



We choose courage
over comfort because
we know that 'the Lord
our God is with us'
(Joshua 1:9).

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School

www.stmarymagdaleneprimary.co.uk

office@stmarys.snmat.org.uk

16.4.26

Dear Parents / Carers,

From the start of the summer term, St Mary's will introduce carefully planned rough-and-tumble play (RTP) for all children at lunchtimes and during other appropriate playtimes. This is part of our OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) developments to make breaktimes richer, safer and more active for every pupil.

What RTP is — and is not

- RTP is energetic, cooperative play (tumbling, play-wrestling, chasing) that is clearly playful, negotiated and consensual.
- It is not aggression or real fighting. Staff will teach children to read social cues and to stop immediately when someone wants stop.

What pupils gain

- Physical development: builds core strength, balance, coordination and spatial awareness — important foundations identified in Development Matters.
- Emotional regulation and resilience: gives children practice managing strong feelings and recovering from minor upsets in a supervised setting.
- Social and communication skills: supports negotiation of boundaries, reading non-verbal cues, empathy and trust.
- Cognitive benefits: play activates brain systems that support enjoyment, motivation and social learning, helping children engage positively with school life.

How RTP will run safely within OPAL

- Aligned with OPAL: RTP will be integrated into OPAL zones and lunchtime planning to broaden active play opportunities for every pupil.
- Supervised and planned: lunchtime/play leaders and trained staff will oversee sessions and open-play zones.
- Risk assessed: staff will complete written, activity-specific risk assessments with the children and use short, child-friendly checks with pupils so they understand how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Rules and signals: children will learn explicit rules (for example: no hitting or hair-grabbing). Play will stop immediately on a pre-agreed signal or when a child says "stop."
- Environment and equipment: RTP will use designated OPAL zones; jewellery will be removed and clothing checked when needed.





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Inclusion and adjustments

- RTP opportunities will be available to every pupil through OPAL zones or supervised sessions. Participation is voluntary and meaningful alternatives will be provided for pupils who do not wish to join. Reasonable adjustments will be made for pupils with SEND or medical needs; staff will put individual plans in place where required.

This development reflects Development Matters, EYFS welfare requirements and our OPAL work, and supports St Mary's vision to grow courageous, respectful and compassionate pupils.

We will, as always, speak with children and complete a joint risk benefit document as part of our OPAL assemblies, before they are allowed to start rough and tumble play. We encourage you to discuss the risks and benefits with your child to help them understand the importance of safety while enjoying their time. Our staff will provide supervision and guidance during playtime to ensure that all pupils adhere to these rules.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this new initiative, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for your continued support in fostering a safe and enjoyable environment for our pupils.

Warm regards,

Mrs Turvey

Assistant Headteacher