



Opal Newsletter

Term 1



Welcome back!

Welcome back to all our children and families and a special welcome to all of our new reception starters.

For our new families, OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) is a fantastic programme which we run during our play times. This programme has multiple positive impacts on a child's progression and wellbeing at school. If you'd like to find out more about OPAL, please visit [OPAL's website](#), or you can read the [power of playtime guide for families](#) on our website. If you have any questions at all about OPAL, please don't hesitate to contact me at hayley.mannering@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk.



We have some very big plans for this year and we are excited to see our OPAL play offer continue to grow.

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This term we are expanding our play offer even further. We will be opening our Opal field to all children at lunchtime. We will also be expanding our existing play spaces, and introducing some more play opportunities.

We will be exploring combinatorial flexibility - how, by putting various items together, we can create something else new. This will be seen in our den building as we start experimenting with some more larger loose parts. We will see how to look beyond everyday uses and use our imaginations to create new ways to play with things.

It is likely we will see a change in the weather this term, and we will need to start to navigate how items and risks change along with the weather. We will also think about how we need to manage our mess when it comes to playing out in the wetter and muddier conditions - these will be some key point in our play assemblies. The wetter and muddier conditions will also provide ample more unique play opportunities - including various elements of nature.



** photos taken at my previous school



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Getting Winter Ready



In Term 1, we will start to prepare for the wetter and colder weather. Also, with children now gaining access to the muddier and wetter terrain during their play, we need to be prepared. If children want to access the OPAL field or Forest School at playtimes, they will be asked to change their footwear. **Please ensure your child has a pair of wellies or leather trainers that they can easily change in and out of during playtimes.** We all know the British weather can be very unpredictable, so **please also ensure they have a waterproof coat (and we would also recommend waterproof trousers) in school everyday.** Children are invited to bring a 'just in case' bag with a change of clothing in, just in case they get caught out in the rain or have a slip in the wetter weather. These items do not need to be school uniform, just something dry to change into if needed - don't forget socks and undies! The bag can be left on your child's peg for the term.



Disco and Fundraising



In the OPAL programme, as much as possible, we try to obtain items through donations and we create regular contacts for our large loose parts. These items would usually be thrown away, or would sometimes cost companies to dispose of (like tyres), so it is a very sustainable programme and it supports the powerful message of recycle and reuse. Sometimes, though, there are items that we do need to purchase, or materials we need for a build with, and therefore we need to generate funds. So, we will be running our first OPAL fundraiser, and this terms fundraiser will be a school disco. More details are to follow but please keep the date of **Thursday October 16th** in your diaries. I'm very excited to put on this event for the children whilst knowing it will also benefit their playtimes. We plan to run discos every term as well as some other very fun events - watch this space!

Social Media



Hopefully you have already seen that our social media pages are up and running. If you haven't done so already, please do check them out using 'opal @ Harrietsham' or click on the icons above, and give us a 'follow' to keep up-to-date with everything we are up to. Children's photos will only be used on our website - not on social media - so to get a glimpse of what your child is up to at lunch time, please make sure your photo permissions are updated on Arbor.

FOR MORE INFO EMAIL: hayley.mannering@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk