



Play Strategy

Core Values

Readiness

Resilience

Respect

School Values

Independence

Ambition

Compassion

Co-operation

Initiative

Enjoyment

Responsibility

Confidence

Celebration

Kindness

Honesty

Individuality

Approved: Spring 2026
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School Play Strategy

The school play strategy is designed to support pupils' personal, social and academic development through high-quality, engaging play opportunities. Play outside in all its forms is used as a powerful tool to enhance communication, confidence and collaboration across the school.

Aims

- To **encourage and support oracy** by providing purposeful opportunities for pupils to speak clearly, confidently and expressively through free unplanned play.
- To promote **engaging and motivating play experiences** that capture pupils' interest and allow them to develop creativity, imagination and a love of learning.
- To ensure **inclusive provision**, enabling all pupils—regardless of ability, background or additional needs—to participate meaningfully and experience success.
- To maintain **impeccable behaviour** through clear expectations, structured and free play, with consistent adult modelling, ensuring a calm, respectful and focused environment.
- To **continue the drive for pupils to be increasingly independent** in their thinking, learning and communication by encouraging ownership of roles, problem-solving, self-reflection and peer collaboration.
- To further drive children's appreciation and value in the natural environment.
- To develop pupils' confidence, resilience and teamwork skills through shared responsibility and engagement.

Through this strategy, play at school is celebratory of itself and integral learning experiences that support high standards of behaviour, inclusion and communication, while empowering pupils to become confident, independent learners and communicators.

Play Strategy: Key Actions (2026–2028)

Strategic Aim

To ensure high-quality, inclusive, and adventurous play opportunities for all children, in all weathers, supported by confident staff and strong sector collaboration.

1. Develop Wet Weather Play (All-Weather Outdoor Play)

Objective: By **September 2027**, all children will play outdoors during every rainy playtime.

Actions:

- Audit current outdoor spaces to identify drainage, shelter, surfacing, and storage needs (2026).
- Invest in all-weather play resources (e.g. waterproof loose parts, mud kitchen equipment, den-building materials) (2026–2027).
- Improve outdoor environments to support wet-weather use (e.g. covered areas, improved ground surfaces, clothing storage) (2026).
- Establish systems for access to waterproof clothing and footwear for all children (2026–2027).
- Develop and implement a clear wet-weather play policy that supports outdoor play in rain; involve children and families in the design and modernisation of Kender All Weather Uniform, to include guidance on appropriate clothing for all seasons (2026).
- Train staff to confidently facilitate and supervise wet-weather play (2026–2027).
- Pilot and review wet-weather play approaches, gathering pupil voice and staff feedback (2027).
- Fully embed daily outdoor play in all weather conditions by September 2027.
- Evolve gradual changes to school uniform to ensure all uniform is supportive of children being outside and free to make play choices (2026–2027).

Success Indicators:

- Playtimes can be experienced and enjoyed in all weathers.

- Play is facilitated and supported for all seasons.
- Positive pupil feedback about wet-weather play.
- Increased staff confidence in outdoor supervision.
- School re-accredited as a Platinum OPAL School

2. Revisit and Review the Risk–Benefit Process

Objective: To ensure risk–benefit thinking actively supports high-quality, adventurous play.

Actions:

- Review the existing Risk–Benefit Assessment (RBA) process and documentation (2026).
- RAG risk assessment in place as well as RBA - Headteacher and curriculum lead to check these.
- Ensure daily and weekly risk assessments are signed off (2026)
- Ensure all staff and children are able to do Dynamic Risk Assessment - DRA (2026)
- Consult staff and children on perceived barriers to play and risk-taking (2026).
- Update the RBA framework to reflect OPAL principles and current best practice (2026–2027).
- Provide refresher training for all staff and parents on risk–benefit thinking in play (2026).
- Embed risk–benefit discussions into regular play reviews and staff meetings (2026–2027).
- Monitor decision-making to ensure consistency and confidence in supporting appropriate risk (2027–2028).

Success Indicators:

- Staff demonstrate confidence in balanced risk decisions.
- School re-accredited as a Platinum OPAL School.
- Children are able to manage own risks DRA.
- Increased range and challenge in play opportunities.
- Reduced unnecessary restrictions on play.

3. Strengthen Collaboration with Platinum OPAL Schools

Objective: To share best practice and continuously improve play provision through sector collaboration.

Actions:

- Identify local and national Platinum OPAL schools for partnership visits (2026).
- Continue to explore opportunities to utilise the forest school for all children; finding resource to develop Forest School Leaders (2026-2028).
- Scheduled regular visits for the Children's Play Team to observe best practice (2026–2028).
- Create structured reflection tools to capture learning from each visit (2026).
- Implement and trial new ideas inspired by visits within the school setting (2026–2027).
- Host reciprocal visits or play networking events where possible (2027–2028).
- Share learning with the wider staff team and governors to support whole-school improvement (ongoing).

Success Indicators:

- Clear changes to practice linked to visit outcomes.
- Strong professional networks with OPAL schools.
- Continuous innovation in play provision.

4. Embed Music and Drumming within Play Provision

Objective: To introduce, develop, and fully embed music and drumming as a core element of high-quality, inclusive play provision.

Actions:

- Audit current music, sound, and rhythm-based play opportunities across all play settings (2026).

