



An introduction to the Outdoor Play and Learning Primary Programme

**Children &
Young People Now**
Awards 2023

Winner



AWARDS
2018
FINALIST



What is OPAL?

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

Active School Programme Awards
2018 European Winners

Welcome to OPAL

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

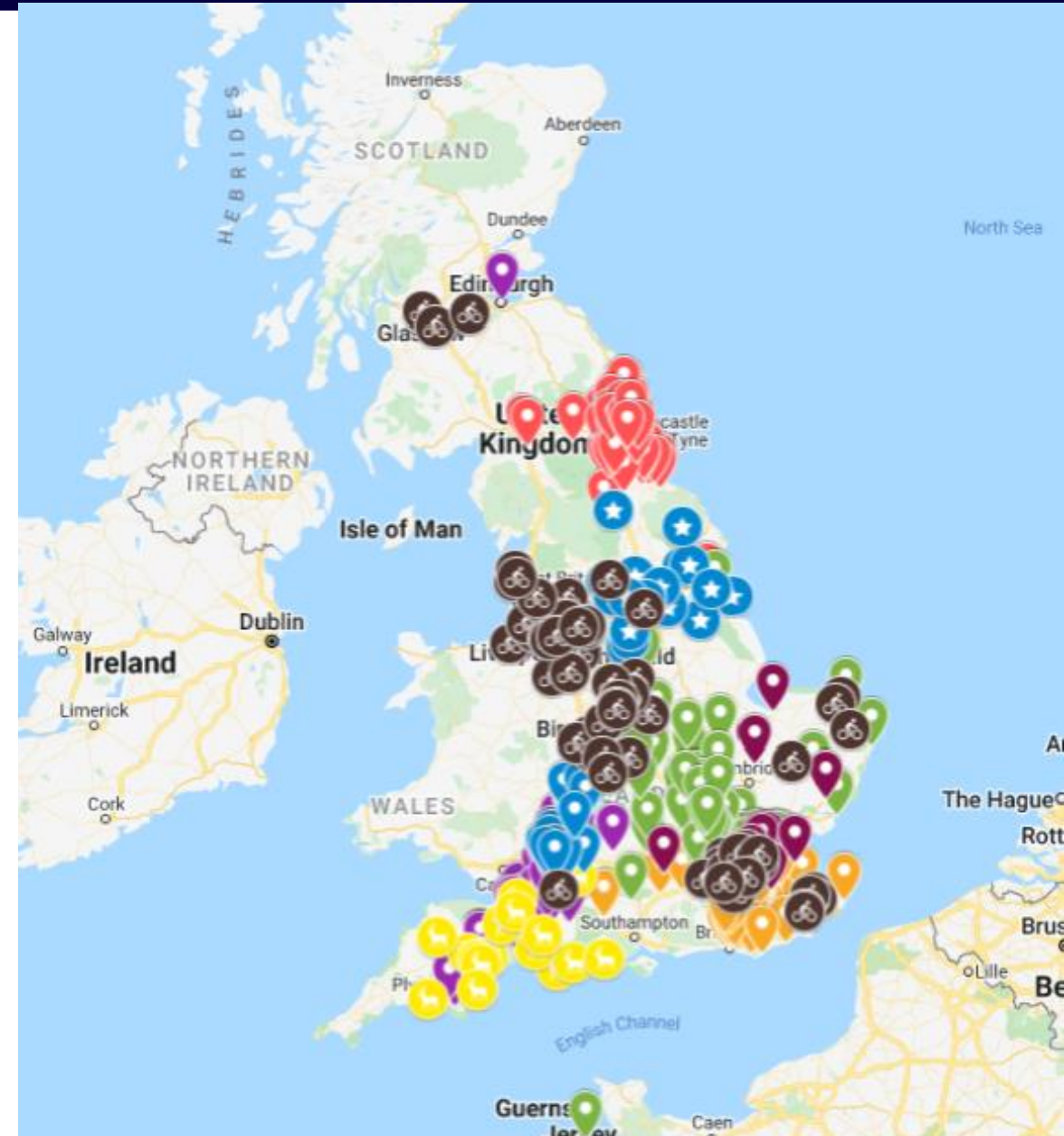
Our delivery

- 43 Mentors provide advice and support across England, Scotland and Wales - and another training in Malaysia.
- Over 2,000 UK schools and over three-quarters of a million children have benefited.
- Projects in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Dubai, France, Spain and Poland.
- International award-winning programme.



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Introduction: What is OPAL?

We combine:
School improvement - Teaching - Playwork

A strategic school improvement programme supporting schools' improvement through play

OPAL supports senior managers to create sustainable change in culture and practice

OPAL provides support through regular meetings spread over 12-24 months and over 100 resources

Workshops on managing risk, playwork practice and grounds development. Plus exclusive networking meetings, school visits and early access to additional training.





Amazing playtimes, for every child, every day

The award system



**Platinum
Award**



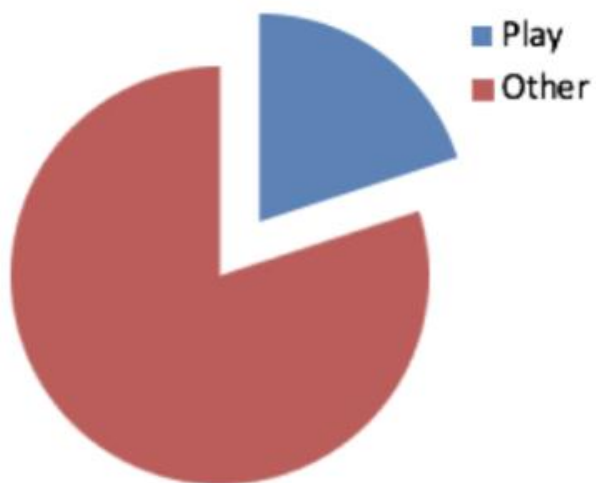
**Gold
Award**



**Silver
Award**



Play makes up 20% of school life



Per year
231 hours
37 days
7.4 weeks

Primary years
1.4 years



Children right now need **play**

- To feel happy
- To have friendship
- To have a healthy body
- To be mentally well
- To get on with people
- To learn
- To feel joy







What is play?



