



Mark First C of E Academy

Creating a Love of Learning

Dear Parents & Carers,

In September 2026 we launched the Opal (Outdoor Play and Learning) programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play.

From the collated results from the parent, staff and children's surveys, we would like to utilise the use of our playgrounds and field at lunchtimes, throughout the year. Many children felt the front playground became too noisy at times, and many would like further creative play opportunities.

OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, your children also learn when they play. We want to make sure that this amount of time is as positive and active as possible. With children visibly messier, but enjoying their time at school, with more freedom, fewer first aid accidents and improved behaviour.

Thank you for your support to enable us to begin this journey. Our September class meetings detailed the importance of wellies in school each day and a hooded waterproof coat, to enable your child to play on the field in all weathers. Children are encouraged to keep their Outdoor Classroom Bag in school each day (including a couple of pairs of spare socks). The use of a puddle suit or waterproof trousers is also recommended, to protect school uniforms from the mud!

To enable us to improve play opportunities for your children, we will be asking the community for donations of resources and making changes about how the children currently use the school grounds. We are also asking for volunteers for the role of 'Parent Play Champion', as a way to represent the parents during Opal Termly Review Meetings.

The 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.

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In the coming 18 months you will also 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.

Thank you for your support

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CBull', is positioned above the printed name.

Mrs C Bull (Deputy Headteacher)

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