

Dear Parents and Carers,

After the Easter holidays, we will be introducing a new programme called OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning Programme) to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play. Play has changed significantly since we were all at school and we recognise that children today don't have the same freedoms we once did. We want to give children back time to really enjoy and learn from their play.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, 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 beneficial as possible for children's learning and development.

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 improved behaviour. We are very aware that at ACS, we do not have the largest outdoor space for children to play, so we want to ensure the space we have is used to its full potential.

As we embark on this play journey there will be some changes to clothing expectations and you may find us asking you for resources to help make these play opportunities possible. The children will be going out to play in all weathers so will require wellies and coats on wet weather days.

The project will launch on Wednesday 23rd April and our hopes are that it will change the way children think and how they play together. To facilitate this project, we will need to buy some new resources, move some things around on the playground and require some loose parts. Loose parts are any materials that can be easily moved, combined, and incorporated into children's free play. We would be grateful for donations of the following items in particular to get us started, which can be brought in from now on:

- Plastic milk crates/supermarket delivery crates/plastic bread trays
- Fabric (large sheets/brightly coloured fabric) for den building, backdrops etc
- Wooden pallets
- Cable drums
- Decking planks
- Large chalk
- Sand toys, buckets, spades, moulds
- Wooden mud/outdoor kitchens
- Pots, pans, jugs, plastic cups, spoons, sieves for water play

The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be a parent meeting on Friday 14th March at 3pm to hear more about OPAL from our facilitator. 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.

We are really excited about this project and hope that you will support us in our efforts to improve playtime for all children. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to speak to me.

Best wishes

Mrs Carter
OPAL Play Lead