OPAL Newsletter

Spring 1 - 2026

OPAL stands for:

Outdoor Play and Learning.

"To ensure that every schoolchild has **an amazing playtime every day** with no exceptions" (OPAL)

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to an action-packed spring 1 edition of the OPAL newsletter!

The OPAL team has been busy adding some exciting enhancements to our outdoor provision, including new ball games such as 4 square. These additions have brought an extra layer of fun and motivation to playtime, helping to keep the children engaged, active and smiling!

Travis Perkins

Your local Timber & Builders Merchant

Stay & Play: Friday 13th February 2026 - 2 to 3 pm

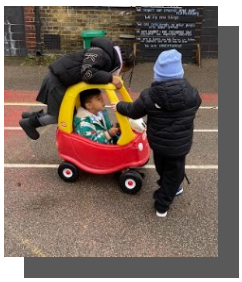
Top tips for outdoor play at home

1. Explore the outdoor places near home where your children can play every day – a garden, balcony, park or street.
2. See if you can arrange for your child's friends to join in ... it's more fun with more children.
3. Let the children decide how they play and be there to support them when needed.
4. Check the weather, and make sure everyone is dressed to play outdoors. If you are going out with your children, take additional warm clothing, snacks and a hot drink if it is cold.
5. See what happens if you step back and just watch ... or try letting them lead you in their play.
6. Introduce stuff to play with to build/make/create. If they build a den or structure, can they leave it up for a while?
7. Let them take some risks and make mistakes!
8. As soon as you think you can trust them, leave them to it ... and enjoy some well-deserved time to yourself.
9. Children love physical play with friends and you. Tickling, wrestling, play fights, chase and horseplay build bonds and emotional intelligence.

Supporting Schemas and Enhancing Learning

What are schemas?
Schemas are a way for children to construct meaning from what they are doing. Through the use of repeating behaviours children are able to explore their ideas and thoughts in their play.

How can we use schemas to enhance learning?
When a child is displaying a schema, then they are in the optimal place for learning. Practitioners can support this 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky) by ensuring children have the right resources in order to develop their learning and help them progress to their next steps.

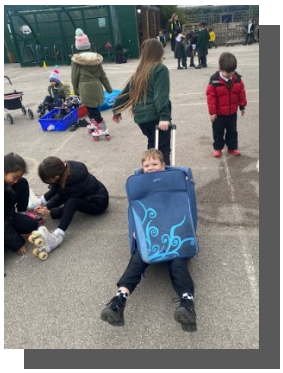


Next time - we will be reviewing the **orientation schema**. Children display this by moving their bodies into different positions and often put their heads between their legs. Older children may enjoy hanging upside down on climbing equipment.

Please share your views with us by emailing:

admin@fossdene.greenwich.sch.uk

FUNDAMENTA GROUNDWORKS



A big thank you! - A huge thank you goes out to everyone who has donated toys, prams, dressing up clothes, plants and other resources. Your generosity makes such a difference.

To help support the development of the 'orientation schema' we would like donations linked to this, such as:

Binoculars, telescopes, magnifying glasses, ramps, tunnels, books, child-safety mirrors, periscopes, ropes to make swings, hammocks, and chairs that spin.

Transporting Schema

This is when children like to transport objects from one area to another. Children will often use objects such as trolleys, baskets, bags, pushchairs, boxes and containers to aid with this.

You may see children pushing toys or each other round in pushchairs or transporting soil/sand/stones in the garden using wheelbarrows. Children will also place toys into bags and carry them around.

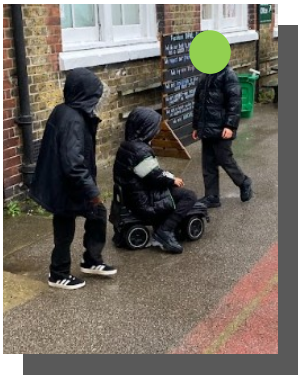
How you can help…

As we continue to make our playtimes more exciting, no matter what the weather, we will need some equipment to help us to do this.

Donations of any of the following would be greatly received:

Pans / bowls / spoons / plates (plastic or metal) / chairs /prams / skates / skateboards / suitcases on wheels / dolls / teddies / board games / books / toys / dressing up clothes /planks of wood / tyres / fabrics / saris / old carpet / laminate flooring / brooms / scooter boards / water toys / instruments / pipes / cable drums / Lego and construction toys / wellington boots / waterproof trousers / raincoats / socks / plants / seeds / compost / pots / watering cans / spades / buckets / tarpaulin sheets / camping equipment / paintbrushes / rollers / wheelbarrows / baskets / bags for life / old wagons / old uniform such as trousers / coats that your child has grown out of

Dress for success...

When children are cold or wet they tend to be less able to concentrate, and less well-behaved, meaning they will learn less in the classroom. To make sure children play happily outdoors every day they need to be warm, dry and comfortable, with the right clothing for all kinds of weather. As the recent weather has been very wet, please ensure your child has the following items at school:

- Wellies or waterproof shoes or boots
- Waterproof (not shower proof) coat
- Layers of clothes / spare shoes and socks in case they get wet