CITY OF LONDON
PRIMARY ACADEMY
ISLINGTON

COLPAI Outdoor Play and Learning Policy

Responsibility:	**Head Teacher / Full Governing Body**
Updated:	**September 2026**
Approved by Board:	**September 2026**
Next Review Date:	**September 2029**

COLPAI Outdoor Play and Learning Policy

1. Commitment

COLPAI 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.

2. Rationale

This play policy is in keeping with our vision and values and is underpinned by our understanding and commitment to children's rights as set out Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child; these include the right to protection, provision and participation, the right to be educated and to play. We also acknowledge Article 12 which includes the Right of a child to be listened to on matters important to them. At COLPAI, we acknowledge we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Our school values are completely aligned with our vision for play at COLPAI. We believe OPAL makes an invaluable contribution to developing respectful, creative, aspirational children who work as a team and achieve excellence. We also believe in encouraging resilience so that children are prepared to meet and embrace new challenges and have the ability to see beyond what is now. At COLPAI, we believe children should be able to take and calculate their own risks which take them out of their comfort zone, whilst remaining safe.

At COLPAI, we hope to create an environment in which play is child led and children are supported to participate and achieve. High-quality, child-led opportunities for play are crucial to a holistic approach to education. It will help children to:

- Develop strong communication skills, social skills and teamwork
- Develop the confidence, self-esteem and individuality to embrace change and innovate
- Develop curiosity, problem solving and risk assessing
- Respect different ideas and beliefs
- Share a common understanding of compassion and accept help from others

We believe every child has the right to play and recognise that not all children have access to rich play opportunities outside school. At COLPAI we belive"…*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".*

COLPAI believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. 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.

3. Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. 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, as well as different concepts and 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.

4. Aims

Our vision is that all COLPAI children learn to be creative and aspirational; we believe they should be prepared to meet and embrace new challenges and have the ability to see beyond what is now. At COLPAI, we believe children should be able to take and calculate their own risks which take them out of their comfort zone, whilst remaining safe.
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In relation to play, COLPAI aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow children to take carefully considered risks and use a common-sense 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 that 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. Health & Safety and Wellbeing: Benefit and risk

In keeping with our Health & Safety Statement of Intent and associated policies and procedures, we are committed to promoting health and safety and wellbeing. This is achieved through a risk management approach that balances benefits and risks and regular reviews and monitors as activities and associated risks change.
We recognise that 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'.
COLPAI adheres to the Health and Safety Executive guidance document 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach' (September 2012) informing our approach to managing risk in play. It will adopt a benefits/risk approach as detailed in the Play Safety Forum's 'Managing Risk in Play Provision' Implementation Guide (2012) which states: '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'.
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. Play assemblies will form an important role, in which risk benefits are discussed with the children and rules are agreed in consultation with them, when new equipment is introduced. This policy should be read in conjunction with COLPAI's Risk Assessment Policy and the HSE risk assessment template is attached as appendix 1.

5.1 Health and Safety and Wellbeing: checks and physical environment

Staff on duty will scan equipment while the children are playing and will remove any damaged items. If there is damage to any larger pieces of equipment, children will be prevented from using it and staff will inform the SBM and or SLT via email immediately. This will be logged and the equipment will remain out of use until it is made safe. Repairs will be logged before the equipment is used again. Where damage is significant and cannot be repaired, the equipment will remain out of use and removed from site.

Play areas and large climbing equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily basis by the premises manager, who will record these checks and keep them on file. Smaller play equipment will be checked regularly by supervising staff and any items removed and reported to SLT.

Risk-benefit assessments for areas, equipment and activities will be held on file and be available for inspection. All new activities which involve potential risk will be subject to individual or generic assessment as part of the planning process. All previous assessments will be reviewed as and when appropriate. It is the responsibility of all staff on duty to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to SLT/ SBM as soon as possible.

