

# Colmers Farm Primary School- OPAL Strategy Document

## Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

### Whole School Strategic Overview

#### Intent

At Colmers Farm Primary School, we believe that high-quality outdoor play is a crucial element of children's development and learning. Our intent in embedding the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) approach is to transform playtime into a valuable, enriching part of the school day that enhances physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.

We aim to:

- Ensure that **all children have access to inclusive, high-quality play experiences** every day, regardless of weather, age, gender, ability or background.
- Recognise that **play is a fundamental right** of every child, as stated in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Promote **holistic child development** by providing diverse, open-ended and stimulating outdoor play opportunities.
- Encourage **creative risk-taking**, resilience, independence, teamwork and social interaction through play.
- Reduce behavioural incidents and increase pupil wellbeing through meaningful play engagement.
- Create a **play culture** that values and celebrates children's voices, choices and agency.

By embedding the OPAL approach, we aim to become a beacon of excellence in outdoor play, fostering a culture where all children are respectful, safe and ready to engage. Through inclusive and imaginative play, we nurture teamwork, build resilience and grow confident, independent learners.

#### Implementation

Our implementation of OPAL is based on a structured, strategic and whole-school approach supported by the OPAL Primary Programme. It is a long-term journey of cultural change, led by senior leadership, with staff, pupils and families actively involved.

Key steps taken in our implementation include:

##### **1. Leadership and Vision**

- The Headteacher and SLT are fully committed to OPAL and have embedded it into the School Development Plan.
- A designated OPAL Lead has been appointed and trained to oversee development and monitoring.
- Governors are regularly updated and have approved funding and resources.

##### **2. Audit and Planning**

- An initial OPAL audit was completed to assess current play provision, culture and spaces.
- A Play Policy has been developed in collaboration with staff, pupils and parents.
- A detailed Action Plan has been created and is reviewed regularly.

### **3. Staff Training and Development**

- All staff received OPAL training to ensure consistency in understanding the value of play and their role in supporting it.
- Play Leaders are trained to act as play facilitators rather than controllers.

### **4. Environment Transformation**

- Playground areas have been zoned and redesigned to support a wide range of play types (creative, physical, social and imaginative).
- Natural and open-ended resources (e.g. tyres, crates, sand, mud kitchens, wheelchairs etc) have been introduced.
- Risk-benefit assessments have been conducted to support safe, managed risk-taking

### **5. Inclusion and Voice**

- Children's voices are central. Regular pupil surveys inform improvements and resource allocation.
- Play provision is adapted to ensure inclusivity for pupils with SEND and other additional needs

### **6. Family and Community Engagement**

- Parents have been consulted and informed through workshops, newsletters, and social media.
- Community donations have been sought for loose parts and materials.

## **Impact**

The OPAL programme has had a significant and measurable impact on the school environment, pupil wellbeing and behaviour. Monitoring and evaluation are ongoing using pupil voice, staff observations and incident reports.

Key outcomes include:

#### **1. Improved Behaviour and Wellbeing**

- A noticeable reduction in lunchtime behaviour incidents and accidents due to more engaging and purposeful play.
- Children return to class calmer, happier and more ready to learn.
- Increased opportunities for self-regulation and conflict resolution.

#### **2. Enhanced Physical Activity**

- Children are more physically active during playtimes, contributing to healthy lifestyles and meeting daily activity guidelines.
- Even less confident or less active pupils are engaging in meaningful movement through varied play types.

#### **3. Social and Emotional Development**

- Playtimes now support the development of friendships, cooperation, empathy, and resilience.
- Children engage in self-directed play, negotiate roles and develop leadership and collaborative skills.

#### **4. Creativity and Independence**

- The use of open-ended resources fosters problem-solving, innovation and imagination.
- Children take ownership of their play and develop independence and risk awareness.

## 5. Whole School Culture Shift

- Staff attitudes towards play have shifted positively; play is now recognised as a vital part of the curriculum.
- The school community shares a collective vision of valuing play as learning.
- Colmers Farm is now a vibrant, dynamic environment that reflects the richness of children's play.

## Next Steps

- Continue to expand and refresh loose parts play resources.
- Create a dedicated Year 6 Common Room to provide a calm, social space that supports transition to secondary school and encourages leadership and responsibility during breaktimes.
- Implement a scooter track to promote active play, coordination and enjoyment of movement in a safe, supervised environment.
- Explore the development of a child-friendly park area that offers a safe, engaging space for imaginative and physical play, enhancing both playtime and outdoor learning opportunities.
- Work towards achieving a recognised OPAL Award during the next academic year, demonstrating our sustained commitment to outstanding outdoor play provision.

**At Colmers Farm Primary School, we are committed to upholding every child's right to play, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through high-quality, inclusive outdoor play every day, we strive to build resilient, confident learners who thrive socially, emotionally and academically.**

