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| **Name of school** | Staples Road Primary |
| **Date of review** | 4/10/24 |
| **Level achieved** | Gold |
| **Score** | 85% |
| **Reaccreditation by** | October 2026 |

# OPAL Primary Programme Final Report

**Staples Road School has made outstanding progress in implementing the OPAL program, achieving a high gold rating of 85%. The sound of the play today was joyful and engaging, with many children deeply involved in their games.**

This Gold award puts you amongst the best schools in the world. You are giving your children back their childhood - and reaping the rewards of happier children who are developing creativity and curiosity.

Your playtime is much calmer now, with fewer accidents and conflicts. Children are happier and report enjoying the variety of play activities available. You have successfully zoned different areas of the playground for different types of play.

You have worked through a range of significant challenges like budget constraints, sourcing resources and risk aversion.

The staff survey is particularly positive, and you have clearly done a great job bringing all the staff with you. Teachers are very positive about the impact on the children and on the classroom. You try to ensure that all staff know about ranging supervision, have a consistent view of risks and understand dynamic risk management.

While there are some areas for further development, the school's proactive approach and dedication to the OPAL Primary Program suggests you will continue to foster a vibrant and inclusive play environment.

Your parents have mostly been brought along on your journey, with some extremely positive responses and 97% saying playtime is important or extremely important.

These statements stood out to me:
“The girls enjoy playtime and are a lot more interested and engaged since the introduction of Opal. Before they used to complain of often being bored, sometimes they complain of there not being enough space - but obviously, that is something that can't be changed. I think the school does a good job with what they have.”

“My son is quite gentle in nature, and when he joined SRPS he found knowing what to do at break time overwhelming. He would talk about not wanting to join in playing football and not really knowing what else to do. Since the increase in OPAL, I hear a variety of things that he has done. I think you are carefully considering all children’s needs with this initiative and for that we are most grateful. He loves the little areas, corners, covered places etc.”

And simply: “Lots of games to play”. I particularly enjoyed talking with your children and hearing that they love “everything!”, that they can play everywhere and - from several children - that they love that there is something that appeals to everyone, whatever they want to do.

You said you wanted improved behaviour and children's enjoyment and engagement with playtime, and you got it. Your ‘slow, steady change’ approach is really working. Well done!

Below, I have detailed some specific strengths, your next steps, and suggestions for systems development.

## Leadership, Policy and Communication - A strong leadership team; regular OPAL Working Group meetings; a Play Policy, clear action plan, and grounds plan to underpin the sustainability of your play provision

Overall, the leadership team has shown a strong commitment to the OPAL transformation, with effective communication and policy structures in place to support it.

Key Strengths:

- Strong leadership commitment to OPAL program implementation
- Regular OPAL working group meetings
- Play included in School Improvement Plan
- Play policy in place and on the school website, alongside a presentation for parents and an overview of OPAL at the school.
- Good communication with parents through newsletters and surveys
- Weekly play assemblies to celebrate play, negotiate with the children and introduce new elements
- Excellent grounds plan of current and immediate plans

Next Step Recommendations:

1. Develop a child-friendly "Charter for Play" to increase student ownership
2. Enhance visibility of play policy for new parents and staff
3. Implement open play times or stay-and-play sessions to increase parent engagement and understanding
4. Include play responsibilities in all relevant staff job descriptions

5. Create a more detailed long-term grounds development plan, including budgets and

timelines

Systems to Implement:

1. Establish a regular cycle for reviewing and updating play policy and action plans
2. Set up a system for gathering and incorporating student voices in playground development decisions 3. Create a communication calendar to ensure regular updates to parents about play initiatives 4. Implement a tracking system for parent engagement in play-related activities
5. Develop a process for integrating play considerations into curriculum planning

## Access and Inclusion - meeting EVERY child's needs, using every part of your outdoor environment and playing out all year round, whatever the weather

While there's still room for improvement, particularly in providing more challenging activities for older students and expanding all-weather play options, the school has made substantial progress in creating an inclusive play environment that caters to diverse needs and abilities.

Key Strengths

- Strong inclusion of children with additional needs - they are integrated into play rather than closely supervised.
- Staff proactively familiarise children with disabilities to new play areas/equipment to ensure access.
- A variety of play opportunities cater to different ages and abilities (scooters, hammocks, etc.)

Next Step Recommendations:

- Add more upper body strength challenges, especially for older students (e.g. climbing structures, rope swings)
- Source weather-resistant materials and structures to enable play in a wider range of weather conditions - superhero capes, wigs, polyester materials, lots more tarps
- Store more wet weather play resources outside so the shed is only open in the dry
- All children to have wet weather gear and plan for clothes changes
- Develop a "playground charter" with student input on how the space should be used and respected.

