



Tuesday 1st October 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

King Ina C of E Academy is about to start a programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play.

Thinking about your own childhood, what did you like playing at school or at home?

Children today don't have the same freedoms we once did, so we want to give children back 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.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, your children also learn when they play. 20% of their time in school is playtime and we really want to make the best of that time.

Over the years, childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met out 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 just messing about. Children learn so many things through play that cannot be taught in a classroom. Certain things are necessary for children to play and these include:

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

On this journey of improving play, we may ask you for resources to help build a fulfilling play experience, whilst making changes about how the children use the school grounds. They may use more of the grounds, for more of the year. 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 the school is fostering 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.

We will be supported by OPAL for up to 2 years and as well as an opportunity to come and talk to our OPAL Mentor, we will soon introduce you to the King Ina OPAL Working Group and let you know what resources and help we are after. Also, once OPAL is up and running, you will be invited to events where you can come and see for yourselves what is happening and have the opportunity to join in the fun too. Watch this space! 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 look forward to working with you and as a community to improve playtime for all children.

Best wishes,

Mrs Sarah Salt
Deputy Headteacher

