



# Opal Newsletter

Term 3



## Happy New Year

### WHAT WILL OPAL PLAY BRING US IN 2023?

The weather last term hit us with a bit of everything and we had to make some big changes to our playtimes. Although we are an 'all weather play' school, the safety of our children will always take priority and in the instance of the ice we did have to put safety first and keep children inside for a time to play. Due to the wet weather that we are experiencing lately, we are trying to protect as much of our field and football pitches as possible, so we can have full use of these when the weather improves. Due to this, we have had to close off areas of the school field. This week we have re-opened the left hand side of the field and we will continue to gradually open more areas as the weather allows. We recognise that space is a crucial part of OPAL and that it works it's best the more space we have so we will review this as often as we can.

### Dynamic Risk Assessments

This term we start the really exciting part of our OPAL journey where we see the children access larger loose parts. This is what we have all been working towards for the last few months. We will be holding weekly OPAL assemblies so that we can have thorough conversations with the children about the items that we are giving them access to. During our play assemblies the children are given opportunities to discuss with their partner the new equipment on offer, how they may like to play with it, the risks they may encounter and the things that we can put in place to make the play safer.

#### Discussion



#### Discussion



During each assembly, we show the children a series of photos of risky play, exposing the item that we are introducing and we get the children to identify the risks. From this, we agree together the 'do's' and 'don'ts' (rules) for that item. Some pictures shown will really get the children to think about risk in great detail and will also give them some ideas of how the item can be used. All of this helps the children (and adults) to develop their dynamic risk assessment skills - the ability to assess risk in the moment.

We are already blown away by the structures the children are creating in their play and by the conversations taking place about making things safe. We will continue to slowly introduce these items one at a time with these discussions so the children can test and adapt before the next item is introduced. The bigger picture is to provide the children with a vast variety of loose parts to encourage combinational flexibility - the putting together of different items to create something new / more play opportunities.

### What about the mud?

Our children will be guided not just on managing their own risk but also on managing their own mess! With more access to the field, heavier foot flow and larger loose parts which are left out in the elements, there is an increased risk of mud and dirt. Children will be reminded to make sure they aren't allowing themselves to get too messy or unnecessarily dirty.

**Although it is in no way compulsory, we would highly recommend sending children who do enjoy getting stuck in / muddy, in with a pair of wellies, waterproof trousers and a waterproof coat that can be easily washed. These can usually be purchased from supermarket clothing departments at a reasonable cost.**





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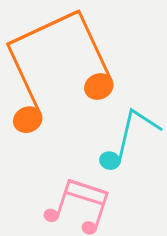
**NEW!**

These items are new already this term:

- Tunnels
- Role play structure
- Tyres
- Pallets
- Fidget wall
- Suitcases
- Natural clay



**Big News!**



**Coming Soon**

*Next OPAL playtime - 25th January*

Don't forget to check the Opal Playtimes section of our website for updates:

<https://www.reptonmanorprimary.co.uk/our-children/opal-playtimes/>

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