



Play - the unteachable curriculum



The way children learn the things that cannot be taught



We are very excited to be undertaking a joint playground development project with the infant school and the support from an organisation called OPAL.

OPAL stands for 'outdoor play and learning' and is a strategic improvement programme designed to help us improve opportunities for play and make sure our outdoor environment provides the best range of experiences for the children. We started this 18 month project in September 2023 and are due to be fully up and running by February 2025.

Below is more information about OPAL and why we feel this is a fantastic project to undertake.

Did you know that playtime is about 20% of every child's day at school? It is also, for many children, one of the few times that they have to play outside regularly with their friends and without devices.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 800 schools across the UK and internationally.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, your children also learn when they play. As 20% of their time in school is playtime, we want to make sure that this amount of time (equivalent to 1.4 years of primary school) is as good as possible.

There are many proven benefits for schools that carry out the OPAL Primary Programme. They usually include children enjoying school more, more teaching time because there are fewer accidents and arguments, increased physical activity and even children becoming better at maths.

Play is not messing about. It is the process evolution has come up with to enable children to learn all of the things that cannot be taught. That is why it is fun.

There are certain things children must have in order to be able to play. These include:

- *clothes that they can play in all year round.*
- *things to play with.*
- *a certain amount of freedom.*

If you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please have a look at the OPAL website (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk), where you will find lots of useful information.

Our OPAL Journey so far

September 2023 -

- Joint CHI & CHJ staff training (including Coombe Connections and lunchtime staff) about the OPAL project

October 2023

- appointed an OPAL working party which includes both Headteachers, 2 Curricular Leads for play, 3 Play Coordinators, a Play Governor and we will be looking for involvement from parents and further meeting with our OPAL mentor about this.

November 2023

- Play policy in place
- Assemblies started to introduce children to the new play areas
- children began playing on areas of both school sites eg dancing on the amphitheatre and playing with small world under the Junior Sail.
- Parent, staff and children surveys completed about their thoughts on the importance of play.

December 2023

- Grounds meeting with OPAL mentor and field opened up for infant and junior children to play with tyres.
- Appeal to school community to help resource play:-

January 2024


- Junior children to start playing go over to in the infant playground eg The Reading House and the Log Cabin Garden.

NEXT STEPS

February 2024

- Development 2 Meeting with the OPAL Working Party and risk management training for all staff.

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach (September 2012)* as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)*.

 OPAL play policy.docx (Draft)