



Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

Do we know it works?

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

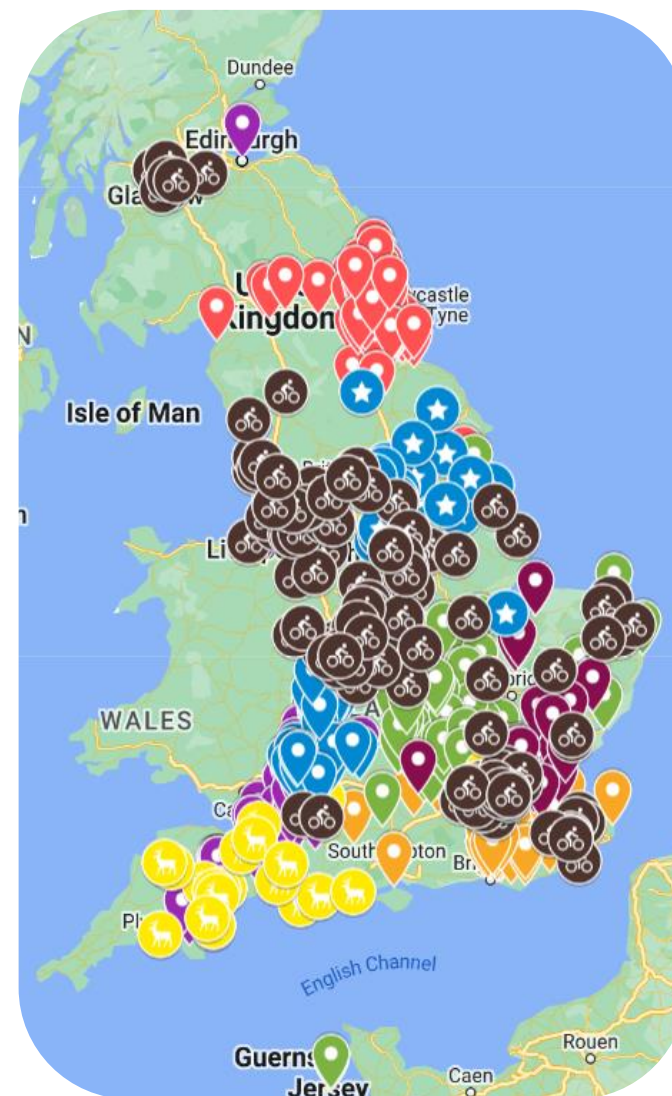
Our mission is for every primary school child to have an amazing playtime, every day, with no exceptions!

Our delivery

- Over 2,000 schools and over 1 million children have benefited;
- Projects in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Malaysia, the USA and Poland.



Citations: National Children's Bureau; Public Health England; All Party Parliamentary Group on Childhood; Cambridge University PEDAL (Play Education Development and Learning); Sport England.





Amazing playtimes, for every child, every day

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a blue school cardigan and tie, is hanging from a thick tree branch with both arms. She is smiling at the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

Childhood has changed – children have not!

Let's think about play.

At 10 years old...

Where were you, who were you
with, what were you up to?



Changes to childhood



Traffic



No ball games

Culture of fear

Obesity

Mental health problems

Lack of resilience

Structured lives



Working parents



Technology



Childhood has changed, children have not

UK children's screen time is an average six hours per day.

