



Kings Furlong Junior School

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Friday 5th December 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Kings Furlong Junior School is launching an exciting new programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, resilience, creativity, imagination, and enjoyment through better play.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme has been developed over 20 years and implemented in more than 800 schools worldwide, including Spain, Canada, France, and New Zealand. It has also been adapted across Europe through the Play Friendly Schools project. OPAL has won multiple awards, including Best Active School Programme in Europe (2018) and two UK national playwork awards. In 2019, Sport England invested £250,000 to expand the programme to more schools.

OPAL is based on the principle that children learn not only through teaching but also through play. Since 20% of their school time is playtime (equivalent to 1.4 years of primary school) we want to make that time the best it can be.

Children today have fewer freedoms than previous generations, so we aim to give them back time to play, explore, and learn because play is a basic human right.

Why is this important? Childhood has changed:

- Average screen time per day: 6 hours
- Average outdoor play per week: 5 hours

Schools that adopt OPAL typically see:

- Happier children who enjoy school more
- Fewer disputes and accidents
- Improved behaviour and learning time

Play is not “messaging about.” It’s how children learn essential life skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. To make play possible, children need:

- Clothes they can play in
- Things to play with
- A degree of freedom

As we improve play opportunities, you may notice changes: children might use more of the school grounds, play in all seasons, get a little messier, and enjoy greater freedom. These experiences are vital for their physical and mental wellbeing and follow best practice in health, safety, and development.

The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months. You’ll have opportunities to meet the OPAL mentor and attend events to see the changes in action. For more information, visit www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk, where you’ll find videos and resources. We will provide you with further information in the new year. We’re excited about this project and hope you’ll support us in making playtime better for every child.

Yours sincerely

Miss Westaway (Head teacher) & Julie Mountain (OPAL mentor)

Headteacher: Miss A Westaway

Deputy Head: Miss S Dunn