



# Outdoor Learning

## OPAL

At St Thomas More, we have adopted the OPAL Primary Programme (Outside Play and Learning) to promote freedom for children to explore play in their own imaginative ways, using found and gathered resources in the natural outdoor environment during lunch times. Our grounds are fantastic but have been significantly underused during the winter /spring months due to the wet field area. As a result, we have decided to open up a range of Play Zones across the grounds during the winter months as long as children have the correct outdoor wear.

**Please ensure that your child has a pair of wellington boots in school, which can be kept here permanently. Suitable coats/ rainsuits are also recommended as the weather changes.**

If you have any old wellies you would be willing to donate, we would be grateful for them too.

Mrs Baxter and the Play Team are looking forward to :

- Children accessing more areas of the school grounds during the colder/ wetter months
- Children exploring, building dens, running, hiding, having fun and getting dirty
- Children involved in activities other than those with a sports focus
- Children taking responsibility for themselves, their games, each other, the environment and their resources

If you would like more information on OPAL, please visit their website at <http://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk>

## Muddy Puddles

We also follow The Muddy Puddle Approach, a type of outdoor learning that allows the children to be outside whilst still embedding and learning academic, curriculum linked subjects. For example, we could make number ladders from sticks and jump up the ladders counting in 10's, we are not limited to work in exercise books only!

The Muddy Puddle Teacher ideas are so much fun and make the children feel as if they are playing whilst learning at the same time.

You can find out more and get free resources for home at:

[www.themuddypuddleteacher.co.uk](http://www.themuddypuddleteacher.co.uk)



## OPAL - Outdoor Play and Learning

An OPAL School strives to improve the quality of play for all of its children.

All children and young people have the right to play and need to play; free to choose what they do – lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet – with the chance to stretch and challenge themselves, take risks and enjoy freedom. The right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



### UNCRC Article 31

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.



[www.TheLittlePlayVillage.co.uk](http://www.TheLittlePlayVillage.co.uk)  
f @thelittleplayvillage  
@The\_Little\_Play\_Village

unicef   
UNITED KINGDOM

# ***Our OPAL Charter***

We have the right to play and enjoy OPAL.

We have the responsibility to make sure everyone enjoys playtime by making sure:

- ✓  everyone chooses what to play
- ✓  we share equipment fairly and kindly
- ✓  we take care of the equipment
- ✓  we treat each other how we like to be treated
- ✓  we keep everybody safe
- ✓  we are kind to others
- ✓  we help people if they need us
- ✓  we allow people to join in games
- ✓  we ask grownups if we need help to sort out our problems
- ✓  we listen to one and another
- ✓  we play safely.



# OUTDOOR PLAY IDEAS...what shall we do today?

- Build an obstacle course
- Invent a new ball game
- Play hopscotch
- Learn how to skip
- Make a map, can a friend follow it?
- Build a bridge
- Paint a mud picture
- Go on a mini-beast hunt
- Make a fairy garden
- Make a stick person
- Make a nature monster out of natural materials
- Make a broomstick or a magic wand
- Make up your own dance or exercise routine
- Put on a show on the outdoor stage
- Make shadow puppets on a sunny day
- Play hide and seek



# Tyre Play

Tyres are great fun and can be used in many different way, e.g. building, obstacle courses, rolling, pulling etc.

Remember...

- Do not stack higher than your body.
- You must check your tyre stack is secure and safe before using it to sit on or climb in.
- Be aware of your surroundings – do not roll a tyre down a hill where other children are playing.
- Wash your hands after playing with the tyres.
- Make sure the tyres are put back as you found them.



# Wooden Planks and large tubes

Wooden planks and large tubes can be used in many ways for open-ended play. They allow great versatility and can be used independently or in conjunction with other resources and can be transformed into a range of designs and constructions.

- We have 4 different sized planks which can be used to support play.
- All planks must be stacked safely in the correct size pile to avoid them falling over when tidied away.
- All longer planks/ tubes must be carried by 2 children, using both hands.
- Do not push arms into tubes.



