mental and physical engagement “.

Marjorie Ouvry, the National Early Years Network 2000

We believe that the school playgrounds and outdoor space should be viewed as an essential medium for learning that can extend the learning that takes place indoors.

“Outdoors should provide opportunities for children to engage in planned and freely chosen play experiences and should offer risk, challenge, variety and fun”.

Learning through Landscapes.

At St Eugene's Victoria Bridge, we have taken into account the change in children's play culture outside of school hours. In particular, the significant decline in outdoor play, which has led to concerns about children's health and well being. With this in mind it is our intention to enhance all our pupils' development by providing outdoor play experiences in varied and challenging ways.

Managing Risk and Play

Legal requirements

When it comes to play projects, the agreed European standards may not be relevant. However, given that the Play Safety Forum, the Health & Safety Executive UK and the Health & Safety Executive N.I and many other governing bodies endorse the risk-benefit approach as a suitable model for managing risk it should be considered by practitioners as the way forward in safeguarding themselves and children.

Children need and want to take challenges and risks when they play. Our 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, we aim to manage the level of risk, so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

“Through play children are able to learn about risks and use their own initiative. Skills learnt through play and other activities can act as a powerful form of prevention in other situations where children and young people are at risk.”

Robin Sutcliffe (Play Safety Forum) 2009

Risk Management in play provision involves balancing risks and benefits in a strategic way. Since the reason for providing play opportunities is their benefit to children, the starting point – and most important consideration- for risk assessment and decision making should be an understanding of the benefits that the provision offers.

Some of the benefits of risky play:

- Places to play.
- Space to meet and hang out.
- Space to have fun.
- A chance to encounter nature.
- A place to make friends.
- Encourage physical activity.
- Learn how to manage risks.
- Develop a sense of one's abilities.
- Cater for the adventurous.

It is our belief that we should not prevent children from doing things that they enjoy because of risks. We strive to strike a balance between risk and fun, and therefore offer challenging play opportunities in a safe environment. We believe that if we restricted 'challenging' play opportunities children's enjoyment outdoors would be limited.

Risk – Benefit Assessment

It is our intention to adapt the 'risk - benefit assessment' tool recommended by Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide (Play England).

“The descriptive approach taken in this guide, called ‘risk-benefit assessment’, recognises that providers can make sound judgements about many of the risks and benefits relating to play provision but that they need to record their considerations and evidence base systematically. It is in legal terms a ‘suitable and sufficient’ risk assessment in the context of children’s play, since it is a reasonable approach to the task of balancing risks against benefits.”

Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide (National Children’s Bureau) for Play England 2013.

Valued Space/ Environment

In recognition of the benefits of outdoor play our school is committed to the continuous development of children’s playtimes. This will be achieved by ensuring that the outdoor space is utilised to its full potential by reviewing restrictions and pupil’s accessibility to all appropriate areas.

St Eugene’s PS values outdoor play and our amazing and vast outdoor space. We are committed to providing an attractive play space with adequate resources to allow for quality free play opportunities (such as loose parts, seating areas, quiet areas, activities and games etc). All playground equipment and resources will be safely stored and accessible for staff and children.

In valuing outdoor play, we aim to ensure that all children have adequate time for free play opportunities at break and lunch time.

The Role of the Adult

To ensure balance and breadth of provision, adults need to have a clear understanding of their role in relation to the children’s playtimes.

St Eugene’s PS aims to create an outdoor environment where adults will be actively involved with children in their games and activities (where appropriate) and should not be solely in a supervisory/ ‘policing’ role.

We believe that adults should be:

- Talking and interacting with children in a positive way.
- Joining in games and activities when invited by children.
- Initiating games and activities.
- Extending children’s play by making extra resources available.
- Enabling children to use resources in different ways.
- Observing at all times.
- Be aware of safety issues.

- Allow flexibility in planned activities.
- Assess resources throughout playtimes and remove where necessary.
- Remind children of rules and restrictions in a positive manner.

Who is Responsible?

The management of the playground is a collective responsibility. Our supervision staff aim to ensure the outdoor area is well laid out and provides for:

- Challenging and exciting play
- Quiet and reflective play
- Fast physical play
- Opportunities for large scale experiences (den building/construction)
- Natural area (exploration, digging etc)
- Imaginary play (resources to be available)
- Co-operative play

The above list is not exhaustive and may be extended as play development evolves. As with all good practice the health and safety of children involved in outdoor play is paramount.

Health & Safety in the Playground

Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant and never leave the play area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over.

If an accident or incident should occur the staff supervisor must fill in the accident slip and send a copy to the office for record keeping and logging.

Behaviour Management

During play children will behave in different ways; sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will play in groups, sometimes play will be solitary. Adults intervening in play should be sensitive and non- intrusive.

St Eugene's PS staff will extend the school's 'Positive Behaviour Policy' outdoors. The ethos of the school's behavioural policy is to promote positive behaviour so that successful personal, social, and emotional development is encouraged.

Staff may need to intervene in children's play when:

- Children's play has become disruptive and is interfering with the activities of other children.
- Children have a problem they cannot solve.
- Children are at risk because equipment or materials are being abused.

This list is not exhaustive.

We believe that it is important to have children feed into and agree a set of rules for playtimes which will be displayed in the playground to remind them of their boundaries and expected behaviour.

When intervening or reinforcing rules in the playground, staff will do so in manner giving children simple explanations of why their behaviour is not acceptable.

Should a child fail to comply with adult intervention in relation to a behavioural issue the adult should, if necessary, refer the matter to the class teacher.

All staff working in the playground (including teaching staff and playground supervisors) will be made aware of behaviour management systems in place during induction and through staff training opportunities.

Identified Resources / Equipment

It is no secret that funding is an issue for all schools. We hope that equipment can be obtained for FREE by means of parents, staff and Play Resource Outlets will be monitored and replaced accordingly. Fundraising and grant opportunities will also be availed of.

Equal Opportunities

It is our aim that **all** children at the school will have access to the outdoor environment regardless of their gender, special educational needs, religion, race, home, or cultural background.

Children's Involvement

At St Eugene's Victoria Bridge, we value and encourage children's participation and input about things that affect their school life. We therefore encourage children's involvement in any playground development.

We are committed to hearing the views and opinions of the children in school and will use methods such as consultations, informal discussions, and surveys within classes to enable children's views and opinions on outdoor play to be sought. We also believe that although it is critical that playtimes are organised and managed by adults it is equally important that the children have a full understanding of the any processes involved and that their opinions are taken seriously.

In order to help with the management of outdoor play our aim is to set a system in place where senior pupils will take on the responsibility of putting out and away equipment, playing games with groups of children and feedback to staff about any playtime issues.

***St Eugene's Primary School
strives to ensure that the outdoor play environment is a positive, fun
happy place to be for children and adults alike.***