



Introduction to the OPAL Primary Programme

2018 European Winners
Active Schools
Programme Awards



**Children &
Young People Now**
Awards 2023

Winner



Supporting school improvement through play

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk

 @OPAL_CIC

 @OpalOutdoorplay

What is OPAL?

An award winning school improvement programme designed to support schools to improve the quality of their playtimes.

Created in response to a need for improved playtimes but also because of issues seen by schools including boredom, high levels of accidents and incidents, and behaviour.

2018 European Winners Active School Programme Awards

2023 Winners Children & Young People Now Play Award

Welcome to

OPAL is a UK and world leader in supporting schools to improve the quality of children's play

Our delivery

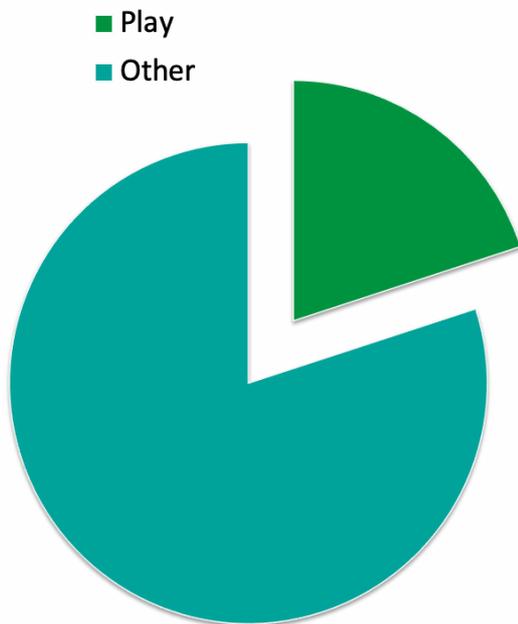
- Over 40 Mentors provide advice and support across the UK
- Over 1000 UK schools and over three quarters of a million children have benefited
- Projects in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Spain Poland, Malaysia
- International Award Winning programme
- Expansion to many more schools funded by a £250,000 grant from Sport England and the National Lottery





**Why is play
important?**

Time



Play makes up 20% of school life

Per Year

- 231 hours
- 37 days
- 7.4 weeks

Primary

Years

- 1.4 years

Children's Rights

HOW WE PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

WITH THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Rights



Childhood Trends

Rising childhood mental health disorders

- **1 in 8 children (12%) between 5 and 19 years** are diagnosed with a mental health condition
- **5 - 15 years (5.8%)** has an emotional disorder including anxiety and depression **(increased by 48% from 2004-2007)**



Youngminds.org.uk *New Figures Show A Rise In Young Peoples Mental Health Problems Since 2004*



Children who spend more time playing adventurously have fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression



The benefits of play ...

- Strength and endurance
- Whole body coordination
- Emotional attachment
- Emotional and social skills
- Hand-eye coordination
- Thinking, reasoning, problem solving
- Early language development

- Communication skills
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Artistic creativity
- Narrative skills
- Social and group work skills
- Understanding rules
- Discussion skills

• Self-regulation:

the ability to be aware of and regulate one's own cognitive and emotional mental states and behaviour.



**‘88% of teachers worldwide
say that children are happier
after playing outdoors.’**

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay



Changes in childhood

- Working parents
- Structured time
- Stranger danger
- Technology
- Traffic
- Fear





Every child knows how to play...

Play Memories Exercise

**What are your
strongest
memories of play?**

Where were you?

Were there any adults around?

Who were you with?

What were you doing?





What's the impact of



The benefits of OPAL to children

- Physical activity: up to 100% of girls and SEND more active
- Resilience, perseverance, decision-making and determination
- Creativity, language skills and storytelling
- Mathematical language, engineering and science
- Social and emotional skills
- Environmental awareness
- Improved positive behaviour
- Less accidents and incidents
- More on task on return to class



The benefits of OPAL to schools

- 10 minutes extra learning time per day
- Less time spent on lunch time 'incidents'
- Less indoor 'wet play'
- Less recorded sickness and absences in both children and staff
- Grounds developed for play are also suitable for outdoor learning, forest school and use by the community
- Improved connections with parents and community
- Maximising the use of the whole school site for the benefit of children
- Staff and children are happier!



OPAL and OFSTED

‘The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding. The playground is a hive of activities and no one is left out. Pupils support one another when someone is hurt and the high level of integration cuts across age group and ethnicity. Pupils are extremely proud of their OPAL (outdoor play and learning), which they contributed to developing. They see the OPAL as an integral part of their school, a development that was justly given a platinum award for inventiveness.’





How will we

manage the risk?



Risk Benefit Assessments

Assemblies

Policy

Inspection

Dynamic risk assessment

OPAL's
5 Point
Approach
R.A.P.I.D





Children's Play and Leisure

Promoting A Balanced Approach

September 2012

Health and Safety
Executive

'Play is great for children's well-being and development.'

'When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits.'

'No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

Striking the right balance means:

- **Weighing up risks and benefits.**
 - Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks.
- **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
- **Recognising that absolute safety is neither desirable nor achievable**





For more information...



Ideas and information for parents and carers of children aged between 4 and 11 years



For all parents



The Power of Playtime!

Outdoor play, every day, will change your child's life

Step inside to find out:

Why it's important for children to play outside every day
How you can help change school playtimes
3 key ways you can help

Plus a pull out and keep sheet
including 8 top tips for more outdoor play at home and 3 sure-fire outdoor play starters

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) CIC
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- Head to OPAL's website:
www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk
- Read OPAL's Literature Review 'The Case for Play in Schools'
- Read **The Power of Playtime**

