



Leesons Primary School

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Dear Parents/Carers



Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

We are currently in the process of implementing a programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, co-operation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play at Lunchtime.

The OPAL Outdoor Play and Learning Programme is the result of 17 years testing and development in over 250 schools and is based on the idea that as well as learning through good teaching, your children also learn when they play.

We strongly believe that: "Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community" (Play Council 2001).

There are many proven benefits for school which carry out the OPAL Programme. They usually include: more enjoyment of school, less teaching time lost to disputes between children, less accidents and greatly improved behaviour.

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

- Having clothes that you can play in
- Having things to play with
- Having a certain amount of freedom

As the school improves play opportunities for your children, we are asking for your help with resources. As you may have seen on the school grounds, we now have 2 large wooden storage containers in which to keep all the play equipment. The policy of OPAL is to provide the children with many loose parts which they use imaginatively to develop their own games and develop child initiated play. Below is a list of equipment which we are currently seeking to collect. We would be most grateful if you have any of these items at home that you could possibly donate to support the school. Resources needed:

- Plastic crates (eg supermarket crate boxes)
- Large pieces of material, which can be used for making dens (blankets, sheeting, tarpaulin)
- Old suitcases
- Soft toys
- Large cardboard boxes
- Large tubing eg cardboard carpet rolls, guttering
- Old clean clothing for fancy dress
- Old pushchairs
- Tyres

Throughout the programme, the children will be using more of the grounds, for more of the year. Therefore we want to make sure that you child is fully equipped too and so we have a welly store for each class on the playground too. In time, we will be asking children to bring in wellies or a change of footwear to ensure they can access all the grounds. Your children may get a bit messier, be exposed to more challenges and have greater freedoms to play where, with whom and how they like. The experiences the school is fostering are essential for children's physical and mental well-being and healthy and in line with all current good practice advice on health safety, well-being and development.



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The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and if you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme please have a look at the OPAL website.
<http://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>

For any larger items which are to be donated, the wooden shed will be opened on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday after school where I will be able to supervise.

We thank you for your support.

Miss N Talbot
OPAL lead