# Crate Safety

- A stack height limit of belly button on Tarmac
- Avoid standing on a stack of crates over 4 crates off the ground
- Test stacks of crates for stability before playing with them to reduce likelihood of them toppling over.
- Only lift single crates above head height, not multiples of crates to prevent head-bumps
- Riding in dragged crates is fine on Tarmac but beware of speed and cornering.
- Check crates for finger traps, sharp edges, breakages, etc.
- If a child discovers a broken crate, they should immediately stop playing with it and take it to the nearest member of staff for checking.
- Safe holding, moving and stacking. It is important to bend knees and keep your back straight.

**Storage crates should not be used during play**





Our  
Play  
Zones



# 1

## Zone 1 – The Quiet Zone

- Reading/Drawing in Polytunnel
- Chalk Path
- Prayer Shed
- Lego Shed

### Resources:

- Polytunnel – reading books, paper, colouring pencils/crayons, pencil sharpeners, erasers, recycling bin
- Chalk Path – container of chinks stored in Lego shed
- Prayer Shed – paper and pens for writing prayers, books, Bible, rosary beads, statue of Mary, table and cloth, decorations
- Lego shed – Lego and small construction resources



1. Children must remain seated and calm.
2. Children must not use path beyond trees and must be visible at all times.
3. Children must not enter/exit at far end of polytunnel
4. Used paper must be put in the recycling box.
5. When tidying up, make sure resources are tidied up/put away
6. All chinks to be sealed back into container.
7. Lego & Prayer Shed to be left tidy and floor to be clear.
8. In hot, dry weather, reading can take place in the outdoor reading area.
9. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.

# 2

## Zone 2 – Mud Kitchen/Den Building

- Mud Kitchen Area
- Den Area
- Welly Shed

### Resources:

- Water container (fresh water daily)
- Kitchen utensils/pots & pans
- Tarpaulin & rope
- Cloths for den building (kept in welly shed)



1. Children must stay in the zone and not enter the Forest School area.
2. Children should not be in touching reach of the fence.
3. Rope play must be safe.
4. Children to help tidy the kitchen area at end of play.
5. Fabric cloths to be put away in Welly Shed.
6. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.

# 3

## Zone 3 – Football & Gross Motor Skills

- Football zone (1/3<sup>rd</sup> zoned off with barrier posts & chain)
- Basketball posts for target practice
- Parachutes/team play



### Resources:

- Football bibs & sponge balls
- Balance boards/bean bags/parachutes/skipping ropes/cones
- Barrier posts & chain

**Football rota – Monday Y6, Tuesday Y5, Wednesday Y4, Thursday Y3, Friday KS1/ Reception**

1. Children must not play with the trolley cart for storing items.
2. Safe play and team games encouraged e.g. parachute games.
3. Children to wear bib if playing in football zone.
4. Children without a bib must not enter the football zone.
5. Footballs that go over the fence will be collected by an adult at the end of play.
6. Children to tidy away equipment.
7. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.



## Zone 4 – Loose Parts Play

- Loose parts storage area against learning centre

### Resources:

- 2/3rds of lower section on playground
- Tyres
- Planks
- Crates
- Rope



1. Safe play at all times- safe lifting, safe use of ropes- equipment stays in this zone.
2. Children to carry equipment safely, aware of others surrounding them and lifting planks with a peer, not on their own.
3. Children to help store/stack away planks and tyres safely at the end of play.
4. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.

# 5

## Zone 5 – Water Play & Theatre

- Water play area
- Theatre area



### Resources:

- Water play – x3 tuff trays with water play equipment stored in the shed.
- Theatre – stage area with lidded bin for dressing up items.

1. Children must not drink the water in water zone.
2. Children can use water from the tap but it must not be left on.
3. Children must not hang from the theatre fabric roof.
4. Children must help to tidy away the water play equipment each day.
5. Children must help to tidy and store away costumes and props.
6. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.



## Zone 6 – Sport Crew & Small World

- Pirate ship and surrounding area
- Zoned sports crew area



**Resources:** (pull along carts stored in small sheds)

- 1 cart of small world play (dinosaurs/dolls)
- 1 cart of small world play (cars/transport)
- 1 cart of sports crew equipment (parachute, cones, balls, beanbags)
- Push/pull items (dolls prams, trolleys) stored in shed

1. Children can play on and around the pirate ship for small world play.
2. Children must not play with the storage cart.
3. Children to help to tidy away at the end of play (or during if items left unattended).
4. Sports crew will encourage team games in their zoned area and be responsible for tidying away their equipment.
5. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.

