



**An introduction to
Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) CIC**

What is OPAL?



AWARDS
2018
FINALIST



School Improvement, Teaching, Playwork

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

Active School Programme Awards
2018 European Winners



Welcome to OPAL

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

Our delivery

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



Introduction: What is OPAL?

**We combine:
School Improvement - teaching - playwork**

A strategic school improvement programme supporting school 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



The Award System



**Platinum
Award**



**Gold
Award**



**Silver
Award**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cm7IfAEsjql&t=2s>

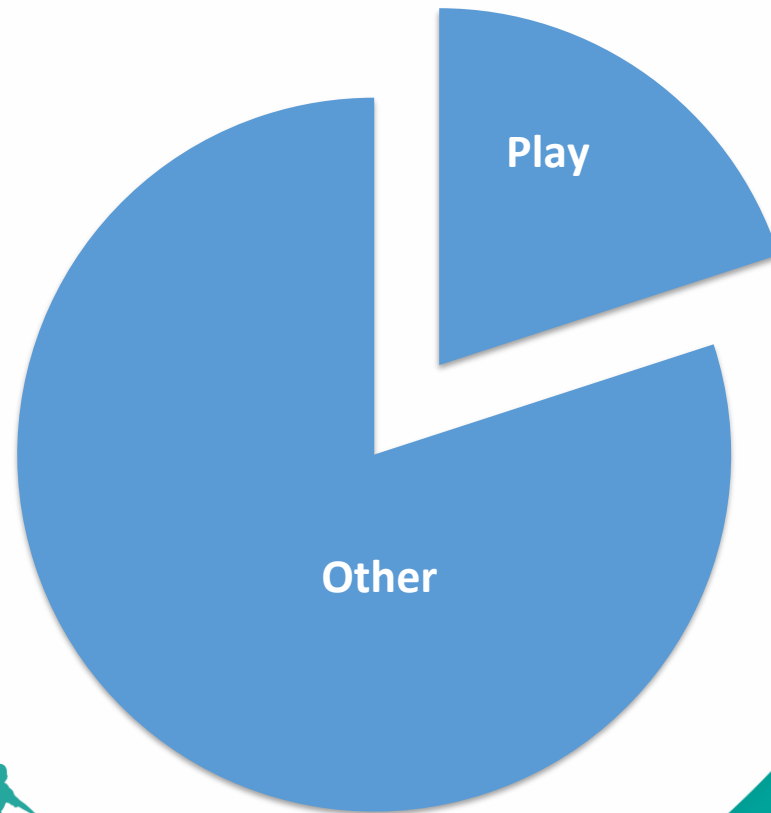
YOU TUBE: Amazing primary playtime at St Michaels OPAL Platinum School

Motivation

Why should your school put time and effort into developing play?



