OPAL Newsletter

Summer 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 summer 1 edition of the OPAL newsletter!

The OPAL team has been busy making playtimes fun by adding a range of new resources to the playgrounds, supported by weekly play assemblies and lots of staff dedication. The focus this half term was on providing children with items they can use to develop their creative and collaborative skills as well as enabling them to take calculated risks within a safe environment.

What is currently happening and what will happen next?

Stay and Plays - Parents and Carers are invited to our stay and play sessions. Parents and Carers can join the whole school for an hour to experience their children's playtime, see what new activities have been introduced and talk to staff about playground plans.

Wildlife Hotel Project - To encourage wildlife into our playground, the children have been busy creating a large wildlife hotel. During Forest School at lunchtime, the children work in pairs to safely use a bow saw, developing teamwork skills as they saw branches together.

Next, the children will be using a hand drill to create holes and spaces for different creatures, helping to make a safe habitat for insects and other wildlife. This exciting project supports collaboration, problem solving and a greater understanding of the natural world.

What is going to happen next? - Rough and Tumble Play. Rough and tumble play is playful physical interaction where children enjoy moving their bodies, exploring boundaries, and interacting with others positively. It may include: chase games, rolling, tumbling or balancing. Gentle playful wrestling or movement games. Big-body movements such as pushing, pulling and spinning.

A key feature is that children are playing together happily, taking turns, laughing, and respecting boundaries. Rough and tumble play helps children develop physically, emotionally and socially. It gives the children opportunities to explore movement, understand limits and build confidence.

Rough and tumble play is carefully supervised to ensure it remains enjoyable and safe. We support children by: setting clear rules, providing safe spaces, close supervision, and consider individual needs.

Although rough and tumble play may look lively, it is carefully supported and supervised by adults.

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?

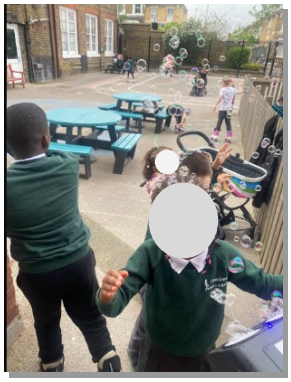
When a child is displaying a schema, then they are in the optimal place for learning. Practitioners can support this 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky) by ensuring children have the right resources in order to develop their learning and help them progress to their next steps.

Trajectory Schema - This is when children are interested in movements. They become fascinated with how people and objects move. You may see them climbing up and down stairs or planking on the floor. Trajectory Schemas also display as interest in vertical and horizontal lines.

From a very young age this can be seen with dropping objects from a height. Children may like to swing back and forth or use sticks to swing around as swords or enjoy lining objects up horizontally or vertically.

Travis Perkins
Your local Timber & Builders Merchant

FUNDAMENTA GROUNDWORKS



OPAL Donations - A huge thank you to everyone who has donated items for OPAL play! Your generous contributions of toys, prams, crates, wooden pallets, tyres, cable drums, books, pots and pans and wellington boots have made a tremendous difference.

Thanks to your support, the children have been able to create amazing constructions and explore their creativity in exciting new ways. All children are actively engaged during playtime, and it's been a joy to see their imaginations come to life. None of this would be possible without your generosity. Thank you!

Summer term plans...

OPAL play - Next phase!

We're excited to move into the next phase of OPAL play, focusing on developing our planters and grassy areas. To help create a vibrant, sensory-rich space, we're kindly asking for donations of plants, herbs and sensory friendly greenery - especially those with interesting scents and textures. Thank you for your support!

Staying safe in the summer sun - As the summer weather sets in, we want to make sure all children stay safe and comfortable while enjoying their time at school.

Please send your child to school wearing a sun hat. Ensure shoulders are covered—no strappy tops or sleeveless shirts. Apply sun cream before your child arrives at school. We recommend a high-factor, long-lasting sunscreen for the best protection.

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 / tubes / cars / small world / dressing up clothes / bubbles / hammocks / fabric

Donations of wet weather clothing that no longer fits your children:
Wellington boots
Waterproof trousers
Raincoats
Socks