



OPAL Newsletter



Autumn 1st half term 2025



Welcome to our first newsletter devoted to all things OPAL!

In this edition:

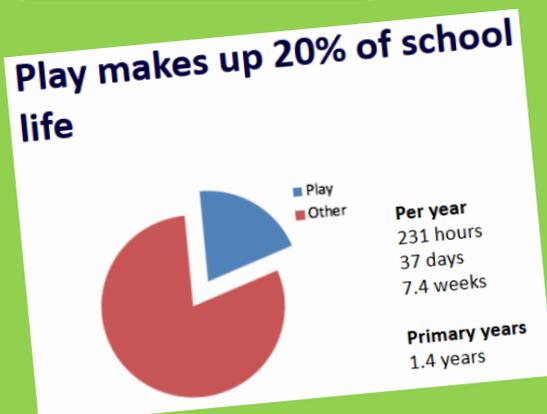
- The chance to learn more about OPAL
- Parent feedback from the OPAL Parent Play Days
- Your OPAL questions answered
- Wet weather updates
- Ways you can help us further enhance our play
- Donation requests

What is play?

Play is a process that is:

- Freely chosen
- Intrinsically motivated
- Self-directed

Why is it important that we plan for high quality play?



Want to learn more about OPAL?

If you weren't able to attend the recent Parent Play day and want to learn a little more about OPAL, take a look at this 2 minute video which was shared on the day and which will give you a little insight.

Amazing play, every day for every child <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZfrmY9tuCM>



Parent Play Days



...in action!



Survey feedback from parents following the recent OPAL Parent Play Days

There was an impressive range of activities for the children to play with and I loved how happy all the children were while playing. It was great fun.

We knew it was an enhanced play of sorts but actually being invited to witness it in action was lovely. We have a better understanding of the extent of play and effort that goes into making it exceptional to the norm.

Fantastic offering to children of all ages.

It's amazing to see how much the children can use their imaginations. It's great to see their enthusiasm and excitement at being able to actually play as children should do.

Kids were very engaged and smiles all round. Felt very safe too

A fantastic addition to their school environment, allowing further ways to explore, collaborate & learn outside of the classroom environment.

It's great for kids' creativity and imagination.

I think it's amazing. The play opportunities the children have are wonderful. I'm so pleased the school have adopted this program.

It was all great. Lovely to see the presentations, staff enthusiasm and the whole culture and environment.

It was fantastic! A happy atmosphere. Joy exuded from every activity space. I was very impressed with the huge range of activities. Providing choice and freedom whilst cultivating creativity, imagination and confidence.

Your OPAL questions answered

In your parent survey responses, some of you noted questions and below we've captured the answers to some of these.

When can we come and play again? Could OPAL parent sessions be a regular event?	We do intend to offer further parent play days in the future. Keep an eye out for these.
How often is OPAL play available for the kids?	Everyday OPAL play is in action for all children for the 1 hour lunch break.
Is OPAL different than forest school?	Yes, but there are some similarities between OPAL play and Forest school, especially with regards to the opportunities children have for risk-benefit assessing, problem solving, collaborative working and many of the play types on offer through OPAL develop similar skills.
How soon can we send in wellies?	From now! Lets keep the feet dry and their shoes mud free!
Is there an opportunity for the year 6s to be given some leadership play opportunities?	Watch this space! Coming soon!
You said you were 2/3 through the journey, what happens at the end of the programme?	We are audited to look at the progress we have made in our play provision. There is less direct support from our OPAL mentor but OPAL will very much remain in place for our children.

Can you help?

We want to increase the amount of cosy play spaces that we have on offer for the children. In wetter weather, these can also double up as dry shelters to play in too.

If we source the pallets, we are looking for any parents or grandparents who would be able to create us some simple pallet dens, tents or houses similar to the kinds of images we've included here.

Can you help? If so, please let Mrs Copeman know in person or via the office email.



The importance of risk in play

Risk means going beyond what is already known and easily accomplished.

Striking the right balance means:

- Weighing up risks and benefits.
- Focusing on and controlling the most serious risk.
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity.
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk.
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full.



Wet weather plans

We are now heading into the wetter part of the year so we need all the children to be prepared for the plentiful play opportunities that different weather conditions provide.



We are still in the process of having more welly storage built but we don't want the fact that this isn't yet in place for all year groups to stop the children having the appropriate footwear in school to stay dry in the wetter weather.

After half term, we encourage all children to have a pair of wellies in school everyday. If classes are yet to have welly racks available, these can be left in a bag on your child's peg. Please put your child's name inside the wellies and on the bag they come in.



We are keen to keep all areas of the play space open all year round, however we may have to restrict access to some areas if the children aren't wearing appropriate footwear to help keep their feet warm and dry and to avoid their school shoes getting ruined (which I'm sure you don't want either!)



We would also encourage all children to keep a spare pair of socks in their bag so that if they do get soggy feet, they have a pair to swap into.

A rain coat is going to be essential as we will be going out to play in all weathers. A pac-a-mac style jacket that can also live in the bottom of your child's school bag is ideal.



How can you help us to keep adding to our play offer?

As we continue making our playtimes more exciting, no matter what the weather, we need some equipment to help us to do this and your donations are invaluable.

Can you help with donating any of the following...

Donations that we're currently in need of include:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| Pallets | Picnic blankets |
| Cable reels | Buggies |
| Ground sheets/tarpaulin | Bean bags |
| boat sails | Plastic spades |
| Thick rope | Ratchet straps |
| Sledges | Space hoppers |
| Metal pots/pans | |
| Plastic jugs & containers | |
| Crayons & coloured pencils or any craft items | |
| Small world toys e.g. plastic animals, figures dinosaurs etc | |
| Old waterproof tablecloths | |

Donations of wet weather clothing that no longer fits your children:

- wellies
- waterproof trousers
- raincoats

As Sam said on the OPAL play days, before you throw something away or take it to the recycling centre, ask yourself, could St Eds make use of it for OPAL play?

Thank you for your ongoing support which is enabling us to continue to enhance the play opportunities for our children.