



Greenside School

OPAL Play Policy



Last reviewed:

To be reviewed:

Written by: D Hardy and S Fuller with support of the working party

Ratified by the Governors on:

Our Vision

At Greenside Primary School we believe that our curriculum should offer life skills and experiences beyond the National Curriculum. We prioritise the key skills and aspirations we want our children to experience and develop during their time with us. We use these 'drivers' to underpin the learning and experiences we undertake in all areas of school life. Our five key drivers for our school curriculum are: **resilience, creativity, diversity, aspiration and community**. These five key drivers are used and seen throughout OPAL playtimes which is part of the reason we chose to take part in the programme. OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) is a nationally recognised, evidence-based school improvement programme that enhances the quality of outdoor play for children in primary schools. It supports schools to create engaging, inclusive and well-managed playtimes that positively impact behaviour, wellbeing and learning. At Greenside Primary School, **OPAL aligns with our commitment to nurturing happy, confident and resilient learners, ensuring all children feel valued, included and ready to succeed. Our vision is amazing playtimes, every day, for every child, no exceptions!**

Our School Values

To be 'Great at Greenside' we value:

Safety - It is our duty to provide a safe environment and to teach our children how to keep themselves safe and healthy. It is important that everyone feels safe in our school and knows who to tell and what to do if they don't feel this way.

Collaboration - We are committed to working in partnership with our children, parents/carers, staff, governors and the wider community. This happens through effective communication and the wide variety of active groups and organisations at Greenside Primary School. We listen to each other and learn from our mistakes. We work together as a team and help each other to achieve our goals.

Inclusion - Greenside Primary School welcomes children's families of all faiths and cultures. We recognise that every child is special and has individual needs. We enjoy, celebrate and learn from our differences which enables us to develop as upstanding citizens.

Respect - We value and respect every member of the school by being polite, kind and caring. We show admiration for each other.

Honesty - Truth and honesty is a vital part of being able to trust everyone in our school. We want everyone to be sincere and fair about things that affect us. We ensure that our school has an atmosphere of openness, providing clear and easy channels of communications.

Recognition - Greenside enables everyone to be proud and recognise their achievements by celebrating every success, no matter how small. We encourage everyone to do their very best and persevere in the face of challenges. We always appreciate and recognise hard work and effort.

Reflection - We believe that reflecting on your learning and behaviour has huge benefits to your successes. We are honest and learn from what has happened and then try to change.

Aspirations - Our ethos is one of no excuses, high expectations and hard work resulting in the provision of learning experiences and opportunities which challenge, support and meet the academic, personal, social and spiritual needs of every child. We have the highest expectations of every member of our school community and encourage everyone to take responsibility for themselves and their learning and make a contribution to the success of the school. It is important that everyone has fun whilst learning.

Happiness - Everyone has the right to be and feel happy. We believe that if we follow our Greenside rules then all our children, parents/carers, staff, governors and the community will be and feel happy.

All these values underpin what OPAL is all about, children taking risks but being safe, children playing together and collaborating on ideas and solving problems together, amazing playtimes for everyone and providing children the range of opportunities for them to play and express themselves. OPAL teaches children to respect each other, their environment and the equipment and it develops children's oracy and trust skills. OPAL is all about collaboration, innovation and negotiation and recognising excellent play and showing these important life skills and Greenside values will be celebrated. It is about reflecting on play and how it can be made safer or more fun or what needs to change. OPAL includes imaginative play and STEM skills which can inspire the children and lead to greater aspirations for themselves in the future. OPAL is all about children being happy and putting them first. AMAZING PLAY TIMES EVERY DAY FOR EVERY CHILD NO EXCEPTIONS!

Commitment

Our school commits to refer to this play policy in all decisions which affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children. We view play as a vital part of our children's day.

Rationale:

Our school believes that **all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment.** We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. We have chosen OPAL as our children need **further opportunities and a wider variety of activities to develop their social, emotional and mental wellbeing and opportunities to further develop their speaking and listening and play skills.** We have extensive outside space that we can make greater use of for playtimes more of the time and we believe in the value and purpose of play.

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is that "better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life."

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.

- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

At Greenside Primary School, we want our children to develop a love of the outdoors, be physically more active, explore their world and communicate and collaborate more effectively with their peers.

The impact of Covid-19 has been evidenced in our children's poor physical health (increased weight gain due to lack of physical activity), emotional well-being and limited development of age appropriate social skills during free time. This is mainly due to the lack of social interaction with peers. We need to focus our support through our plans for school improvement in teaching our children how to play again, to not rely on technology for entertainment and to develop the skills highlighted above that play can encourage and facilitate.

Roles and Responsibilities?