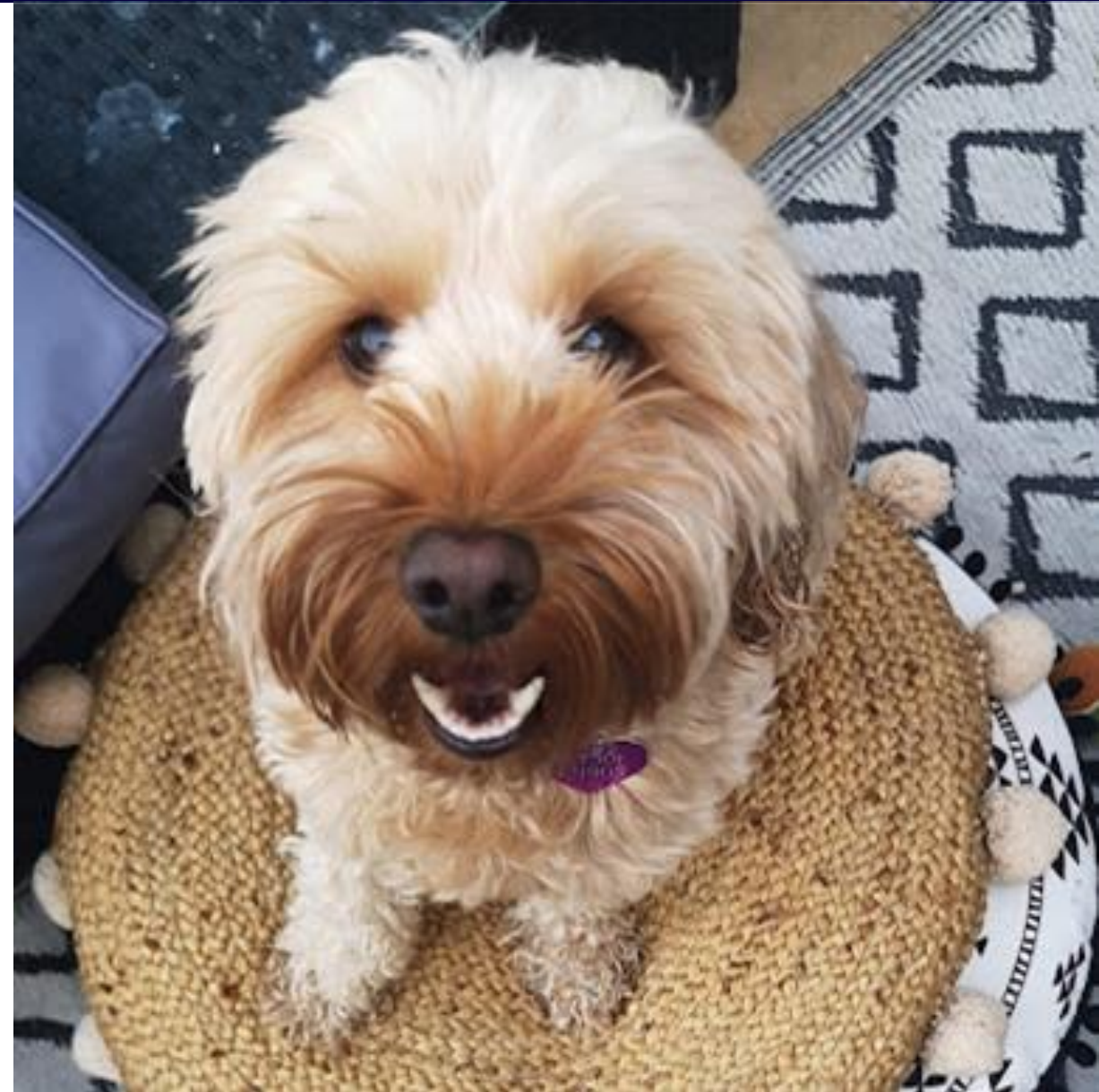


*“By the age of seven the average child will have spent a **full year of 24-hour days** watching recreational screen media.” Dr Aric Sigman*

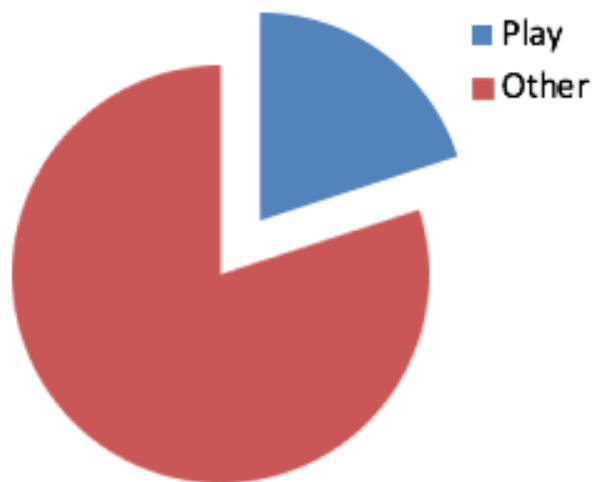


Here's a thought...

