

OPAL Intent, Implementation and Impact

Statement of Intent

At Cullercoats Primary School we value the importance of quality play for every child in the school. The intent of implementing the Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) program in our Primary School is to create a rich and stimulating outdoor environment that promotes children's holistic development, enhances their well-being, and fosters a love for learning. OPAL aims to provide children with regular, supervised access to a wide range of play experiences that encourage creativity, problem-solving, and physical activity. By embedding the OPAL approach within our school ethos and curriculum, we seek to cultivate a deep connection to nature, promote active and healthy lifestyles, and support children's social and emotional development.

Implementation

To successfully implement OPAL in our Primary School, we will follow a structured and collaborative approach:

1. **Training and Professional Development:** We will provide comprehensive training to all staff members to ensure they understand the principles and benefits of the OPAL program. This will include sessions on risk management, playwork principles, and the promotion of inclusive play. Staff will also be encouraged to attend relevant external courses and conferences to continuously enhance their knowledge and skills.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** We will engage parents, carers, and the wider community in the implementation of OPAL, ensuring they understand the importance of outdoor play and learning. We will hold information sessions, provide resources, and actively seek their support and involvement in maintaining the outdoor play environment.
3. **Physical Environment:** We will develop the physical outdoor space to provide a diverse range of play opportunities. This will involve creating natural play areas, incorporating loose parts, installing equipment that encourages imaginative play, and involving children in the design and development process. The outdoor space will be regularly refreshed and renovated to present new challenges and possibilities.
4. **Play Policy and Procedures:** We will establish clear policies and procedures that set out the expectations and guidelines for safe and engaging outdoor play. These will include risk assessments, behaviour management strategies, supervision protocols, and cooperation with local authorities regarding health and safety regulations. The policies will be regularly reviewed to ensure they align with the latest best practices.
5. **Curriculum Integration:** We will integrate outdoor play and learning into the daily curriculum, recognizing it as an essential component of children's education. Outdoor play opportunities will be purposefully planned, with consideration given to aligning them with specific learning objectives and related topics. Staff will be encouraged to use the outdoors as a learning resource across multiple subjects.
6. **Play Support and Supervision:** Trained playworkers and staff members will actively engage in play with children, ensuring they receive support, encouragement, and scaffolding when necessary. Staff will strike a balance between providing opportunities for child-led play and introducing new activities that extend children's learning experiences. They will nurture positive relationships with children, fostering an inclusive and respectful play environment.
7. **Assessment and Reflection:** We will regularly assess the impact of the OPAL program on children's development and well-being through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Observations, surveys, and interviews will be used to gather feedback from children, parents, and staff. This data will be analysed to inform future improvements and adjustments to the program.

Impact

The implementation of OPAL in our Primary School will have a range of positive impacts on children, staff, and the overall school community. These impacts will be evidenced in numerous ways, including:

1. **Enhanced Well-being:** The OPAL program will contribute to children's physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Regular engagement in outdoor play will encourage physical activity, improve fitness, and help combat sedentary behaviour. The opportunities for social interaction and collaboration will develop emotional intelligence and resilience.
2. **Improved Attitudes Towards Learning:** The outdoor play experiences provided through OPAL will foster a love for learning and curiosity among children. Through play, children will develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to take risks. They will approach learning with enthusiasm, demonstrating a greater motivation to explore and discover new knowledge.
3. **Positive Social Interaction:** The inclusive play environment created by OPAL will promote positive social interaction among children. They will learn to share, negotiate, and resolve conflicts collaboratively. The outdoor setting will provide opportunities for cross-age interactions, strengthening relationships within the school community and fostering a greater sense of belonging.
4. **Increased Engagement and Achievement:** Embedding OPAL within the curriculum will create a more engaging learning environment, resulting in increased levels of participation and achievement across subjects. The hands-on experiences and practical application of concepts learned outdoors will enhance children's understanding and retention of knowledge.
5. **Stronger Connection to Nature:** The OPAL program will cultivate a deep connection to the natural world, promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. Children will develop a greater appreciation for the outdoors, leading to a desire to care for their surroundings and engage in environmentally responsible behaviours both within and outside of school.
6. **Parental and Community Involvement:** OPAL will provide opportunities for parents and the community to engage with the school in meaningful ways. Involvement in the maintenance of the outdoor play spaces, volunteering in play activities, and participating in events will strengthen relationships, improve parental satisfaction, and foster a sense of shared responsibility for children's education and well-being.

By implementing the OPAL program at Cullercoats Primary School, using a with a clear intent, comprehensive implementation plan, and a focus on measuring impact, we aim to provide an outstanding outdoor play and learning experience for all our children, as recognised by Ofsted's inspection framework.