

# Maintenance and Care Plan for Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)



Implemented March 2026 | Version 1.0

## 1. Aims and Scope

This policy ensures that the school's OPAL environment remains **safe, inviting, and sustainable** for all children, staff, and families. It covers the maintenance of permanent structures, loose parts, plants, social spaces, and specialist areas such as the forest school. All users share responsibility for keeping the site tidy and respectable.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

OPAL Coordinator	Overall oversight; Friday checks; liaison with contractors; plant care coordination; training children in safe removal of broken items.
GTaylor Maintenance company	Weekly maintenance and checks; responding to TAMS requests; watering plants over summer holidays.
Mercury Sports	Yearly checks on permanent structures (e.g., climbing frames, pond fencing, stage, shelters).
Play team	Daily vigilance during OPAL play; immediate removal of broken/dangerous equipment.
Children	Trained to identify and remove small broken/dangerous parts to the designated broken parts area.
Sustainability	Advise on plant care; ensure site biodiversity goals are met.
Forest School Lead	Maintain forest school area and ensure safe access.

## 3. Maintenance Schedules

### 3.1 Yearly Checks (Permanent Structures)

Annually, before the start of the autumn term, Mercury Sports will conduct a full inspection of all permanent OPAL structures, including:

- Climbing frames and tree climbing platforms
- Mud kitchen framework
- Outdoor stage
- Pond fencing and viewing platform
- Willow domes and fixed seating
- Forest school shelter and fire circle

A written report will be provided to the OPAL Coordinator and Headteacher. Any urgent repairs will be scheduled immediately. Non-urgent findings will be added to the TAMS system for GTaylor to action.

### 3.2 Weekly Maintenance (GTaylor)

GTaylor Maintenance Company will complete weekly checks every **Wednesday afternoon**. This includes:

- Inspecting all fixed equipment for loose bolts, splinters, or sharp edges
- Checking pond water levels and fence integrity
- Ensuring path surfaces are free from trip hazards
- Testing gate latches and hinges
- Watering plants and vegetable patch (see section 7)

All findings and completed work must be uploaded to **TAMS** by close of play on Tuesday. Staff can also upload urgent requests to TAMS at any time.

### 3.3 Friday Checks (OPAL Staff)

Every Friday afternoon, the OPAL Coordinator or delegated OPAL staff will carry out a detailed check of:

- All loose parts (tyres, planks, crates, guttering, pots, pans, fabric)
- Small world zones and toys
- Outdoor art displays
- Litter picker stations
- Broken parts area and general bin levels

A simple tick-sheet checklist will be completed and filed. Any missing or damaged loose parts will be noted and replaced or repaired via TAMS.

## 4. Daily Vigilance During OPAL Play

All staff supervising OPAL play must remain **vigilant** and immediately remove any equipment that becomes broken or dangerous during the session.

- **Small broken items** (e.g., cracked plastic, splintered wood, sharp metal) → place in the **broken parts area** (a labelled tub or tray) or directly into a general bin if they fit safely.
- **Large broken items** (e.g., shattered crate, snapped plank, broken wheel) → OPAL Coordinator to liaise with GTaylor for removal or transport to the local tip.
- **Multiple large items after a big build or project** → the OPAL Coordinator will request a skip via the school business manager.

**Children are trained** to recognise broken or dangerous parts and to carry them carefully to the broken parts area. This builds ownership and risk awareness.

## 5. Litter Management

A **litter picker station** (with child-safe litter pickers, gloves, and a bucket) will be available at all times during OPAL play. Staff actively encourage children to use it.

- The OPAL environment must remain a **litter-free zone**.
- At the end of each OPAL session, children and staff do a final litter sweep.
- Any sharp or hazardous litter found (e.g., glass, broken plastic) is removed by staff only.

## 6. Outdoor Artwork

Artwork displayed outdoors (e.g., nature weaving, mud paintings, giant charcoal drawings) enhances the play environment but will deteriorate.

- **Damaged or ruined artwork** will be taken down immediately by staff or children.
- Once per school year, a **timetabled Enhancement Day** is held to create and install new outdoor art. This involves all classes and, where possible, visiting artists.

## 7. Care and Maintenance of Plants

Plants are central to OPAL – they provide sensory play, biodiversity, shade, and loose parts (leaves, sticks, petals).

### 7.1 Term-Time Plant Care (Autumn, Spring, Summer)

The OPAL Lead will use **clubs, lunchtime gardening groups, and class responsibilities** to maintain:

- Wildflower areas
- Herbs for the mud kitchen
- Vegetable patch
- Sensory planting (lavender, mint, lamb's ear)

The OPAL Lead will liaise with the **Sustainability Lead** to ensure plant health aligns with wider site ecology goals. Local gardening firms may be invited to **donate plants, compost, or time** – a list of partner firms will be kept by the OPAL Lead.

### 7.2 Holiday Watering (6 Weeks Summer)

GTaylor Maintenance Company will water plants and the vegetable patch **twice a week** during the six-week summer holiday. A simple rota and log sheet will be left in the maintenance office.

### 7.3 Children's Responsibility

Children are taught to respect plants – not to trample beds, to water when needed, and to harvest herbs and vegetables respectfully.

## 8. Forest School Area Maintenance

The Forest School Lead is responsible for maintaining:

- Safe boundaries and entrance
- Tool storage (peelers, bow saws, loppers)
- Fire circle with clear safety zone
- Shelter and seating

The OPAL Coordinator will liaise with the Forest School Lead termly to ensure the area remains **accessible for all children** during OPAL play, not just Forest School sessions. Any tree hazards (dead branches, unstable trunks) are reported immediately to GTaylor.

## 9. Risk Assessments

All maintenance activities and site changes are underpinned by **OPAL risk assessments** (benefit-risk assessments). These are reviewed:

- After any significant repair or new build
- Following an incident or near miss
- Annually as part of the OPAL policy review

Risk assessments are stored on TAMS and in the OPAL Coordinator's file.

## 10. Keeping the Site Tidy and Respectable

Every member of the school community; staff, children, and visitors, is responsible for the appearance and safety of the OPAL environment.

- **Children** return loose parts to zones after play.
- **Staff** model tidying and respectful use of equipment.
- **Parents** are reminded via newsletters to respect the site during drop-off/pick-up.

A half-termly "Tidy & Tweak" session (20 minutes after OPAL play) involves children sorting loose parts, sweeping paths, and weeding planted areas.

## 11. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the OPAL Coordinator, Headteacher, and a parent representative. Monitoring evidence includes:

- TAMS maintenance logs
- Friday checklist records
- GTaylor weekly reports
- Annual inspection report from Mercury Sports
- Photographic evidence of plant health and site tidiness

**Date of next review:** September 2026

**Signed by Headteacher:** D.Adams

**Signed by OPAL Lead:** H.Brewin