




Opal Newsletter: Autumn 1

We're excited to launch our new half-termly OPAL Newsletter to keep you updated on all things play at Alwoodley Primary School. Play is a vital part of our school culture, and we're proud of the incredible transformation our play offer has undergone over the past two academic years.

Families with children higher up the school will have seen first-hand how our outdoor spaces and playtimes have evolved — and we're not stopping here! Our goal is to continue building on this success, making play even more enriching, inclusive, and enjoyable for every child.

Class Bingo Challenge Launched

Last week in our Monday play assembly, we launched an exciting new initiative: the half-termly Class Bingo Challenge Board! This fun and purposeful challenge helps us replenish play items we're running low on, while giving classes the chance to earn a reward. Each board includes a mix of free items provided by nature and easy-to-donate items from home. When a class fills their board, they'll be rewarded with an extended playtime — a brilliant way to celebrate teamwork and support our play provision. Here is this half term's challenge board.

	10 pine cones	20 acorns
A wooden spoon	5 small toy cars	A sand-pit toy

Supporting Play at Alwoodley

We're proud to be working closely with **OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning)** to continually improve our play provision. Our dedicated OPAL mentor, **Ana**, visits regularly to offer expert guidance and support. Each half term, **Miss Hill** leads training sessions for our play team staff to ensure our approach remains consistent and aligned with OPAL principles.

At Alwoodley, we encourage a wide variety of play types — from imaginative and creative to active and exploratory. Underpinning all play decisions are three simple but powerful questions:

1. **Does it have a benefit?**
2. **Is it safe for me?**
3. **Is it safe for others?**

If the answer to all three is **yes**, then the activity is permitted. This approach empowers children to take ownership of their play while ensuring safety and purpose remain at the heart of everything we do.

New Plans and Fundraising

Parents will be aware that we are currently operating within a deficit budget. While the school funded the construction of the hammock circle on the field over the summer, future OPAL developments will be supported by the Friends of Alwoodley. If any of you would like to join the committee or help at events, we would be very grateful — their work is central to our fundraising efforts. You can contact them on: friendsofalwoodley@gmail.com

This year, we are aiming to raise £5000 to create a climbing and sliding area behind the MUGA. You may have noticed the black tunnels near the MUGA — these were generously donated to us, along with some hardcore, to support this exciting project. Behind the scenes, we are working tirelessly to source additional items that will enhance our play offer even further. If you are aware of any companies that are willing to make donations or support us please contact office@alwoodley.net

OPAL uniform

At our school, we embrace an all-weather approach to outdoor play. While we will head indoors during torrential rain, light showers won't stop us from enjoying time outside. To help your child stay comfortable, please ensure they come to school in a suitable coat—ideally a waterproof one if rain is forecast. As the season turns more autumnal, wellies become essential and are listed in our uniform policy. If you haven't sent any in yet, please do so as soon as possible; each class has dedicated storage for them. Pupils without wellies will unfortunately be limited to a smaller area of the site during wet weather.

Please be reminded – if items of uniform are clearly labelled we can return them to the child directly rather than placing things in the lost property.

...and finally

If you would like to find out a little more about the benefits of OPAL, they have created a video specifically for parents. You can view it here: <https://youtu.be/9GTSaannkP4>