Supporting school improvement through play

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk

 @OPAL_CIC

 @OpalOutdoorplay

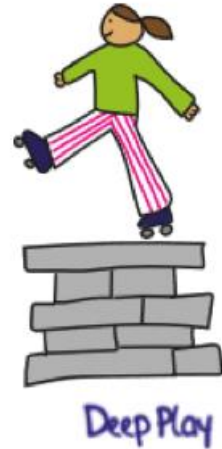
What is play?

Play is a process that is:

- Freely chosen
- Intrinsically motivated
- Self-directed



The 16 play types



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
- Mental representation

Self-regulation: The ability to be aware of and regulate one's own cognitive and emotional mental states and behaviour.





Traffic



No ball games

Changes to childhood

Culture of fear

Obesity

Mental health problems

Lack of resilience

Structured lives



Working parents



Technology



The impact of OPAL

- More physically active more of the year.
- Developing life skills – resilience, competencies.
- Risk management skills, improved decision making.
- Social skills, team building, negotiation.
- Improved mental health and wellbeing.
- 100% girls more active.

- Huge core skills improvement.
- Improved behaviour.
- Less accidents, incidents and whinging.
- More inclusive. No child bored or feeling left out.
- Increased learning time. More settled and ready to learn.
- Cost saving – SLT and teachers' time.



OPAL and OFSTED

The school's exceptional provision for pupils to thrive and flourish through outdoor play and learning has an extremely positive impact. This is particularly evident in pupils' well-being, behaviour, confidence and learning.

Hernhill Primary OFSTED

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.

Kender Primary OFSTED



How do we develop play in school?

Policy and planning

They are making sure improving play is always part of their planning.

Improving space and access

Children will be able to access a great environment all year.

Risk-benefit approach

They will balance challenge and exploration with sensible care.

Knowledge

Their staff will use playwork skills to improve their practice and the environment.

Communication

They will keep talking to children, parents and staff about play.



Children's play and leisure - promoting a balanced approach (Sep 2012)

In 2012 the HSE worked with the UK's Play Safety forum to agree this guidance.

Source:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>

"Play is great for children's wellbeing and development."

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

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

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.



The essentials

A waterproof coat



A pair of wellies



Tolerance of dirt and mud



Outdoor play is essential to your child's health and wellbeing.



What does an OPAL school look like?



What does an OPAL school look like?



[tps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFxPU4Ca6yk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFxPU4Ca6yk)



Can you help?

What's in your loft... it may be really useful!


Who do you know... tree surgeon, plumber, builder, water board, sign writer, office/admin... what waste might they have?


Do you have a van?



Supporting school improvement through play

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Upcycled Loose Parts



Baking Pans



Cake Moulds



Ice Cube Trays



Kitchen Tools



Measuring Spoons



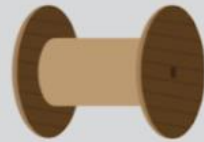
Pots & Pans



Strainers



Baskets



Cable Spools



Cardboard Items



Cones



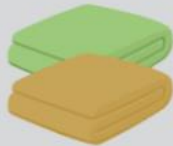
Containers



Corrugated Pipes



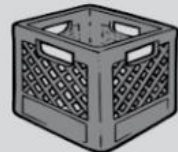
Dress-Up Items



Fabric



Funnels



Milk Crates



Nets



Old Electronics



Pool Noodles



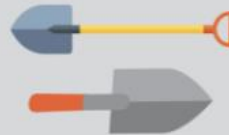
PVC Pipes



Rolling Carriers



Ropes



Shovels & Spades



Sinks & Tubs



Tarps



Tires & Wheels



Wooden Planks





Can you help build a pirate ship or a tyre mountain slide?







Somersault bars? A mud kitchen? A stage?



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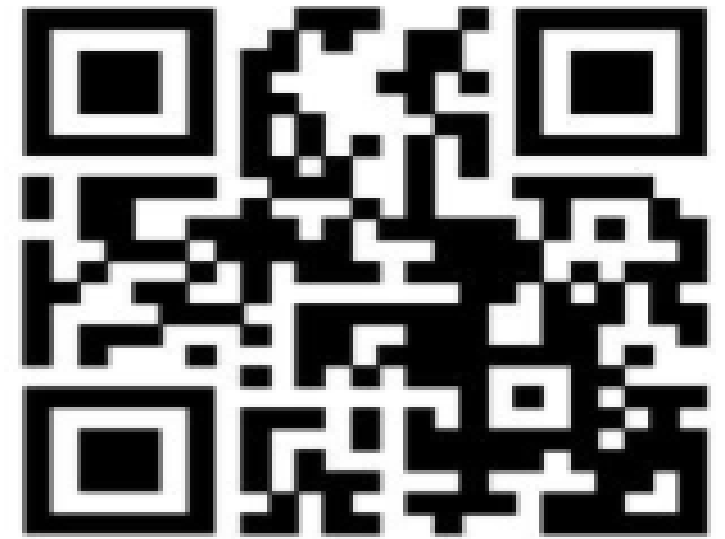
We need your help!

- Water play (pipes, gutters, buckets, tuft trays)
- Den building
- Digging (trowels, spades etc.)
- Welly storage



Thank you

Amazon wishlist





Thank you

outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk



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/OpalOutdoorplay



youtube.com/c/OPALPlaytime

