



Parents letter – introduction to OPAL letter & survey (Outdoor People/OPAL Schools)

Dear parents,

We are delighted to let you know that this year we will be focussing on making our playtimes amazing.

To help us we have brought in the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) Primary Programme, a strategic improvement programme designed to help us improve opportunities for play, make sure our outdoor environment provides the best range of experiences for the children and help our staff feel even more confident in helping all children have a great playtime every day. This means that soon our playtimes will be getting even more fun and we hope every child will love them.

Did you know that playtime is about 20% of every child's day at school? It is also, for many children, one of the few times that they have to play outside regularly with their friends and without devices.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 1000 schools across the UK and internationally.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good 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 as good as possible.

There are many proven benefits for schools that carry out the OPAL Primary Programme. They usually include children enjoying school more, more teaching time because there are fewer accidents and arguments, increased physical activity and even children becoming better at maths.

It's also just plain fun!

Play is not messing about. It is the process evolution has come up with to enable children to learn all of the things that cannot be taught. That is why it is fun.

There are certain things children must have in order to be able to play. These include:

- clothes that they can play in year round.
- things to play with.
- a certain amount of freedom.

As the school improves play opportunities for your children, you may find the school is asking you for resources like old pots and pans and cardboard boxes. We will also be making changes to how



the children use the school grounds. The experiences the school are 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.

We will be working with Outdoor People, the non-profit that delivers the OPAL Primary Programme across NE and SE London and East Kent, for the next couple of years. They will be leading training, supporting our OPAL working group and mentoring the team to help us make our playtimes amazing.

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. See the YouTube channel ([OPALPlaytime](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaK1K1K1K1K1K1K1K1K1K1K1)) and on Twitter ([@OPALCIC](https://twitter.com/OPALCIC)) for lots of examples of schools that have the kind of playtimes we want for our children.

Find out more about Outdoor People, the non-profit that runs the OPAL programme across East London and East Kent from their website: <https://outdoorpeople.org.uk/>

First though, before we begin the programme, we need to know what you think about playtimes now.

Please complete this survey by scanning the QR code:



Please complete the survey by 27th February

This data will help us know where we are now, and plan for and measure the changes across the school over the next couple of years.

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. Do let us know what you think – and if you can help.

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

Best wishes



Chris Marston
Head of School

Cath Prisk, Beth Illman, and Gráinne Pickles, OPAL mentors with Outdoor People, SE and NE London and East Kent