

## **Playtime Observation Report**

**Focus:** Reception children accessing the wider school grounds with the rest of the school

**Date:** 22.10.2025

**Observer:** Louise Taffe OPAL Mentor

**Class/Group:** Reception and Whole School

### **Context**

This observation took place during lunch playtime; Reception children are invited to join Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils in the wider school playground and field areas. The purpose of my visit was to evaluate the impact of shared outdoor play on social interaction, confidence, and inclusion for both Reception children and the wider school community.

### **Observation Summary**

As the Reception children entered the wider playground, they were greeted warmly by older pupils. Many Reception children displayed visible excitement and curiosity, exploring new areas such as the climbing equipment, ball games area, and open field. Older pupils were observed modelling positive play behaviours, such as sharing equipment, inviting younger children to join games, and offering guidance when needed.

Reception children engaged confidently with older peers and began forming mixed-age play groups. Several children were seen developing their gross motor skills by running, climbing, and participating in ball games. Staff noted high levels of cooperation and turn-taking, as well as moments of imaginative play led by older pupils that included younger children.

### **Positive Effects Observed**

#### **For Reception Children:**

- **Increased Confidence:** Children demonstrated greater independence and willingness to explore new spaces.
- **Enhanced Social Skills:** They interacted positively with a wider range of peers, developing communication and teamwork skills.
- **Modelling of Positive Behaviour:** Exposure to older role models supported understanding of playtime routines, fairness, and inclusion.
- **Physical Development:** Access to larger play areas encouraged more vigorous movement and coordination activities.

#### **For Older Pupils:**

- **Leadership Opportunities:** Older children took responsibility for supporting and including younger peers.
- **Empathy and Care:** There were frequent examples of older pupils demonstrating kindness, patience, and encouragement.
- **Community Spirit:** The shared play environment fostered a stronger sense of whole school belonging and respect across age groups.

## **Impact on School Community**

The integration of Reception children into the wider playground contributed to a more cohesive school community. It promoted a culture of inclusion, mutual respect, and collaboration. Staff observed fewer incidents of conflict and increased levels of cooperative play across all year groups. The initiative also supported smooth transitions for Reception pupils as they become more familiar with the whole school environment.

It is clear to see that the individual work the team in reception have adopted has made the transition into the mixed play space a positive one. I would like to share this approach with other OPAL schools in the future as an excellent example of transition and support.

## **Next Steps / Recommendations**

- Encourage regular mixed-age play sessions to strengthen relationships and confidence.
- Encourage peer mentors or “play buddies” from older classes to support Reception pupils. This builds on those peer relations and enables children to build on independence.
- Continue with the strong monitoring of ongoing interactions to ensure all children feel safe, included, and supported in larger spaces. These strong ongoing observations mean you can quickly identify any child that may struggle in the future. This ties in nicely with section 2.3 of the OPAL programme around equality. It shows you as a school have a very inclusive framework.
- Gather pupil voice feedback to reflect on children’s perspectives of shared playtimes.

Louise Taffe

OPAL Mentor