

# Charnwood OPAL FAQs

## What is OPAL?

OPAL stands for Outdoor Play And Learning. OPAL is a community interest company dedicated to providing services to schools and organisations to improve the quality of play opportunities for all children. We want to ensure that every child has **at least** one hour's outstanding outdoor play every school day.



## Why do we do OPAL?

**Getting outdoors results in better learning outcomes:** Outdoor learning can create improvements across all academic disciplines, helping with problem-solving and enthusiasm for learning; and can contribute to improved test scores and grade averages.

**Outdoor play gets kids more active:** When engaged in play, children will stay active for long periods of time and are more active outdoors compared to indoors. Studies done using GPS tracking in the UK show that children are more than two-and-a-half times more active when outdoors compared to indoors (Cooper et al 2010).

**Outdoor learning and play creates healthier kids:** Children come to school more often, can concentrate better, physically sit at their desks for longer, can see better and can learn more. Active free play is also critical in helping children develop balance, co-ordination and improved motor fitness.

**Time spent outdoors boosts mental health:** Children feel better and perform better after they have been outdoors. Getting outdoors helps children feel calmer, helps process their day and builds the holy grail of capabilities: resilience.

**Children who are outdoors more are more likely to develop a connection to nature and grow up wanting to protect the environment:** A 1999 study of 1,259 students from nine countries found that direct experience with nature was more likely to lead to pro-environmental behaviour than simply studying about nature from books (Packer, 1999 in Ballantyne & Packer, 2009).

## Where do we do OPAL?

OPAL happens outside on the playgrounds and on most of the field within the school grounds.

## When do we do OPAL?

We play outside at break times for 15 minutes and we enjoy an hour of play during lunchtimes.

## What can I do to help?

Please ensure your child is ready for any weather. We will be outside in different types of weather. We can help with finding suitable clothing.

Bring any potential play equipment to school – see the donation list here:

<https://www.charnwood.staffs.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Loose-Parts-Donations.pdf>

Old coats and clothing would be great to keep children without coats warm and dry.

## What do children have to wear?

Children should come to school in their regular uniform or PE kits (depending on the day). Children may bring extra layers to keep in their locker or water proof trousers for rainy days.