# 7

## Zone 7 – Sand Trays & Music

- Sand tray zone outside Y2 classroom
- Musical instruments attached to wall

### Resources:

- 3 tuff trays with sand in them
- Sand play toys (spade, moulds etc)
- Tuff tray covers
- Storage bucket for small equipment (to be stored in shed)
- Dustpan and brush
- Additional musical instruments (stored in sheds)



1. Children must not eat/ throw/ remove sand from trays.
2. Children must keep items near sand play area.
3. Children must help to tidy away at the end of play including sweeping up sand using dustpan and brush.
4. Sand tray will be covered at end of play.
5. All children must ask permission to go to the toilet and be given a toilet card.



Chalk Path



Construction Area



Quiet Area for reading and drawing



Loose Parts Play



Mud Kitchen and Den Building Area



Sand/ Water/ Small World Play

### OPAL - Outdoor Play and Learning

The OPAL Play Team have been working hard to give our children a hive of activities and opportunities to promote their personal development and wellbeing during lunch times.

The children have enjoyed exploring our new zoned areas and have shown fantastic creativity and imagination within their play.

Personal play time achievements are celebrated through the Golden Welly award during assembly each week. Congratulations to all of the children who have achieved the award so far!



# Golden Welly Award



Introducing the 'Golden Welly Award' – You can achieve this award during play times for demonstrating great imaginative play, outstanding behaviour, brilliant teamwork skills etc.

One child will achieve the award weekly (announced during Friday's assembly) and will keep the special Golden Welly trophy in their classroom for the whole week. Happy playing!

# Muddy Puddles

At STM, we are proud that our teachers are trained in the Muddy Puddle approach to learning. The method involves teaching the curriculum using the outside to allow space, freedom for movement, collaboration, rich speech and language opportunities, and time for play. This is alongside only using natural materials to teach with. This creates an environment of learning that has enhanced creativity, cross-curricula links, and sensory experiences and is entirely sustainable and caring to the outside space.

Children who this approach can have profound benefits from:

- Children of varying learner types who do not stereotypically learn from an inside environment and indoor methods. Children who thrive in active, collaborative and practical teaching methods.
- Children with poor fine and gross motor skills.
- Children with SEMH - the outdoors has been proven to positively impact both the child and educators' mental and physical well-being.
- Children with speech and language difficulties - our approach provides an open, non-judgmental space for children to express themselves and have more peer conversations.
- EAL - for children with additional languages, the outdoors can provide like-for-like opportunities so children can experiment with and use their own and new languages.

•If you would like to find out more, please visit [About Us MPT - The Muddy Puddle Teacher | Outdoor Learning](#)





## Muddy Safety Rules

1. Feet first, then hands when we pick anything off the floor.
2. Sticks stay low they tickle our toe, if they go high they poke us in the eye.
3. Treat rocks like babies. Pick them up gently with two hands and put down with two hands.
4. Every time you go outside, always risk assess your space and look for how the weather changes surfaces and how we need to change our behaviour to suit this.

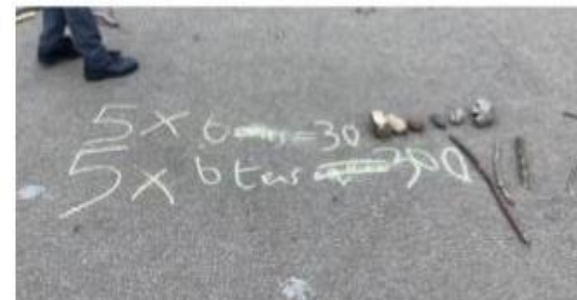


# Take a look at our fun and engaging outdoor learning!

- *We have been learning about skeletons and their function, creating their own skeletons using natural resources outside.*



- *We have been investigating related calculations, exploring scaling facts by 10, such as using  $3 \times 4 = 12$  to derive  $3 \times 40 = 120$  and  $30 \times 4 = 120$ . We used a range of natural representations such as sticks and rocks, to expose the link between multiples of 1 and multiples of 10. Some children even moved onto think about the links to division.*



- *We have been taking our art lessons outside, creating natural art using materials from the field and woodland areas. We were able to evaluate our work and consider what we could do to improve in the future.*



- *We enjoyed a phonics segmenting lesson using leaves with graphemes written on them, working with a partner to say and write words using their chosen grapheme.*