Time



Play makes up 20% of school life

Per Year

- 231 hours
- 37 days
- 7.4 weeks

Primary Years

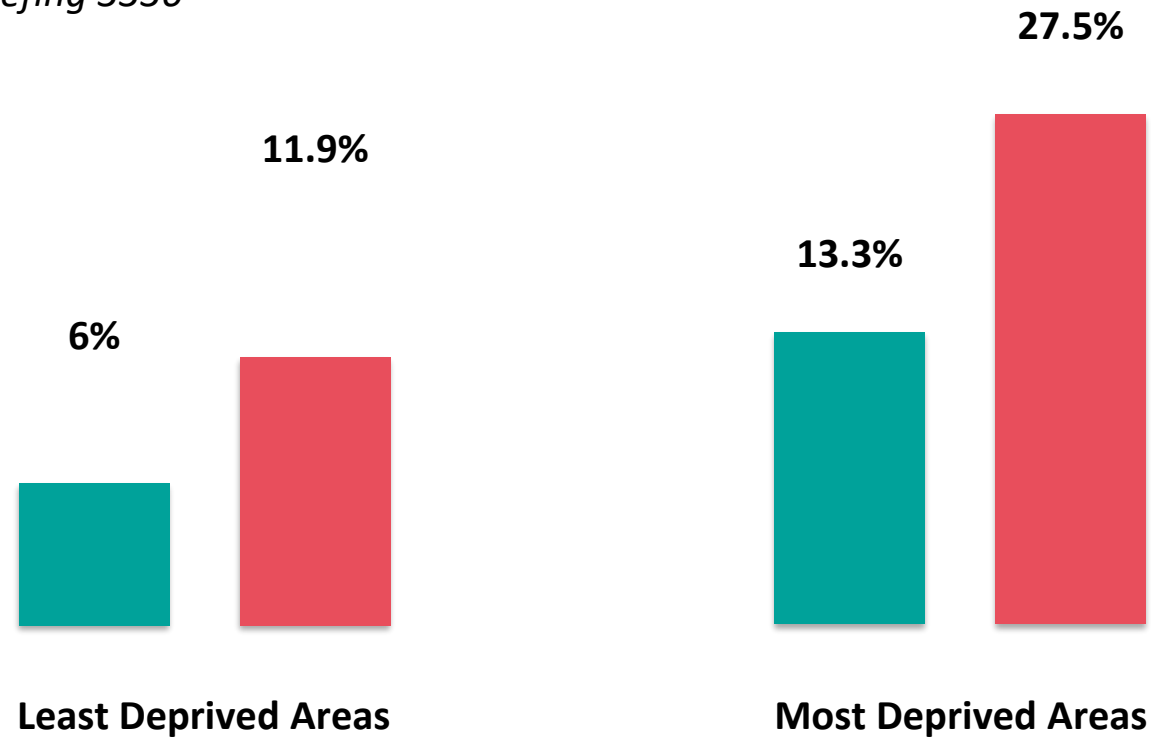
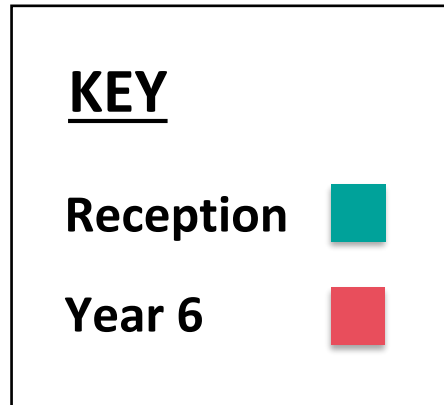
- 1.4 years



Childhood Trends

Rising childhood obesity levels and health gaps

Baker 2019 House of Commons briefing 3336



NHS child measurement programme, England 2019/20



Childhood Trends

Rising childhood mental health disorders

Enfield Health and Wellbeing © 2020

- **1 in 6 children (16.6%) between 5 and 19 years** are diagnosed with a mental health condition

Increased from 1 in 9 in 2017!!

- **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*



FOR EVERY
CHILD IN
DANGER

Article 31 UNCRC Every child had the right to play

Children's Rights

HOW WE PROTECT
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

WITH THE UN CONVENTION
ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Rights



Childhood has changed ...

Children have not

UK Children screen time average

6+ hours per day

UK Children average
social outdoor play

5 hours per week



What is Play?



Play is a process that is ...

- Freely chosen
- Intrinsically motivated
- Self directed



Learning

- Play is the unteachable curriculum
- The way children learn the things that cannot be taught



Self awareness
Understanding
Cognitive development
Problem solving

INNER WORLD

Self

Solitary imaginative play

Risk-taking

OUTER WORLD

Environment

Playful manipulation
of elements

Mass
Volume
Texture
Speed
Number
Texture
Ecology

PLAY

Social role
play, Games,
Rules

Shared
discovery,
Exploration

SOCIAL WORLD

Others

Word Play, Banter, Fantasy,
Hanging Out

Language
Social position
Rules
Roles
Physical literacy

Empathy
Emotional
literacy
Resilience



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.

Resilience is the ability to get through serious life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive!

Everyone has the capacity for resilience. Building resilience is something we work on throughout our lives.



Adult Intervention

Hinders

- 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
- Judgmental
- Risk-averse
- Dominating

Helpful

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



Awareness allows us to make the changes we need to support a child.


A London School Playground


For a good quality of life ... what do children need?



