LUDICOLOGY

OPAL Mentor

Job description | 2026 recruitment

Employer	Ludicology Ltd
Reports to	Ben Tawil, Co-director
Contract	Permanent, part-time, 0.8 FTE
Hours	29.6 hours per week, normally Monday to Thursday
Full-time basis	37 hours per week
Salary	£34,400 per annum, based on an FTE salary of £43,000
Location	Home-based, with extensive regional travel
Effective date	As soon as reasonably practicable following appointment

Role purpose

To mentor primary schools through the OPAL Primary Programme, supporting sustained cultural and practical improvement in how play is understood, planned, resourced and staffed. The postholder will manage an allocated portfolio, deliver high-quality coaching and programme support, and help each school complete the programme within the agreed timeframe and to the best of their capabilities.

Core targets and responsibilities

- Start 18 new schools in each school year, subject to agreed allocations and school readiness.
- Maintain an active portfolio of up to approximately 36 schools at different stages of the OPAL programme, subject to agreed allocations, programme duration, completion rates and school readiness.
- Plan and deliver mentoring so that each school is supported to complete the programme within the preferred 18-month programme period and, in all cases, within a maximum of 24 months from its agreed programme start date.
- Deliver scheduled school visits, online mentoring, workshops, audits, reviews and other programme activities in line with OPAL requirements and Ludicology quality standards.
- Agree clear actions, milestones and responsibilities with each school and follow up progress consistently.
- Maintain accurate, timely and secure records of contacts, visits, actions, evidence, risks, progress and programme status using approved systems.

- Identify schools at risk of delay, agree recovery actions and escalate concerns promptly to Ludicology directors.
- Maintain prompt, professional and constructive communication with schools, colleagues and programme partners.
- Build effective working relationships with headteachers, governors, OPAL leads, staff, pupils and other stakeholders.
- Coach and appropriately challenge senior school staff with professionalism, empathy and discretion.
- Support schools to embed inclusive and sustainable improvements to play policy, practice, environments, resourcing, risk-benefit approaches and staff culture.
- Manage diary, travel and workload efficiently within the agreed four-day pattern, raising capacity concerns early.
- Represent Ludicology and OPAL professionally and provide exemplary service to clients and partners.
- Undertake relevant continuing professional development and maintain current knowledge of playwork, primary schools, safeguarding and programme requirements.
- Follow all Ludicology policies and procedures, including safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection, equality, health and safety, mileage, expenses and professional conduct.

Wider role responsibilities

Alongside responsibility for their allocated school cohort, the postholder will contribute to the wider delivery, quality and development of Ludicology's OPAL work, in accordance with operational priorities agreed with Ludicology directors. This will include:

- Implementation of Ludicology's agreed quality assurance processes with schools.
- Undertaking OPAL reaccreditations allocated by Ludicology.
- Assisting with the delivery of additional training, workshops and networking events.
- Contributing regularly to OPAL College on behalf of Ludicology.
- Attending Tea with OPAL on-line events regularly on behalf of Ludicology.
- Representing Ludicology at other agreed OPAL meetings and events.
- Supporting the promotion of Ludicology's OPAL offer through appropriate case studies, programme information, events, communications and approved channels.
- Supporting the recruitment of new schools, including following up agreed enquiries, contributing to recruitment activity and explaining the programme to prospective schools.
- Sharing practical insight, resources and learning with colleagues to support quality and continuous improvement.

Essential criteria

- A strong commitment to children's right to play and improving children's opportunities for play.
- Experience in playwork, education, youth work, family support or related children's services.

- Understanding of English primary school structures and the practical demands on school leaders and staff.
- Excellent communication, coaching, presentation and workshop facilitation skills.
- Ability to build trust, influence practice and provide constructive challenge with empathy and discretion.
- Strong organisation, project and portfolio management skills, with close attention to detail and follow-through.
- Self-motivated and proactive, able to plan work independently and identify what is needed for successful delivery.
- Confident use of Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, video-conferencing tools and digital record systems.
- Ability and willingness to travel regularly to schools and other work venues.
- Commitment to safeguarding, equality, inclusion, confidentiality and continuing professional development.

Desirable criteria

- A sound understanding of play and playwork theory and practice.
- Experience of school improvement, organisational culture change or sustained mentoring programmes.
- Experience in quality assurance, accreditation, training, project management, community development, research or event delivery.
- Knowledge of risk-benefit assessment and inclusive approaches to school play times.

Review and flexibility

This job description describes the main purpose and responsibilities of the role. It is not an exhaustive list of every task. Reasonable duties consistent with the nature, level and agreed hours of the role may be assigned following discussion. Objectives, workload and available capacity will be reviewed through staff meetings, supervision and appraisal. Any material contractual change will be discussed and agreed separately.