

Water Primary School

Happiness, Health & Opportunity

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Dear Parents/Guardians

At Water Primary School, we are committed to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all our children and we believe that play is essential for the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of every child. I am delighted to inform you about an exciting programme we are due to launch in school. The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is centred around using natural and man-made resources to enable children to be inspired and creative during playtimes.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through excellent 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 the best it can be. OPAL allows us to nurture all children's interests and provide provision through to Year 6. Please rest assured that sporting activities will still take place, in addition to the OPAL provision.

The OPAL Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 800 schools and has been used in Spain, Canada, France and New Zealand. The programme has also been adapted and used in schools in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Austria under the Play Friendly Schools project. In 2018, OPAL won first prize in an EU-funded award for the best active school's programme in Europe and two UK national play work awards. In 2019, OPAL was awarded a quarter of a million pounds by Sport England to bring the programme to many more schools.



One reason our school is carrying out this programme is that childhood has changed, and for some children, their play needs are no longer met outside of school, evident in these statistics below:

- Average screen time per day is six hours.
- Average outdoor play time per week is five hours.
- Percentage of UK children who only play outdoors with other children at school is 56%.

There are many proven benefits for schools that carry out the OPAL Primary Programme including:

- Increased enjoyment of school.
- Children coming into class ready to learn.
- Further development of social skills.
- Further opportunities for the children to be creative and make decisions.
- Further development of resilience and independent skills.
- Children whose play needs are being met, resulting in a huge reduction in playtime and post-playtime behavior issues.
- Fewer accidents.

Play 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:

- Labelled waterproof pants (NO-ALL-IN ONES PLEASE).
- Labelled waterproof jacket.
- Labelled wellies.

These items are to remain in school daily so that they are always available to the children.

As Water School improves play opportunities for all children, you may find that we invite you to donate resources if possible and we are making changes about how the children use the school grounds. Your children may get a bit messier, be exposed to more challenges and have greater freedoms to play where, with whom and how they like. The experiences our school is fostering are essential for children's physical and mental wellbeing and are in line with all current good practice advice on health and safety, wellbeing and development.

The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be an opportunity to come and talk to the OPAL mentor at your child's school. 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 and several videos about the programme.



In the coming 18 months you will be invited to events where you can come and see for yourselves what is happening and have the opportunity to join in too.

We are really excited about this project and hope that you will support us in our efforts to improve playtime for all children.

Yours faithfully
Miss O Wilson
PE Co-Ordinator

