



Parents Play Afternoon

Monday 30th June 2025



While you are waiting...



How does this enclosure meet the needs of the great apes?



Ape enclosure at Port Lympne



'Anti-play culture' limits children's time outside



Ban on 'no ball games' signs suggested to get kids off screens



Our school playground

- We are the gatekeepers of children's experience: we can control, restrict or provide access, permission, time, space, and opportunities



Amazing playtimes, for every child, every day



Do we know it works?

OPAL is a UK and world leader in supporting schools to improve the quality of children's play.

OPAL's mission is for every primary school child to have an amazing playtime, every day, with no exceptions!

OPAL's delivery:

- Over 2,000 schools and over 1 million children have benefited;
- Projects in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Malaysia, the USA and Poland.





Childhood has changed - children have not!

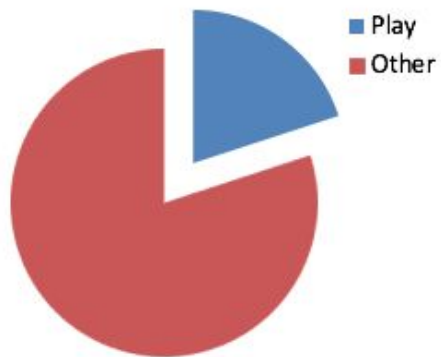
Let's think about play.

At 10 years old..

Where were you, who were you with,
what were you up to?



Play makes up 20% of school life



Per year
231 hours
37 days
7.4 weeks

Primary years
1.4 years





What is play?

Play is a process that is:

- Freely chosen
- Intrinsically motivated
- Self-directed





The unteachable curriculum

We don't have to choose between play and learning.

Children need to **PLAY** to
BE ADAPTABLE **CONSTRUCT KNOWLEDGE**
PROBLEM SOLVE **LEARN** **CREATE**
SOLVE **PROCESS** **EMOTIONS**
INTERNALISE **EXPERIENCES**
DISCOVER **CHALLENGE**
BE HEALTHY **THEMSELVES**
LAUGH & HAVE FUN
LEARN TO WORK **IMAGINE**
TOGETHER **LEARN TO LEAD**
EXPRESS **EXPLORE** **SPEAK**
IDEAS **DEVELOP** **READ**
MANAGE **AN INQUIRING** **WRITE**
STRESS **MIND** **COUNT**
Because **PLAY** matters.



The benefits of play

- Strength and endurance
- Whole body coordination
- Emotional attachment
- Emotional and social skills
- Hand-eye coordination
- Thinking, reasoning, problem solving
- Early language development
- Communication skills
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Artistic creativity
- Narrative skills
- Social and group work skills
- Understanding rules
- Discussion skills
- Mental representation

Self-regulation: The ability to be aware of and regulate one's own cognitive and emotional mental states and behaviour.



How will we develop play in school?

Policy and planning

We are making sure improving play is always part of their planning.

Improving space and access

Children are able to access a great environment all year.

Risk-benefit approach

We will balance challenge and exploration with sensible care.

Knowledge

Our staff will use playwork skills to improve their practice and the environment.

Communication

We will keep talking to children, parents and staff about play.



Play Policy



[Play Policy](#)



The Essentials

OPAL Kit

These items should be sent to school in a named bag to be left at school. They can be any colour.



Wellies



Waterproof Jacket



Waterproof trousers/puddle suit

Tolerance of dirt and mud



[School Uniform Parent
Communication June 2025](#)



