



OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning)

Updates and Information

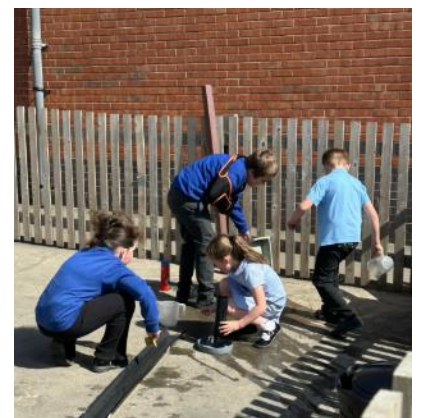
April 2025

We are now at the end of our first half-term of OPAL dinner times. Our new Play Policy has been approved by the governors which outlines our aims and vision. **You can read it [here](#).**

Last month our OPAL consultant Rob visited us to support us and he reported that he was impressed by the range of small loose parts we had gathered and how wonderful the children are 😊

We have newly appointed OPAL Rangers who are a group of enthusiastic children volunteers.

We have opened up more of our field area including trim trails, one of the fields and auditorium areas. Have a look at the pictures to see what fun the children are having.



Say hello to the new OPAL Rangers.

Well done for volunteering to help make lunchtimes even more fabulous



OPAL's R.A.P.I.D response to risk

1. Risk-benefit assessments
2. Assemblies
3. Policy
4. Inspections
5. Dynamic risk management

Risk

"If we never took a risk our children would not learn to walk, climb stairs, ride a bike or swim: business would not develop innovative products...scientists would not experiment and discover, we would not have great art, literature, music and architecture."

Jones, D, Cotton Wool kids

Benefits v Risk

Staff including some governors have undergone RAPID training with Rob from OPAL to help support us in terms of benefits and risks involved with outdoor play. As we introduce more adventurous play, please be assured that each area and the resources within are subject to a clear formal risk assessment as well as ongoing dynamic risk benefit analysis by the adults. We know through the questionnaires you completed at the start of this academic year, that you are supportive of the importance to provide adventurous outdoor play to your children.

Part of this risk mitigation is the role of our Play assemblies to the children where we continue to ask them to think about 3 things:

- 1- Am I safe
- 2- Is everyone else safe
- 3- Is the equipment safe- and will I break it

All equipment and areas are inspected and the children are taught to place broken items in the toy hospital and to tell an adult.

WHAT IS NEXT and HELP NEEDED

We are now onto our next phase of OPAL which includes planning for children to play with bigger loose parts like pallets and cable drums. Rob from OPAL had trained all relevant members of staff regarding benefit risk assessments and we are now busy planning the logistics of opening up the wider grounds for our children to play. This will eventually include the wooded areas in school which the children already use for outside learning. More information will follow on this in the next newsletter.

We still need your help. Please continue to send in any unwanted loose parts. Sometimes we ask for help and the fact that we are a larger school may mean that everyone assumes someone else will help. We appreciate that everyone is busy, but often we do not have any volunteers or we have the same one! This change in our lunchtimes is a huge commitment and takes a lot of time and organisation so any offer of help is very much appreciated.

We still want to build a big sandpit so lots of children can experience it. If you think you can help in any way e.g. supply of wood, your time to help make it please do get in touch with the office.

We would love donations of any planks of wood, pallets, plastic guttering, plastic barriers. In fact, anything you have that you think the children would like to play with we would like so please do continue to drop off donations. You can do this at any time either into the wooden box outside the office or for bigger items just let us know and we can arrange for you to drive around the back of the school.

We are also still in the process of planning outside storage for all children to have wet weather gear i.e. storage of wellies, waterproof trousers and other clothing. We will be asking all children to bring a pair of wellies and waterproof coat into school in the next school year.

If you or anyone you know have the skills and/or time we would be so grateful of any help you can provide to truly transform our grounds for our children's benefit. Please do pass on any contact names in local companies that we can ask for help from. Often it's who you know that makes a difference!

Together we will make our playtimes the best experience for our children that we can.

Thank you as always for your continued support.

We will always be wanting a supply of any loose parts you may have hanging around

Here are some examples of what **loose parts** are:

- Suitcases of any size and type that are still useable i.e. zip works, wheels work etc
- Anything on wheels/castors including pushchairs
- Plastic milk crates/supermarket delivery crates/plastic bread trays
- Briefcases, especially hard cased ones
- Road signs and cones
- Kitchen pots, pans, baking trays, work tables, wooden spoons, chopping boards
- Tools like small spades/shovels, trowels and brooms
- Tubes of various sizes and various materials
- Buckets
- Nets and thick ropes
- Keyboards/torches/laptops/calculators/mobile phones/desk phones/webcams/cameras that are no longer working
- Fabric (large sheets/brightly coloured fabric) including blankets
- Foam sheets/bodyboards/camping roll mats/yoga mats
- Wooden pallets
- Metal frames
- Cable drums
- Guttering
- Noodles (the type you use in the swimming pool!)
- Hats/scarves/jazzy shirts/elasticated skirts/waistcoats/wedding dresses/character costumes
- Pegs (to help to set up dens)
- Small world toys like dinosaur, action figures, dolls etc
- Construction toys like Lego, K'nex, Stickle bricks, Duplo etc