

OPAL - Parents Newsletter & Update, Term 4



Dear Parents,

We have now started our OPAL Play journey here at Swalecliffe. The aim is to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, co-operation, co-ordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play. The children have been enjoying what has already been put in place: social reading spaces, board games, art and crafts, music, chalking and Freedom Fridays.



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

One reason the school is carrying out this programme is that childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met out of school:

*the average screen time per day is six hours.

*the average outdoor play time per week is five hours ...





There are many proven benefits for schools that carry out the OPAL Primary Programme. They usually include: more enjoyment of school, less teaching time lost to disputes between children, fewer accidents and greatly improved behaviour.

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, while also having so much fun. There are certain things children must have in order to be able to play. These include:

- wearing the correct uniform that has been chosen to suit playtimes at school,
- not wearing hooped earrings of any other jewellery (other than studs),
- being dressed for success in outdoor wear that is suited to the weather
- having a certain amount of freedom
- having things to play with ...

Items Needed - OPAL Bingo

To help OPAL continue to at our school and provide the children with even more things to play with, we need your support please.

Next term, each class will be provided with 'OPAL Bingo'. The aim is that your child's class tries to get a 'full house' or even a row. All classes will be awarded extra Golden Time on the Friday of collections week, earning extra minutes for their donations. Larger versions of the 'Bingo' are attached to this email but below is an example.

Get ready to play... OPAL BINGO

wellies 	straw bales 	wooden spoons 	action figures 	poles 
dress-up items 	cars 	dinosaurs 	pans 	5 gallon buckets 
Lego 	small balls 	scooters 	plastic tubes 	jugs 
guttering 	buckets 	sinks and tubs 	skateboard 	cardboard tubes 
plastic animals 	art & craft materials 	helmets 	aprons 	chalk 



To help us manage donations, we will be collecting these on the mornings of 29.04.25 and 20.05.25. from when the gates open to 9.00.

We will be based in the Infant Playground where we will have donation stations set up.

Children will then let teachers know if their family were able to donate some items. We hugely appreciate your support. Please note that 'dress-up' doesn't have to be fancy dress.





The people at OPAL have created a fantastic booklet, written by Michael Follett who is the founder and director of OPAL, to help parents further understand the power of playtime in school and at home.

[Click here](#) to access this document.

The Power of Playtime!

7 TOP TIPS FOR OUTDOOR PLAY AT HOME:

Explore the outdoor places near your home where your children can play every day - a garden, balcony, park or beach.

See if you can arrange for your child's friends to join in ... it could be more fun with more children.

Let the children decide how they play and be there to support them when needed.

See what happens if you step back and just watch or try letting them lead you in play.

Introduce stuff to play with to build/ make/ create. If they build a den or a structure, can they leave it up a while?

Let them take risks and make mistakes!

Children love physical play with friends and you. Chasing, horseplay and play fights build bonds and emotional intelligence.

Many thanks for your support,

Miss Garton & Mrs Watson (Play Curricular Leads)

Mr Clayton (Play Co-Ordinator)

