



# Parents Introduction Letter



24<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Parents

We are about to launch an exciting new project to make our playtimes even better, in conjunction with OPAL. (<http://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>). OPAL has won the best active schools' programme in Europe award and been cited in two Parliamentary Reports as outstanding practice. OPAL is working closely with Sport England to promote more active childhoods.

We strongly believe that: **"Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community"** (Play Council).

You may remember that before Christmas we mentioned that a big priority for us in the New Year was to further develop the KS1 and 2 outdoor environment – at the same time as asking for your old pots and pans! We are excited to share with you that we are about to start a programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, co-operation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play.

OPAL is based on the idea that as well as learning through good teaching, children also learn when they play, and 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 outstanding in its offer. There are many reasons why we have decided to embark on this programme. One is that over the years childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met outside of school. Now, more than ever children are relying upon digital devices and we want to strike a healthy balance in school as both have a pivotal part to play in education. Research shows that average screen time per day is 5 hours and average outdoor play time is 5 hours per week. The percentage of UK children who only play outdoor with other children at school is 56%. Finally, and most importantly, as the school moves towards a physical expansion, we want to ensure that we continue to prioritise and meet the needs of our current pupils, giving them the very best experience at all times. As an outstanding school we are always looking for ways to improve further and we believe developing playtimes is an area where we can make a big impact.

As we begin to improve play opportunities, you may find we are asking you for resources and may be making changes about how the children use the school grounds. They may use more of the grounds, for more of the year. The children may get a bit messier (so may need



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wellies – even in KS2!), be exposed to more challenges and have greater freedoms to play where, with whom and how they like.

The experiences the school is fostering are essential for children's physical and mental well-being and health and in line with all current good practice advice on health, safety, well-being and development. **Developing the grounds and resourcing it will be the main focus for fundraising from FRIENDS for the remainder of this academic year, so please support where you can!**

The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be an opportunity for parents to come and talk to a representative from OPAL, see for yourself what is happening and join in too! If in the meantime, you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please have a look at the OPAL website.

You will be able to learn all about the programme and watch several videos on their website ([outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk))

We recently obtained the views of our pupils about current playtimes to benchmark the position and as this will be a whole school project would also welcome the views of parents. We therefore invite you to complete the survey by following the link. **The deadline for completion is Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January.**

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/F5H6JBN>

Many thanks in advance for your anticipated support.

Kind Regards

Kelly Jackson

Headteacher