



Whitchurch Church of England Primary School

17th October 2023

Dear Parents



We are about to launch an exciting new project to make our playtimes even better, in conjunction with Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) CIC. In 2018, OPAL won the best active schools' programme in Europe award and has been cited in two parliamentary reports as delivering outstanding practice. OPAL is working closely with Sport England to promote more active childhoods, which is one of the many reasons we are improving our playtime, as well as to improve opportunities for socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment for your child.

We strongly believe that: "Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community." (Children's Play Council 2001).

The project will develop over the next 18 months and our hopes are that it will change the way we think and how we play together. To facilitate this project, we will need to buy some new resources, move some things around in our outdoor space and require some loose parts. Loose parts are any materials that can be easily moved, combined, and incorporated into children's free play. The items we are looking for will enable us to enjoy a wider range of play experiences during playtime (see below for some examples):

- Suitcases of any size and type
- Anything on wheels/castors
- Plastic milk crates/supermarket delivery crates/plastic bread trays
- Briefcases, especially hard cased ones
- Road signs and cones
- Kitchen pots, pans, baking trays, work tables, wooden spoons, chopping boards
- Tools like small spades/shovels, trowels and brooms
- Tubes of various sizes and various materials
- Buckets
- Nets and thick ropes



- Keyboards/torches/laptops/calculators/mobile phones/desk phones/webcams/cameras that are no longer working
- Fabric (large sheets/brightly coloured fabric)
- Foam sheets/bodyboards/camping roll mats/yoga mats
- Wooden pallets
- Metal frames
- Cable drums
- Guttering
- Noodles (the type you use in the swimming pool!)
- Hats/scarves/jazzy shirts/elasticated skirts/waistcoats/wedding dresses/character costumes
- Pegs (to help to set up dens)

We are currently awaiting the arrival of our storage shed for the loose parts and as soon as it is ready, we will be holding a collection for any donations. **Please do not bring your donations in before we announce the date we will start** as we will have nowhere to store them before then.

There will be more information to follow at a parent's session later in the year when you will be invited to come and play with your children. We are really excited about this project and hope that you will support us in our efforts to improve play time for all children. In the meantime, please have a look at the following video which shows what play at an OPAL school can look like once the project is fully up and running: [Amazing Primary Playtime at St Michael's OPAL Platinum School - YouTube](#) .

Throughout the project we will be keen to hear your views and will be sharing examples of the children's experiences. To start this off we would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete a short questionnaire relating to play. Please click on this link to access the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HQKRXFT> The survey will close on Monday 30th October so we would appreciate your responses by this date.

As we work our way through the journey of developing play in our school, we will keep you updated on all developments and hope that you will be able to support the project through any donations that you might be able to make.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Michelle Dunwell
Deputy Head Teacher