

Sustaining and Achieving Our OPAL Play Award

At Seaton Academy, our vision is to sustain and enrich our OPAL Play Award by embedding a culture of inclusive, imaginative, and child-led play at the heart of school life. We are committed to continuously developing our play environment to offer every child the opportunity to explore, create, take supported risks, and build lasting relationships through meaningful play.



Guided by OPAL's fundamental themes, we will:

- Champion inclusivity, ensuring every child, regardless of ability or background, has equitable access to high-quality play experiences.
- Foster creativity and imagination by providing open-ended resources and a dynamic outdoor environment that inspires curiosity and self-expression.
- Encourage positive risk-taking to support resilience, independence, and decision-making in safe, supervised contexts.
- Promote social and emotional growth, using play as a tool to nurture collaboration, empathy, and communication skills.
- Empower our pupils to lead their own play journeys, giving them voice, choice, and ownership of their time outdoors.

Through ongoing staff training, community engagement, and a shared belief in the power of play, we will ensure that the standard is not only maintained, but continues to evolve and flourish — making playtime a joyful, transformative, and essential part of every school day.

Enhancing Our OPAL Play Provision through Themed Play Days and Creative Opportunities

To further strengthen our OPAL Play provision, we are excited to continue developing our newly introduced themed play days, a dynamic initiative designed to inspire imagination, collaboration, and inclusive play across the school. Each term, our dedicated OPAL Play Leaders will work alongside their classes to select two engaging themes — such as stories, seasonal holidays, or topics based on children's interests — to shape their play experiences.

These themes will spark collaborative planning, with pupils working together to design creative, purposeful activities that encourage exploration and playfulness. The activities will be launched during our whole-school OPAL assemblies, helping to raise the profile of OPAL Play, revisit key play-based vocabulary, and support reluctant participants in becoming more actively engaged.

In line with recent feedback from Governor Shelley McGlasson's review, and the school's focus on expanding writing opportunities, we are also embedding literacy-linked activities within our themed play sessions. These opportunities aim to strengthen children's language development and encourage writing through purposeful, play-based contexts.

Pupil Voice and Projects Driving OPAL Zone Development

Pupil voice continues to be a driving force in the evolution of our OPAL Play provision. Working closely with our Eco Council and School Council, pupils have taken an active role in shaping and enhancing our play zones. This collaborative approach has already led to exciting developments such as the addition of a sand tray, reading swings, and swing bars—all directly inspired by children's suggestions and needs. Responding to a popular request to "Mix and Make" with a science focus, we are currently exploring ways to introduce more hands-on, investigative opportunities into the play offer. Further discussions with our Pupil Premium groups highlighted aspirations for future careers in construction, art, food, and performance—many of which align with the skills and experiences they have enjoyed through OPAL Play. To build on this, we are now working with our OPAL Parent Champions to deliver class talks and workshops on career aspirations and real-world opportunities, helping children connect their play experiences with future possibilities and ambitions.

Enhancing Our OPAL Charter Through Creativity and Collaboration

Building on the work of last year's OPAL Play Leaders, who developed and shared a clear set of expectations for playtimes, our new team of OPAL Leaders have taken this initiative further by transforming these expectations into a thoughtful and inspiring poem. With input from their classes, the children reflected on how best to make the OPAL Charter a visible and meaningful part of daily school life. This led to an exciting collaboration with a local artist, where pupils helped design a vibrant mural featuring their poem—creating a permanent, creative reminder of the values and behaviours that underpin our play. To celebrate the project and encourage wider engagement, the whole school took part in a mural design competition, with five outstanding entries—selected alongside our weekly Golden Welly award winners—earning additional OPAL playtime as a reward. This initiative has sparked a renewed sense of ownership and pride in our outdoor spaces. Building on this momentum, pupils are now helping to enhance our grassed area with the addition of a bus play structure, inspired by Year 2's curriculum learning about Rosa Parks, further embedding play into learning and promoting pupil voice at every step.

To ensure the continued success and sustainability of our OPAL Play provision, our dedicated OPAL Play Team takes part in fortnightly CPD sessions. These structured training opportunities focus on reviewing key elements such as play policy, risk-benefit assessments, and the strategic development of play areas. In addition, the sessions provide valuable time for staff to engage in practical training that supports high-quality interactions, effective supervision, and the creation of enriched, inclusive play experiences. Through ongoing reflection and discussion, team members are encouraged to build their confidence and autonomy, gaining the knowledge and freedom they need to excel in their roles. This regular CPD ensures a consistent and shared understanding of the vision for OPAL Play across the team, helping to embed best practices and maintain the high standards that support our Platinum Award status.

Looking Ahead on Our OPAL Journey

At Seaton Academy, we are proud of how far we've come on our OPAL journey and are excited to continue building on this success. We recognise the importance of maintaining high standards across all aspects of OPAL Play, while continually striving to grow, evolve, and improve. Through our carefully developed Next Step Action Plan, we are committed to deepening the impact of play across the school and ensuring it remains inclusive, creative, and meaningful for every child. Seaton Academy remains fully dedicated to being a Platinum-standard OPAL school, and we hope that during your time with us, you experience the passion, purpose, and pupil voice that drive our play provision forward every day.