

# OPAL Play Newsletter

Issue 1  
July 2024



## What is OPAL?

Research shows that children's mental and physical health is getting worse and that great play can make it better. During 7 years at primary school, children spend 1.4 years playing. To ensure that this time and our school grounds, are used to their full potential, Swanland Primary School has become an OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) school. OPAL allows the children freedom to explore play in their own imaginative ways. The approach also promotes a more inclusive play environment in which all children can feel comfortable to express themselves.

Through this approach to play, children are not only more active at lunch and breaktimes, but they are also having the opportunity to further develop life skills such as problem solving, resilience, cooperation and teamwork.

Find out more about OPAL: [Our Vision - Outdoor Play And Learning](#)



*Our vision is that every child in our school has an amazing hour of high-quality play every day – with no exceptions.*

# Ground Force Day

In May we held our first 'Ground Force Day' to begin developing our playground spaces. A small yet mighty team of volunteers managed to build the children a stage, a music wall, the mud kitchen area, wigwam dens, reading shelters, a fairy garden, small world play areas and build sheds. We would like to thank the volunteers that came to help out on the day. We are hoping to hold another day like this in our Autumn term, so keep your eyes peeled for details and remember that any help is greatly appreciated.

*'Many hands make light work.'*



## A Big Thank You...

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone within our school and community for your help and support with our OPAL play work. We are so thankful for all the donations of equipment through our OPAL Bingo and donations in general.

We would like to give a special mention to the following people and companies:

**Swanland School PTA** - who donated the money for us to sign up to the OPAL Play programme.

**Wickes Beverley** - who kindly donated £200 worth of products including screening for mud kitchen area, decking boards, weed control membrane and bitumen paint.

**MKM** - who kindly donated fence panels to build our wigwam dens, decking boards, pallets.

**Hanna Properties** - who kindly donated pallets, timber offcuts, guttering.

**The Havercroft Family** - for building us some amazing water play stands.

**The Leach Family** - for donating a mud kitchen.

**MS3 Networks** - for donating traffic cones and cable reels.

### **The Walking Mums (and Dads)**

In June 2024 a group of mums (and dads) undertook the challenge of climbing the national 3 peaks in just 24 hours. They were successful in their challenge and managed to raise over £3000 in sponsorship for our school!! We are absolutely delighted that they would like this sponsorship to go towards OPAL Play, and are liaising with them to come up with something special for our children to enjoy. A huge thank you to this incredible group of parents for supporting our school and pushing themselves to complete this challenge.



## OPAL Bingo

Thank you to all the families that have taken part in our OPAL Bingo challenge this term! The children have enjoyed keeping track of how their house teams were doing on the master bingo cards in the small hall. All children who brought in donations have been awarded praise points and due to the overwhelming generosity of everyone, all houses managed to complete their bingo cards! All the children will be rewarded with an extra OPAL Playtime on the last afternoon of term. Now that you have seen the type of things we use to play during our OPAL playtimes, please bear us in mind if you have anything similar during a clear out! Small world, cars, barbies and dolls etc need replacing often.



## Future Plans

We feel as though we have managed to achieve a great deal in just the 3 short months since we started the OPAL Play Programme, however we are just at the beginning of our journey! We will be working closely alongside our OPAL Mentor, Ana, for the next 3 years in order to continue our progression and fully implement and embed the OPAL scheme and values within our school.

We have lots of plans for the future, including hopefully creating a large sandpit, a role play village, creating more social spaces, planting and rewilding areas, etc.

We are looking forward to holding some stay and play sessions next year, in which parents can come and spend a playtime with us, experiencing the benefits of an OPAL playtime alongside their children!

We will also be recruiting some children to act as OPAL Ambassadors in the Autumn term! This role will include helping to facilitate good play, being familiar with what our OPAL lunchtimes mean and explaining what OPAL is to new children / staff members or visitors.



## A Final Note

Overall, the OPAL Play Team would like to pass on a massive thank you to all parents, pupils and staff, for supporting our new project! We look forward to collaborating with many more of you during the next academic year. Any feedback, suggestions, ideas are welcome and can be communicated to us via email on: [opal@swanlandschool.co.uk](mailto:opal@swanlandschool.co.uk)

Have a great summer,

The OPAL Play Team