The OPAL Play Team

The OPAL Play Team, made up of lunchtime supervisors, is responsible for overseeing and facilitating high-quality, inclusive play across all outdoor spaces. They actively engage with children to support safe, creative and enriching play experiences, ensuring OPAL principles are consistently upheld. Their duties include setting up and tidying away resources, maintaining organised and accessible play zones, and carrying out regular risk-benefit assessments to ensure the environment remains both safe and stimulating. Members of the OPAL Play Team attend scheduled meetings to review provision, discuss improvements, and share observations that inform ongoing development. Through positive interactions, vigilant supervision, and a commitment to nurturing purposeful play, the team helps create a well-managed, joyful and safe outdoor experience for all pupils.

Play Coordinator

The Play Coordinator leads the operational delivery of OPAL across the school and acts as the main point of contact for all play-related matters. They organise and oversee the daily running of playtimes, ensuring resources are well managed and that zones, equipment, and routines support high-quality, child-led play. They work closely with the OPAL Mentor and senior leaders to ensure progress against the OPAL action plan and maintain momentum in the school's development of play. The Play Coordinator also provides guidance and support to lunchtime staff, ensuring that all adults understand their roles and can confidently engage with children in positive, enabling ways. They monitor the safety of the play environment, coordinate risk-benefit assessments, and regularly review procedures so that play remains safe while encouraging creativity, challenge, and independence.

Curriculum Lead

The Curriculum Lead acts as the overall OPAL Leader in school, ensuring that OPAL principles are fully integrated into the broader teaching and learning vision. They champion the educational value of play—highlighting benefits such as problem-solving, collaboration, resilience, autonomy, and communication—and support staff in recognising how rich play experiences contribute to holistic child development. Working closely with staff, they identify natural links between outdoor play and curriculum areas, promoting opportunities for meaningful learning through play.

As the lead figure overseeing OPAL progression, the Curriculum Lead monitors the impact of OPAL on children’s wellbeing, behaviour, engagement, and attitudes to learning. They gather evidence through observations, pupil voice, and staff feedback, using this to inform whole-school improvement and ensure that outdoor play continues to enrich the school’s educational offer. Their leadership ensures strategic consistency, sustainability, and the ongoing development of a high-quality play culture across the school.

OPAL Working Party

The OPAL Play Team holds overall responsibility for driving forward the school’s vision for high-quality outdoor play. They collaborate to plan, develop, and evaluate play provision that supports children’s social, physical, emotional, and creative development. This team ensures that OPAL principles are embedded across the school day, monitors the effectiveness of changes to the play environment, and identifies new opportunities for improvement. They act as champions of play, modelling positive attitudes and ensuring consistency in expectations across the school.

In addition, the OPAL Working Party oversees staff training and supports colleagues to develop confidence in facilitating rich, inclusive play experiences. They communicate with pupils, staff, and families about OPAL initiatives and gather feedback to ensure the play offer continues to meet the needs of all children. Their work ensures that play remains purposeful, safe, and aligned with the school’s wider ethos and values

Headteacher

The Headteacher provides the strategic leadership and commitment necessary for the successful implementation of OPAL. They ensure that play is prioritised within the school’s vision and development plans, allocating resources, time, and staffing to support the work. The Headteacher fosters a culture in which play is valued as an essential part of children’s learning and wellbeing, and they ensure that all staff understand and uphold the OPAL principles.

Additionally, the Headteacher is responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented consistently and effectively across the school. They oversee compliance with safeguarding, health and safety, and duty of care responsibilities, ensuring play remains safe, inclusive, and in line with statutory requirements. Through strategic oversight and clear direction, the Headteacher enables OPAL to thrive as a core element of school life.

Behaviour Expectations

We expect all children to consistently follow the great at Greenside rules:

- 1. walk quietly in school.**
- 2. listen to and help each other.**

3 try our best all of the time.

4.follow instructions the first time.

5. keep our hands, feet and objects to ourselves.

6.look after our property and the environment.

7.are respectful, honest, polite and kind to everyone.

During lunchtimes, children are also expected to follow our OPAL Play Promise:

We Respect and We Share

- We take turns*
- We share toys and spaces*
- Everyone is welcome to play*

2. We Listen and We Are Kind

- We listen when someone is talking*
- We speak and play nicely with each other*
- We help others when they need us*

3. We Tidy Up and Care for Our World

- We put equipment back where it belongs and keep all areas tidy*
- We look after nature—plants and animals. We take care of our toys and tools.*

✿ Together we play safely, kindly, and happily! ✿

Guidance for the playground:

1. When disputes arise, all children involved should be given a chance to explain their case without interruption. They should be encouraged to find a solution. No blame should be given to one child more than the other until the facts have been determined.
2. Children should be asked to apologise and make friends after disputes. Time needs to be put aside to repair and rebuild, offering children a way back.
3. School rules should be applied consistently and children reminded of them regularly.
4. Incidents that occur during lunchtime should be dealt with, unless extremely serious, by the lunchtime supervisor on duty.
5. Lunch time staff have allocated roles to ensure children are actively engaged, providing opportunities for developing social skills.

Good Practice Rewards:

Good manners and behaviour should be rewarded with:

- Lots of positive praise
- House points and dojos.