Systems to Implement:

- Regularly review the risk-benefit assessment with staff to identify areas for improvement in access and inclusion
- Incorporate play types, schemas, and specific zones/equipment into staff training on a rotating basis, focussing on meeting every child's needs, every day
- Engage parents and the wider community to help maintain, repair, and enhance the play environment
- Allocate budget and resources to gradually improve the all-weather, all-abilities accessibility of the outdoor space

## Managing risks, keeping playtime safe enough and maintaining the playground for play

Overall, Staples Road has established robust systems and a strong risk management culture that allows children to play freely and safely. This provides an excellent foundation for their continued development of the play environment.

Key Strengths:

- The playground is well maintained, visually litter-free and extremely well signposted.

- Particular praise goes to the facilities manager for his support of the project.
- Praise should also be given to the staff and parents who gave up their own time to paint and build or work with children to build the play areas.
- A comprehensive risk-benefit assessment process in place
- Regular daily and weekly playground checks are established
- Regular communication across the play team, despite huge staffing challenges
- Most staff understand and apply dynamic risk assessment principles and are particularly confident of 'fun, fair, safe' and restorative justice prompts
- Children demonstrate a good understanding of keeping themselves and others safe - fun, fair,safe

Next Step Recommendations:

1. Provide additional training on dynamic risk assessment for new staff members
2. Build on 'fun, fair, safe' to encapsulate 'safe ENOUGH'. Not just safe - it's important children feel happy challenging themselves in environments that are safe enough and that they fully know they have the capabilities and are trusted to keep themselves and their friends safe enough.
3. The children's and parents' surveys indicate that there is an issue around the consistency of messages - what they can play, where and how. Focus on securing that consistency.
4. Enhance documentation of risk-benefit assessments for all play areas and activities
5. Develop more robust systems for addressing maintenance issues identified during checks, potentially involving the children

Systems to Implement:

1. Create a standardised induction process for new staff on risk management procedures

2. Ensure all staff who may be on play duty at lunch, after school or playtime all understand the RAPID processes - potentially add it to the lanyard.
3. Implement regular staff refresher training on risk management principles
4. Develop a system for involving children in identifying and reporting potential hazards 5. Ensure you are regularly reviewing and updating risk-benefit assessments based on playground changes and incidents

## Play Value - focussing on: the quantity and variety of loose parts; access to natural materials, in particular, sand, mud and water; ball games (lots of different ones, non-ball players protected); magic, awe and wonder; and greening the school ground

The playground is fun-filled and child-centred, with some outstanding features. There is enough to do on a sunny day, and there is plenty to entice children around the full area available.

Key Strengths:

- Significant improvement in variety and accessibility of loose parts
- Good A-board requesting loose parts
- Fabulous den making
- Lovely sand house, second sandpit, water feature, digging area, tree climbing, cardboard slides… so much!
- Excellent investment in the ball areas to separate and protect children and allow a greater diversity of different types of ball play
- Good use of natural elements and sensory play opportunities. For a London school with no access to a field, the staff have made the best of what is on offer
- Effective zoning of playground areas
- Fairly plentiful den-making materials
- Nice music playing and some music-making
- Lovely crafts shed
- Great signage

Next Step Recommendations:

1. Develop more upper body strength options, particularly for older children
2. Swings, slides and generally more ways to move around the site are needed especially for older children
3. By putting in more challenging activities you will entice the older children to what was the 'infant playground'
4. Create additional small and medium social spaces throughout the playground
5. Introduce more elements that encourage wonder, imagination, and "magic".
6. Enhance the mud kitchen and water play areas
7. Consider hammocks around the place
8. Build a ball pit!
9. Consider a big transport feature (London bus? canoes?) or climbing frame, or even just a huge tree trunk to climb on in the playground
10. Lots more green, planting, mud offers, sensory play, shade….

Systems to Implement:

1. Sustain your regular audit process for play equipment to ensure variety and challenge

2. Create a system for children to suggest and vote on new playground features

3. Implement a rotation system for introducing new loose parts and play provocations to ensure ‘newness’ and to protect some stuff from winter.
4. Develop a process for regularly reassessing and adjusting playground zones based on usage
5. Create a maintenance schedule for natural play areas (e.g., mud kitchen, sand areas)
6. Involve more parents in taking charge of securing stuff and sustaining the flow of loose parts