OPAL Newsletter

Spring 2 - 2026

OPAL stands for:

Outdoor Play and Learning.

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

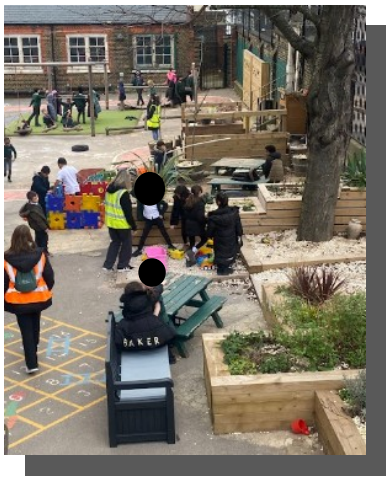
Dear Parents and Carers,

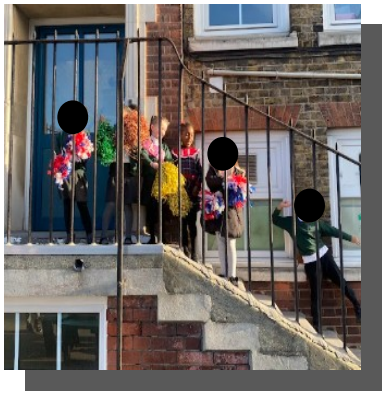
Welcome to your spring 2 newsletter. We hope you are enjoying some spring like-weather—as much as we love wet and muddy play, it's great to see the sun shining on all of the wonderful playtimes the children are experiencing.

In this edition, we're shining a light on supporting the exchanging schema to enhance learning. You will see photographs of the children in action, exploring different types of play and get some top tips on how to keep your child active during the Easter holiday.

Travis Perkins

Your local Timber & Builders Merchant





Top tips for outdoor play at home

"When you take away the phone and email and you don't have a million things to run around to, it allows your mind the space to think more expansively about the things that matter."
Ewan McGregor, actor

Twelve things

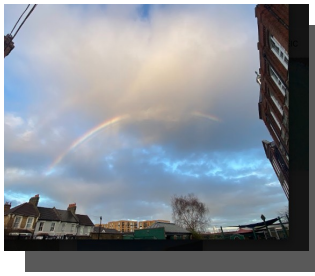
to do before you are twelve (and then keep doing them until you are at least 70!)

1. Learn to swim
2. Climb a tree
3. Build a den
4. Ride a bike/a skateboard/horse
5. Spend a whole 24 hours with no technology
6. Make a kite and fly it
7. Play in the rain/snow/fog/drizzle/sunshine/frost/dark
8. Plant something, watch it grow then eat it
9. Meet other people in a park and invent a game
10. Sleep under the stars
11. Be bored sometimes (boredom is the mother of creativity...)
12. Ride a bus, tram or train by yourself

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 **trajectory schema**. Children display this by 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.

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.

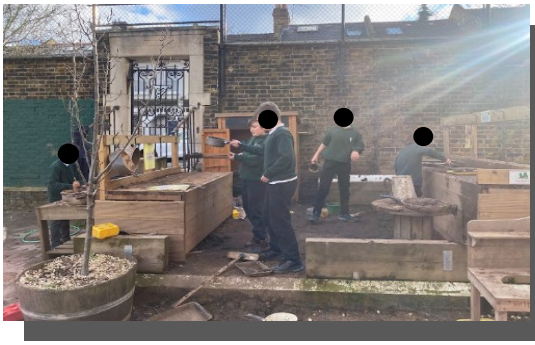
To help support the development of the 'exchanging schema' we would like donations linked to this, such as:

- Toy tills, pretend shop / café / post office items
- Tongs, scoops, bags, wallets, buckets for moving and exchanging items

Exchanging Schema

This is when children like to swap objects with others. They may be exchanging currency, pencils, tokens, toys or any type of object.

Children will often play in the role play and enjoy being the receptionist, shop keeper or ticket seller.



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 'April showers' are looming, 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