Stradbroke Primary School

Richmond Road ▪ Sheffield ▪ S13 8LT
Tel: 0114 239 9320
enquiries@stradbroke.sheffield.sch.uk ▪ https://www.stradbrokeprimary.uk/

Headteacher: John Sitch ▪ Deputy Headteacher: Stephen Nash

Friday 17th October 2025

OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) Launch at Stradbroke Primary School

Dear parents and carers,

Here at Stradbroke Primary School, we are about to start an exciting and transformational programme (OPAL) to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved, purposeful play at lunch times. 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. On Friday 24th October, all staff will be attending training on the inset day to prepare for the launch of OPAL after half-term.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 2,000 schools across the world. In recent years, OPAL has won first prize in an EU-funded award for the best active school's programme in Europe and two UK national play-work awards.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through outstanding teaching, your children also learn when they play. As 20% of their time in school is structured playtime, we want to make sure that this amount of time (equivalent to 1.4 years of primary school) is as enjoyable and as purposeful as possible.

One reason the school is carrying out this programme is that due to new generational influences childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met due to increased screen time.

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 messing about. It is the process evolution has come up with to enable children to learn all of the things that cannot be taught, while also having so much fun. There are certain things children **must** have in order to be able to play. These include:

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

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As we strive to improve play opportunities for your children across school, you may find that we ask for resources to be donated and you may see changes in how the children make use of the school grounds - particularly grassy areas.

Children 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.

If you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please have a look at the OPAL website (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk – follow the QR code below), 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.

Best wishes

Mr Sitch
Headteacher
Stradbroke Primary School