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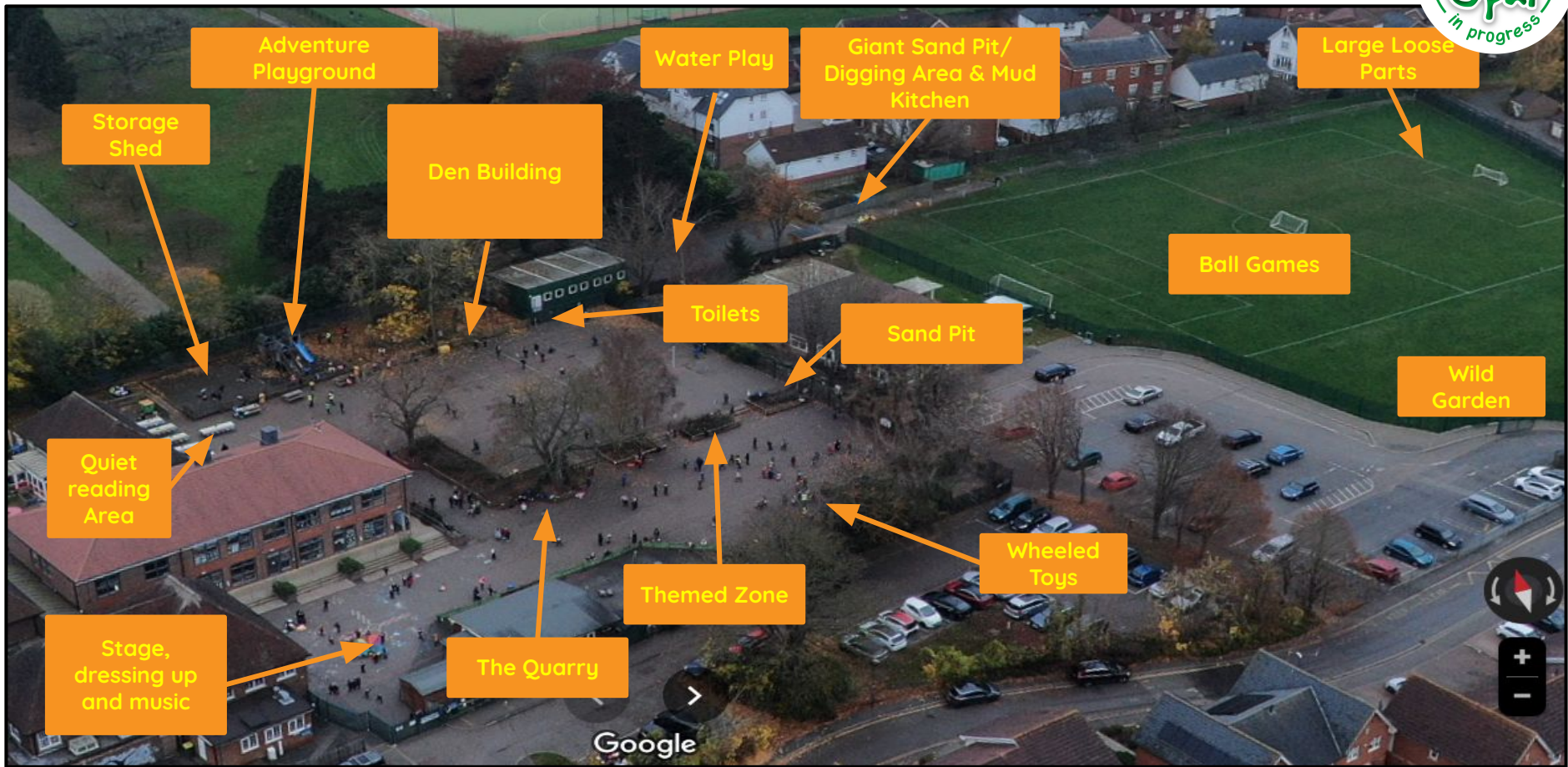
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Improving Access and Space





Improving Access and Space



Integration

- New friendships
- Inclusion
- Social skills
- Non-judgemental
- No age restrictions
- No gender bias



Improving Access and Space



Creating a playful environment - outdoor loose parts





Improving Access and Space



Imagination, creativity and teamwork





Improving Access and Space



No age restriction on a mud kitchen





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The importance of risk in children's play

Risk means going beyond what is already known and easily accomplished.





Health and Safety
Executive

Children's play and leisure - promoting a balanced approach (Sep 2012)

In 2012 the HSE worked with the UK's Play Safety forum to agree this guidance.

Source: [Children's play and leisure - HSE](#)



“Play is great for children’s wellbeing and development.”

“When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and the benefits.”

“No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.”

Striking the right balance means:

- Weighing up risks and benefits.
- Focusing on and controlling the most serious risk.
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity.
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk.
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full.



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Adult intervention... playwork style

Hinders

- Be careful
- You're going to hurt yourself
- That's too big for you
- Passes on own anxiety
- Distracts child from engaging in certain play types
- Adulterates play - gets over involved/excited
- Over competitive
- Allows child to always win

Helpful

- Supportive
- Models behaviour
- Follows child's direction
- Provides resources
- Thinks about when to intervene
- Waits to be invited
- Observes
- Learns and reflects



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Communication



Class Dojo Posts

- Keep you up-to-date with our play offer.

Opal Working Group

- One parent
- One governor
- Play Coordinator
- Curricular Lead for Play
- Strategic Lead for Play
- Meet once per term

Donation Drives

- Opal bingo
- Class Dojo

Dedicated Website Page

- [Outdoor Play and Learning \(OPAL\)](#)



Play Afternoons

- Dedicated time to spend in school

Community Events

- Opening up our space for the community



The impact of OPAL

- More physically active more of the year.
- Developing life skills – resilience, competencies.
- Risk management skills, improved decision making.
- Social skills, team building, negotiation.
- Improved mental health and wellbeing.
- 100% girls more active.
- Huge core skills improvement.
- Improved behaviour.
- Less accidents, incidents and whinging.
- More inclusive. No child bored or feeling left out.
- Increased learning time. More settled and ready to learn.
- Cost saving – SLT and teachers' time.
- Mental representation



Natural loose parts



Acorns



Grass



Leaves



Logs



Pine Cones



Rain & Water



Sand



Snow



Shells



Soil



Sticks



Stones



Wild Flowers



Wood Cookies





We still need your upcycled loose parts!



Thank you - please keep sending in resources for playtime!



Health benefits for all the family

- Exercise
- Family time
- Fun
- Improved mental health
- Fresh air
- Relaxation
- Feel good factor



Parent's booklet... it's **free and full of great ideas!**

Ideas and information for parents and carers of children aged between 4 and 11

For all parents

The Power of Playtime!

Outdoor play, every day, will change your child's life

Step inside to find out:

- Why it's important for children to play outside every day
- How you can help change school playtimes
- 3 key ways you can help

Plus a pull out and keep sheet
including 8 top tips for more outdoor play at home and 3 sure-fire outdoor play starters

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) CIC
Supporting school improvement through play
www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk



Time to play!

- Staff are outside if you have any questions.
- Let the children show you around.
- Let the children lead.
- Help yourself to resources.
- Join in if invited!
- Have fun!

