

OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING



NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first OPAL newsletter of the school year. There is so much to share with you all, we decided to create a newsletter specifically for OPAL news and updates.

Scooters



This term, we are excited to be announcing a new addition to our Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) project: we will be finally introducing scooters! Thank you to FOG for supporting us to purchase these.

Before introducing the scooters we have worked alongside our Health and Safety advisors, Adeptify, to ensure our risk assessments are robust. Links to our play policy can be found on the Opal section of the website.

<https://www.glebe.hillingdon.sch.uk/page/?title=Outdoor+Play+and+Learning+%28OPAL%29&pid=227>

Wheeled Play



BENEFITS



Wheeled play will develop the children's gross motor skills, balance and coordination. Furthermore, a good selection of wheeled play resources will support many kinds of muscle development: arms, legs, shoulder and core. They will also help increase coordination, balance, spatial awareness and prediction. We have daily wheeled play with scooters and trikes in nursery and weekly play in Reception and have over the years really seen the benefit of this play.

Helmets During Wheeled Play



After careful consideration and discussion with our OPAL working party, children will not be required to wear helmets while scootering at school. The reasons for this decision include:

„ Flexibility: The benefits of children being able to hop on and off their wheeled play at will, scooting for a few minutes, stopping to play elsewhere and scooting off again.

„ Helmet Fit: The dangers presented by ill-fitting helmets; loose chin straps can provide as much, or more, danger than no helmet.

„ Time Efficiency: The time needed to fit a helmet properly and take it off again at the end of the ride.

Helmets During Wheeled Play



- „ Safety: Children should not wear helmets when they are not on their wheeled play because of the entrapment dangers helmets produce.
- „ Speed: The speed children will generally be travelling on the school site is comparable to the speed of two running children colliding heads.
- „ Traffic-Free Zone: Cars and traffic will not be present on the school site.
- „ Education: The need to tell children the difference between riding in school grounds and out in public.
- „ Terrain: The flatness of the site will not allow scooters to reach alarming speeds.

Risk Benefit Assessment



We will conduct a risk-benefit assessment with the children in assembly on the 14th September. Additionally, all children will have a class-based session during this week using the scooters, prior to them being used at playtimes and lunch, to allow them to digest these rules in a smaller group and allowing teachers to support any pupils, if necessary. This will ensure that the children understand the safety guidelines and the benefits of scooters. We then aim to begin to introduce scooters at playtime and lunch from the 21st September. There will be an area specifically designated to scooter play and this will be sectioned off from other play with tyres.

Should you wish for your child to wear a helmet whilst scootering, please feel free to provide one for them – named, to avoid it going missing. The child will have responsibility for looking after the helmet and taking it out with them to wear. Please discuss with your child should you not wish for them to take part in wheeled play and let their teacher know so staff can monitor this. We are looking forward to seeing the positive impact that wheeled play will bring to our children's development and enjoyment.

Our New Boat!



We would like to say a huge thank you to Rickmansworth Sailing Club, who have generously donated an old sailing boat for the children to enjoy. Not only did they gift the boat, but they also delivered it to school and kindly loaned us a trolley so we can move it while we prepare it for use. The boat will be securely installed by setting it into the ground for long-term play, and we cannot wait for the children to start enjoying it.

A big thank you also to Mrs Parson for liaising with the sailing club to organise the donation,

and to Mrs Parson, her husband, and Mr Young for their hard work in preparing the boat for the children.





Pond Restoration

Our school pond had been a much-loved resource over the years, supporting a wide variety of aquatic life for the children to observe and enjoy. Unfortunately, time and weather have taken their toll, causing several deep cuts in the lining. Despite our efforts to repair these areas, it has become clear that the pond now needs a full re-lining to restore it to a healthy, thriving condition.

We have been amazed by the support shown by our school community throughout the OPAL process, and we are reaching out once again. If you know of any local contractors or individuals with experience in pond construction or lining replacement, who may be able to offer this service at a community-friendly rate, we would be very grateful to hear from you. We are happy to acknowledge and promote any companies who assist us through our school newsletter.

We know from experience how valuable this pond has been as an outdoor learning resource, and we are keen to see it thriving once again with sticklebacks, minnows and other aquatic life for the children to enjoy. Please note that the pond's fixed metal safety cover is already in place (temporarily removed while repairs are assessed).



Pond Restoration



Our pond at the moment



Sand Pit Construction

We have been keen to build a large sandpit for the children to enjoy all year round and have been liaising with a contractor who has previously worked with another school in the borough. Unfortunately, they currently have too many bookings and are unable to proceed with our project at this time.

We are still very keen to move forward, particularly as we head into potentially wetter weather when the ground will be easier to work with. Our plan is to build the sandpit on the field, at the edge of the playground, so that it remains accessible throughout the year. The sandpit will be approximately 8m by 10m. We intend to dig to a depth of around 500–600mm, install a membrane, and add 55–80mm of gravel to improve drainage, as the field can become boggy. The edging will be created using tyres, a method we have seen successfully used at other schools.



Sand Pit Construction

If you know any local contractors or individuals who may be able to support us with this project, we would be very grateful to hear from you.

Once the sandpit is complete, we will use the soil removed from the excavation to create a small hill over the industrial PVC tunnels previously purchased for us by FOG. The children have already been enjoying these tunnels on the playground, and adding a small hill around them would make this feature even more exciting.

Thank you again for your support,

Miss Griffiths, Mrs Bhardwaj and Mrs Parsons