- Identify and purchase a range of inclusive, durable musical and drumming resources to support child-led play (2026–2027).
- Provide training and practical workshops for play staff on using music and drumming as tools for play, expression, and wellbeing (2026).
- Integrate music and drumming opportunities into everyday indoor and outdoor play environments, ensuring children can access them freely (2026–2027).
- Develop partnerships with local musicians, drumming groups, and cultural organisations to enrich play experiences (2027).
- Embed regular opportunities for child-led music and drumming within play sessions and events (2027–2028).
- Share examples of effective practice with staff, children, families, and stakeholders to support consistency and sustainability (ongoing).

Success Indicators:

- Music and drumming are a visible and valued part of daily play provision.
- Children regularly choose to engage in music and rhythm-based play.
- Staff demonstrate confidence in supporting and extending musical play.
- Positive impacts on inclusion, wellbeing, and social interaction are evidenced.
- Music and drumming are fully embedded in play provision by 2028.

5. Children's Play Team as Ambassadors for Promoting the Benefits of Play Provision

Objective: To develop and empower the children's play team as confident ambassadors who actively promote the value, impact, and benefits of high-quality play provision to children, families, communities, partners, and stakeholders.

Actions:

- Audit current advocacy, communication, and promotional activity related to play provision (2026).
- Organise an International Day of Play event; consider a Summer Project theme of PLAY (2026).
- Develop a clear ambassador role description outlining expectations, key messages, and audiences for the play team (2026).
- Provide training for play staff on play advocacy, communication skills, and articulating the benefits of play for wellbeing, development, and inclusion (2026–2027).
- Support play team members to gather and share children's voices, experiences, and outcomes through stories, observations, and creative documentation (2026).
- Create accessible resources (case studies, short reports, displays, social media content) that highlight the impact of play provision (2026–2027).
- Enable play team ambassadors to represent play provision at events, forums, schools, community meetings, and partnership networks (2026–2027).
- Encourage collaborative working with families and community partners to champion play and its benefits (2027).
- Embed reflective practice and peer support to sustain confidence and consistency in ambassador roles (ongoing).

Success Indicators:

- Play staff confidently articulate the benefits and impact of play provision.
- Children's voices and experiences are regularly shared with families and stakeholders.
- Increased awareness and understanding of play provision within the wider community.
- Stronger relationships with partners, funders, and local organisations.
- The children's play team is recognised as trusted ambassadors for play by 2028.

6. Design and Implement a Curriculum with Play as an Essential Component (An on the horizon set of actions...)

Objective

To consider the design and implementation of a high-quality, inclusive curriculum where play is recognised as a central and intentional approach to children's learning, wellbeing, creativity, and development across all settings.

Actions

- Audit current curriculum frameworks, planning tools, and practice to identify how play is currently embedded, valued, and assessed (2026).
- Develop a clear curriculum statement and principles that position play as essential to learning, development, wellbeing, and inclusion (2026).
- Consider and costs adaptations to Reception classroom environment (2026).
- (2026 to 2028) Research from schools where Play based learning is embedded, whilst monitor government plans for learning in KS1.
- Co-design a play-based curriculum framework with children, staff, and families that reflects children's interests, voices, and lived experiences (2026–2027).
- Provide professional learning for staff on play pedagogy, child-led learning, inclusive play, and balancing intentional teaching with free play (2026–2027).
- Develop practical curriculum guidance, planning templates, and exemplars that demonstrate how play supports learning outcomes across developmental domains (2027).
- Embed observation, reflection, and documentation of play to inform curriculum planning and respond to children's emerging interests and needs (2026–2027).
- Ensure environments, resources, and routines actively support diverse types of play (creative, physical, social, risky, imaginative, and sensory) (2026–2027).
- Strengthen transitions and continuity by aligning play-based approaches across age groups, settings, and partner organisations (2027).
- Engage families through communication, workshops, and shared documentation to build understanding of the value of play within the curriculum (2027).
- Establish ongoing review and reflective practice to adapt and strengthen the play-based curriculum in response to evidence, feedback, and children's outcomes (ongoing).

Success Indicators

- Play is clearly articulated and embedded within curriculum frameworks, planning, and daily practice.
- Staff demonstrate confidence and consistency in implementing play-based learning approaches.
- Children show high levels of engagement, wellbeing, agency, and creativity through play.
- Curriculum planning reflects children's voices, interests, and developmental pathways.
- Families and partners understand and value play as a core element of learning.

Appendix 1
Areas of the Kender outside space to be maintained and enriched:

- 1 A Sports & football; netting protecting
- 1 B Small social spaces
- 1 C Tyres storage zone
- 1 D Art/craft area
- 1 E Water play
- 1 F Loose parts shed
- 1 G Loose parts smaller storage (grit bins, crates)
- 1 H Mud kitchen & handwash stations
- 1 I Den making zone
- 2 J Medium social spaces
- 2 K Sandpits (temporary then permanent)
- 2 L Music making
- 2 M Gymnastics/dancing
- 2 N Digging area
- 2 O Chill out area
- 2 P Stage area & dressing up
- 2 Q Large social spaces
- 2 R racquet sports/other ball games (4 square, tennis, netball, basketball)
- 2 S Welly storage
- 3 T Wheels zone & bike storage
- 3 U Large loose parts zone
- 3 V Natural rewilding area
- 4 W Upper body climbing
- 4 X Mounds/height
- 4 Y BIG transport feature
- 4 Z Something special for your school!