For a good quality of life, what does Lottie need?



Play makes up 20% of school life



Per year
231 hours
37 days
7.4 weeks

Primary years
1.4 years



Outstanding playtime every day, with no exceptions



The unteachable curriculum

We don't have to choose
between play and learning.

Children need to **PLAY** to
BE ADAPTABLE
CONSTRUCT KNOWLEDGE
PROBLEM LEARN CREATE
SOLVE PROCESS EMOTIONS
INTERNALISE EXPERIENCES
DISCOVER CHALLENGE
BE HEALTHY THEMSELVES
LAUGH & HAVE FUN
LEARN TO WORK IMAGINE
TOGETHER LEARN TO LEAD
EXPRESS EXPLORE SPEAK
IDEAS DEVELOP READ
MANAGE AN INQUIRING
STRESS MIND WRITE
Because **PLAY** COUNTS
matters.





Integration

- New friendships
- Inclusion
- Social skills
- Non-judgemental
- No age restrictions
- No gender bias

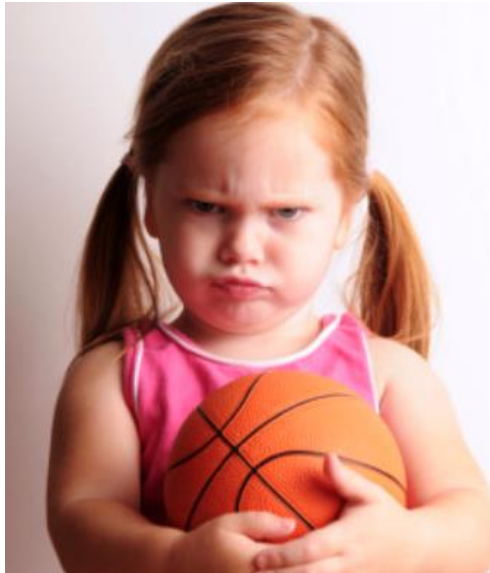


Inclusion – access for all



Resilience and emotional regulation

Children build resilience by overcoming challenges and fear.



Resilience isn't a biological gift from great parents... it is something we need to gain through experience.



What is play?

Play is a process that is:

- Freely chosen
- Intrinsically motivated
- Self-directed

At Strathmore, our school council define play as “When we aren’t told what to do and we can have time and space to be with our friends and have fun.”



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.



Health benefits for all the family

- Exercise
- Family time
- Fun
- Improved mental health
- Fresh air
- Relaxation
- Feel good factor

Parent's booklet full of great ideas!



Adult intervention... playwork style

Hinders

- Be careful
- You're going to hurt yourself
- That's too big for you
- Passes on own anxiety
- Distracts child from engaging in certain play types
- Adulterates play - gets over involved/excited
- Over competitive
- Allows child to always win



Helpful

- Supportive
- Models behaviour
- Follows child's direction
- Provides resources
- Thinks about when to intervene
- Waits to be invited
- Observes
- Learns and reflects

We don't always get it right!

The importance of risk in children's play

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



Supporting school improvement through play

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk

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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/chlds-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.



How do we develop play in school?

Policy and planning

We 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

We will balance challenge and exploration with sensible care.

Knowledge

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

Communication

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



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.



Creating a playful environment – outdoor loose parts



Imagination, creativity and teamwork



Natural loose parts



We still need your upcycled loose parts



Thank you – please keep sending in resources for playtime!



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.



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Thank you for listening and for your contributions



Your OPAL journey is about to begin! |



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