6. Supervision

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. At COLPAI, we aim to have three supervising adults on duty at lunch time. One in the MUGA, a second member in the climbing frame playground and a third in the Golden Lane Playground. A further two members of staff are on supervision duty in the hall. In addition, the relevant phase leaders will monitor the quality of supervision regularly. In addition, SLT regularly quality assure playtime supervision. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in Reception (and specific children with SEND or behavioural needs), the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial as it can inhibit children's play. Supervision will take remote and ranging models, where adults will be allocated a zone to supervise and children can quickly find an adult. This allows play leaders to patrol their zone and gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

7. The adults' role in play

At COLPAI, we recognise the Play England's Charter for Children's Play which states that children need the time and space to play to allow them the opportunity to meet and socialise with their friends, keep physically active and give them the freedom to choose what they want to do.
The school will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Play work Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.
Our approach to play is structured to enable adults to facilitate children's play:

- SLT quality assurance
- Four phase leaders (one deployed to each phase of EYFS, KS1, Lower KS2 and Upper KS2)
- TA supervisors Lunch and playtime as per the rota
- Teacher supervisors as per the rota

The play team are responsible for supervising and providing a stimulating and inclusive play environment for children, intervening when necessary. Supervisors will ensure all children play safely within the agreed rules and take responsibility for keeping themselves and their peers safe. The supervisor is responsible for sanctioning any child who does not follow the agreed rules and safety protocols to keep the playground safe. Children whose playground behaviour regularly falls short of expectations should be flagged with the Phase Leader and SLT. Staff will speak to any child who does not follow the safety rules or does not take responsibility to keep themselves or others safe, seriously. Staff will reiterate clear expectations of keeping to the rules. Where appropriate, staff may issue a 'time out' to think about appropriate and safe play or require the child to attend reflection. Targets and strategies may be set to re-establish good, safe behaviour. See section 8 below.

The play supervisors' function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play team 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. Play teams 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.

The play team should ensure that play is child led and a wide range of experiences are available to all children. They should observe, reflect and intervene if necessary. The school will help children maximise 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. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

8. Behaviour

At COLPAI, we believe every child has the right to enjoy playtime. However, with that right comes a responsibility to play safely and kindly, showing respect to others. At COLPAI we expect all children to:

- Be kind and helpful to everyone
- Play safely and gently (no rough play)
- Follow the agreed rules for using the equipment and resources safely
- Be inclusive, share and take turns
- Listen to each other
- Be honest and truthful
- Take care of the school, its playground and equipment
- Show respect, good manners and be polite and courteous

Where children breach the agreed behaviour code, agreed sanctions and logical consequences will be implemented. COLPAI's Play Policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

9. Inclement and severe weather

During inclement or severe weather conditions, it might be necessary to restrict access to or to temporarily close outdoor play and learning areas due to risk of injury. If it is raining, thundering, lightening, snowing, and icy, hailing, or there are extreme winds, children will need to remain inside. If the playground is not safe, e.g. slippery due to wet or icy surfaces, playtimes may need to be re scheduled to take place indoors. Likewise, in extreme red warning heat waves, it may be necessary to restrict access to the playground to keep children safe.

'Wet' mornings

At the start of the school day, if it is raining or there are other inclement weather conditions, pupils will be directed to go straight from the playground into school, walking directly up to their classroom via the yellow or orange staircase. Pupils are taught to walk safely and sensibly and senior staff are on duty to remind pupils of safety rules.

‘Wet’ breaks
Senior leaders will decide if the weather is bad enough for a ‘wet’ break. If a wet break is declared children must not be left unsupervised. One member of staff (teacher, teaching assistant or lunchtime supervisor) should remain in the classroom to supervise break with all children remaining in their own classes. Similarly, a senior leader will decide if the weather is bad enough for a ‘wet’ lunchtime.
If a ‘wet’ lunchtime is declared, the lunchtime supervisors will supervise the children with the support of other school staff as necessary. No children must be left unsupervised.

During ‘wet’ play, alternative indoor play options will be on offer to children, for example:

- Age and stage appropriate films
- Board games
- Drawing
- Reading
- Colouring activities, dot to dot, word searches, crosswords, origami,
- Construction station, e.g. Lego
- Listening to music

COLPAI will encourage pupils to dress appropriately for the weather by wearing coats, hats, and gloves when it is cold or snowing. The premises team will use grit and/or salt on paths and playgrounds around the school site. During the summer months, children will be encouraged to wear sun hats, sun cream, and loose, cool clothing (the head teacher may decide to relax uniform during periods of extreme heat). In extreme heat, staff will endeavour to keep children cool by restricting play to indoor or external shaded areas, and may limit the amount of time children are exposed to the sun. Wherever possible, staff will endeavour to adapt play provision in accordance with extreme weather conditions, for example, in extreme heat teachers may be able to provide cooling, less active play options such as water play.

During inclement and severe weather conditions, senior members of staff will carry out a dynamic risk assessment and identify mitigations and safety measures required to ensure the provision of safe play and outdoor learning.

10. **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 and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

11. 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.

We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school’s grounds to enhance play. We will use the document ‘Best Play’ to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

12. Review
This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required.