



# OUTDOOR PLAY

# AND LEARNING



## A warm welcome from the Oakwood OPAL Team

In what ways, if any, do you think you benefited from playtime? Thinking about your own childhood, what did you enjoy playing at school or at home? Children today don't have the same freedoms we once did, so we want to give children quality time to really enjoy and learn from play. After all, it's a child's basic human right.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 800 schools. Oakwood Primary School was the first school in St Albans to adopt OPAL, and we are proud to lead the way.

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.

If you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please visit their website:  
[www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)

## **BENEFITS FROM AN OPAL LUNCHTIME**

**socialisation**

**cooperation**

**coordination**

**resilience**

**creativity**

**imagination**

**enjoyment**



# What is play?

We define play as an act which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. We encourage all play types during lunch time.



To ensure all children can engage in the play they choose, we split our school site into zones with each zone catering to a different play type.



<span style="color: blue;">●</span>	<p><b>Blue Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts and crafts</li> <li>Small world</li> <li>Relaxation zone</li> </ul> <p>Brambles: Mud kitchen Den building</p>
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<p><b>Green Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fixed climbing equipment</li> <li>Digging</li> <li>Slack lines</li> <li>Crates</li> <li>Small world</li> </ul> <p>To come: Sandpit Mound</p>
<span style="color: red;">●</span>	<p><b>Red Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Football (designated area)</li> <li>Slackline</li> </ul> <p>To come: Large tyres and large loose parts/gymnastics</p>

<span style="color: black;">●</span>	<p><b>OUT OF BOUNDS ZONES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Car park</li> <li>Early years</li> <li>Staff garden</li> <li>Area around treetops</li> <li>Area in front of Beech and Cherry (currently)</li> </ul>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<p><b>Yellow Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fixed climbing equipment</li> <li>Ball games NOT football</li> <li>Mud kitchen</li> </ul>	<span style="color: purple;">●</span>	<p><b>Purple Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climbing tree</li> <li>MUGA</li> </ul>
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## OPAL Exploration Time

At Oakwood, we prioritise safety and this is at the heart of every decision we make. We want your child to feel safe, ready and excited to actively participate in play at lunch times. To achieve this, our Early Years team and OPAL team have worked together to create a structured, thorough plan to integrate your child into all things OPAL.

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of safety</li> <li>• Message of your body is your body</li> <li>• Adults wearing a hi-vis are there to help</li> <li>• Exploration and play in the different zones with a focus on the quiet zone, woodland, mound and play equipment</li> <li>• Locate the toilets and first aid bench</li> <li>• Practise tidy up time at the whistle and lining up at the bell (end of play procedures)</li> <li>• Practise putting on and off wellies</li> <li>• Practise using the buddy bench to find friends easily</li> <li>• Careful passing of crates as part of play</li> <li>• Risks and benefits of stick play</li> </ul>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising and using the names of areas and which areas require wellies</li> <li>• Continued use of KS1 equipment and now including KS2 equipment</li> <li>• Discussion of high equipment, listening their body and what to do if they feel unsafe</li> <li>• Time to explore the bigger equipment, challenge themselves and ask for help when they need it</li> <li>• Exploration of larger school grounds including KS2 areas and the field, including finding adults and toilets when in those areas</li> </ul>
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe use of the slack line, including maximum number of children and use of two hands and two feet</li> <li>• Safe tree climbing</li> <li>• Continued learning around listening to their bodies</li> <li>• Role play what to do if they are lost</li> <li>• Practise listening out for the tidy up whistle from further away</li> <li>• Saying 'stop' if they are not comfortable with the play</li> <li>• Whistle response games</li> <li>• Listening to their body and taking risks</li> </ul>
Continued provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of any key learning as necessary</li> <li>• Weekly Gross Motor time on KS2 equipment outside of lunch time</li> <li>• Weekly Protective Behaviour and PSHE sessions that discuss listening to their bodies, recognising emotions and communicating their needs and boundaries</li> </ul>



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## The practicalities

Lunch time for Acorns children starts at 11:45am and they are closely supervised by our fantastic team of midday supervisors, who help your child with the fine motor skills needed for eating and social skills in this group setting. Initially, Early Years staff are also on hand acting as your child's trusted adult in this new setting. Once a group of children have finished their lunch, they are led out to the playground by an adult. When children are familiar with the routines, we encourage them to walk to the playground independently. This is where the real fun begins!

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## How you can support your child

- Talk with your child about their OPAL lunch times and be enthusiastic about their play.
  - Ensure your child has appropriate clothing to be outside in all weathers.
  - Participate in our donation drives.
  - Lend a Hand on our fantastic PTA Lend a Hand days where our amazing parents build wonderful play areas, including mud kitchens!
  - Keep your child's teacher updated on any friendship successes or challenges.
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## How can I stay updated about OPAL lunch times throughout the year?

- Look out for fun-filled pictures of your child playing at lunch time on Evidence Me.
- Look out for school emails and newsletters containing OPAL news.



### **CLOTHING NEEDED TO THRIVE OUTSIDE**

#### **wellies**



#### **coat**



#### **puddle suit or waterproof trousers**

