



Jarrow Cross
Church of England
Primary School
Borough Road, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear NE32 5UW
Tel: (0191) 4898354
Head Teacher: Mrs S. McBeth
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Website: www.jarrowcross.co.uk



Dear Parents/Carers,

Our school is about to start a programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play.

In what ways, if any, do you think you benefited from playtime? 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 and has been used in Spain, Canada, France and New Zealand. The programme has also been adapted and used in schools in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Austria under the Play Friendly Schools project. In 2018, OPAL won first prize in an EU-funded award for the best active school's programme in Europe and two UK national playwork awards. In 2019, OPAL was awarded a quarter of a million pounds by Sport England to bring the programme to many more schools.

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.

One reason the school is carrying out this programme is that 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%.



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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.

Following this letter in order to try and improve the play opportunities for your children, school will be asking you for resources and making changes regarding how the children use the school grounds. We 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 we are 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.

School will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be an opportunity to come and talk to the OPAL mentor at your child's school. 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.

In the coming 18 months you will be invited to events where you can come and see for yourselves what is happening and have the opportunity to join in too.

We are really excited about this project and hope that you will support us in our efforts to improve playtime for all children.

Best wishes

Mrs McBeth

OPAL mentor name- Andrea Caine



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