

Meadow Vale Primary School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Meadow Vale Primary School is in the early stages of a programme intended to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play.

As a starting point, we would appreciate if you were able to complete the online survey on playtimes at our school to help guide us on this journey: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=mUj7UkpXN0GKBSej3zebFjsrNSI_gblMgGzn1Zz8yZFUODBXVzIUQVA0TFc1NDMxQ1VOMjZHN09ITi4u

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 800 schools and has been used in Spain, Canada, France and New Zealand. The programme has also been adapted and used in schools in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Austria under the Play Friendly Schools project. In 2018, OPAL won first prize in an EU-funded award for the best active school's programme in Europe and two UK national playwork awards. In 2019, OPAL was awarded a quarter of a million pounds by Sport England to bring the programme to many more schools.

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.

One reason we are carrying out this programme is that childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met outside of school.

- Average screen time per day is six hours.
- Average outdoor play time per week is five hours.
- Percentage of UK children who only play outdoors with other children at school is 56%.

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

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, while also having so much fun. There are certain things children **must** have in order to be able to play. These include:

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

As we improve play opportunities for your children, you will find continued requests for donations. 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 we plan to provide 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.

Meadow Vale Primary School will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be an opportunity to come and talk to the OPAL mentor at school. 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 and several videos about the programme.

Later this year, 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!

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

Kind regards,
Zoë Galani - Pastoral Lead