Good Practice Sanctions:

The following interventions should/can be used to stop inappropriate behaviour:

- If a child makes the wrong choice a verbal reminder about the rule they are not following will be given.
- If a child continues to make the wrong choice their name will move out of the green and on to the think page in the consequences folder.
- If a child makes the wrong choice again then their name will be put in the amber.
- If a child can show the lunchtime supervisor that they can make the right choices and follow our rules their name will be moved back red, amber, think, green.
- If a child's name is still in the amber at the end of the lunch, then a note will be made and passed onto the class teacher.
- If a child continues to not follow the rules, their name will be moved into the red. They have the chance to work their way back into the green, through the amber by the end of lunch.

- If a child ends lunch on red, this is to be reported to the Lead Lunchtime Supervisor who will report it to the class teacher.
- A child may spend some of lunchtime reflecting with class teacher or a member of SLT if serious.

In the event of a serious behavioural incident (see Positive Relationship Policy) the incident will be reported to a member of the Senior Management Team by the Lunchtime Co-Ordinator.

Inclusive Play – SEND

All pupils from EYFS to Year 6 are entitled to engaging, varied and developmentally appropriate play experiences. We ensure that play opportunities reflect the wide range of abilities, interests and needs found within a primary school. We actively promote a culture where all children feel valued, included and confident to participate in play.

Adapting the Environment and Resources

- Our outdoor play spaces are organised into clear zones to support different types of play (e.g. active, creative, imaginative, quiet).
- We provide a wide range of loose parts that can be used in different ways, allowing children to access play at their own level.
- Adjustments are made where needed to ensure pupils with physical, sensory or cognitive needs can access play (e.g., quieter areas, visual supports, accessible equipment).
- We have an offer of sensory toys if needed

Supporting Pupils with SEND

- Staff understand that some pupils may need additional support to access playtimes, including help with social interaction, communication or emotional regulation.
- Risk-benefit assessments consider individual needs so that pupils are included safely, rather than excluded.
- Where appropriate, individual strategies (e.g., visual timetables, buddy systems, structured support) are used to support participation.
- When appropriate pupils will be supported by 1:1 staff and individual plans are followed.

Role of Staff

Lunchtime supervisors, teachers and support staff act as facilitators of play, encouraging independence while providing support when needed.

Staff are trained to understand a range of SEND needs commonly seen in primary schools, including ASD, ADHD and SEMH.

Adults promote positive relationships, model inclusive behaviour and support children in resolving conflicts.

Pupil Voice: All pupils, including those with SEND, are encouraged to share their views about playtimes through school councils, class discussions or informal feedback. Children are supported to make choices about how and where they play, promoting independence and self-confidence.

Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

Playtimes are recognised as an important part of supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing and social development.

We provide quieter or calmer spaces for children who may feel overwhelmed by busy playgrounds.

Additional support is available for pupils who may struggle with friendships or unstructured times.

Working with Families and Professionals

We work closely with parents/carers to understand each child's needs, interests and preferences.

The SENDCo and SEN team support staff in ensuring inclusive play provision and liaises with external professionals where appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

Inclusion within playtimes is regularly reviewed as part of our OPAL development.

We use observations, pupil voice, staff and parent/carer feedback to adapt provision and ensure all pupils can access and enjoy play.

Feedback and reviewing

At Greenside Primary School, we are committed to continually improving our OPAL play provision through regular feedback and review. We value the voices of pupils, staff and parents/carers to ensure our play environment remains inclusive, engaging and responsive to the needs of our school community.

Pupil Voice

Children are encouraged to share their views on play through the school council, class discussions, questionnaires and informal conversations. Their ideas help shape play spaces, resources and rules.

Staff Voice

All staff provide ongoing feedback based on observations of play, behaviour and engagement to inform improvements.

Parent/Carer Voice

We gather feedback from parents and carers through surveys, communication channels and school events to understand how play provision supports children's wellbeing and development.

Play provision is reviewed regularly by the OPAL team and senior leaders, with adjustments made to reflect feedback, observations and the changing needs of pupils. This ensures that our play offer continues to develop in line with OPAL principles and the values of Greenside Primary School.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the duty of all staff in school. If a child reports anything that gives a lunchtime supervisor cause for concern this must be reported to the DSL immediately and the class teacher. Never tell a child you can keep secrets. It is important that incidents within school are kept confidential and information about children in school should not be discussed outside of school. Lunchtime supervisors need to be particularly vigilant of:

- Children calling to members of the public through the perimeter fence.
- Handling, reporting and recording injuries (especially bumped heads) and concerns, particularly to the responsible teacher. Accurate details are important so, if necessary, please record details for the teacher.

Appendices

OPAL College- <https://opal-college.mn.co/spaces/10826362/page>

Guidance Health and Safety Executive - CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pmaDf0zBxD9yG_ouAQlpOMHAD7JJ6kfn/view

Policies to Refer to

Positive Relationship Policy

Safeguarding Policy

SEMH and SEND Policies

First aid Policy