Supporting school improvement through play

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk

 @OPAL_CIC

 @OpalOutdoorplay


We are the gatekeepers of children's experience: we control, restrict or provide access, permission, time, space and opportunities.

Great play helps make a better school



- Platinum OPAL schools have 10 minutes more teaching time per teacher per day
- Up to 80% less accidents and incidents
- Improved pupil enjoyment, happier children
- Increased physical activity
- Improved behaviour
- Inclusion for all





**Access
means ALL
of the
grounds
ALL of the
year**





Access

FACTS

- Typical primary schools let individual children access 5 - 15% of usable space
- Typical primary schools use their fields 8 -12% of the school year
- The asset value of a school playing field is between £0.5 to £2M

Access means all of the grounds all of the year



Risk-benefit





Dangerous Activity?

Risk = The ability to move beyond what is already known and already easily accomplished

Resilient learners overcome the risk of failure, pain and uncertainty





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.'

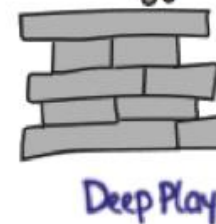
'No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

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
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full



The Play Types





New Playwork Roles

Developing The Play Team



During the 18 months of the programme, two key roles must be established if there is to be any change of lasting change.

OPAL will help you to develop these roles.

The Curricular Lead For Play

Leads on all strategic, planning and evaluation aspects of play

The Play Coordinator

Leads on all operational, resource, playwork and communication



“ Trust us ... We’re pretty competent and capable really...We are!!”



Integration & Inclusion



Open ended play materials

Upcycled Loose Parts



Baking Pans



Cake Moulds



Ice Cube Trays



Kitchen Tools



Measuring Spoons



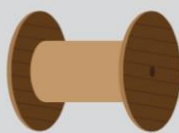
Pots & Pans



Strainers



Baskets



Cable Spools



Cardboard Items



Cones



Containers



Corrugated Pipes



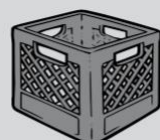
Dress-Up Items



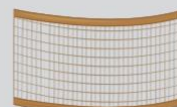
Fabric



Funnels



Milk Crates



Nets



Old Electronics



Pool Noodles



PVC Pipes



Rolling Carriers



Ropes



Shovels & Spades



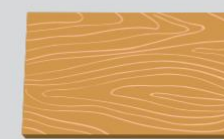
Sinks & Tubs



Tarps



Tires & Wheels



Wooden Planks



Access to nature...mud , sand, water

Natural Loose Parts



Acorns



Grass



Leaves



Logs



Pine Cones



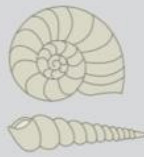
Rain & Water



Sand



Snow



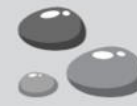
Shells



Soil



Sticks



Stones



Wild Flowers



Wood Cookies



Social Spaces

... a range of sizes required



Social Spaces

... made by children



How much did this lot cost?

Nothing!



Pallet houses, baking tins, wheelie bins ...

time to get creative!



Journeys ... how can children travel?



Affordance

Texture



Motion



Sound



Self



Art



Scale



Plants



Risk



Elements



Sociability



Terrain



Materials



Affordance – Scale - Generosity



Topography, Sensory, Materials, Art and Imagery



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?
- Most things offer tremendous play value



OPAL Communications is key

Children

- Play assemblies
- Awards
- Consultation
- Charter for play
- Play detectives
- Regular discussions
- Resources
- Development of zones
- Survey
- School council

Parents

- Regular
- Positive
- Photos
- Request for resources
- Feedback
- Invitation
- Come and play
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Survey

Staff

- Play leads
- Reflective Practice
- Regular meetings
- Time for developing play
- Comms strategy
- OPAL working party
- OPAL Governor
- SIP
- Data collection
- Play training





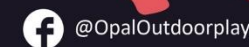
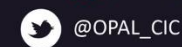
Thank you for listening and for your contributions
Your OPAL journey is about to begin

For further information email your mentor



Supporting school improvement through play

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk





Any questions?

What next?

For further information contact:
www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk

