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Headteacher: Mrs J Narraway

10<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Dear Parent/Carer,

WARNING! This is a long letter so you may want to make a brew before you start reading it!

### Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Development

There is a palpable energy around Newchurch at the moment (more than usual) as both the children and staff are very excited about the changes that are about to happen in our outdoor space.



You may have noticed the mountains of tyres and pallets that have arrived outside of school lately which have been donated by members of our local community. Already, some of these have been put to good use as we start Phase One of our development.

As detailed in the newsletter, Phase One includes the introduction of the following:

- Wellie sheds
- Loose parts shed and loose parts (milk crates, tarpaulins, cable reels, plastic bread trays etc)
- Digging area
- Mud kitchen
- Music making area
- Role play/dressing up
- Arts and crafts
- LEGO table
- Tyre arch
- Pallet galleon
- Pallet and tyre storage
- Chatty hut – music and performance area

Before the holidays, we sent a questionnaire out to parents/carers to consult on whether you would be willing to include wellies in the school uniform expectations. The response was an overwhelming (and



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pleasing) YES! This will allow those children who seem to be magnets to the mud in the outdoor space to engage in their play and keep their uniform and shoes clean.



This week, we will be ordering our sheds which will house the children's wellies. We have made sure that there are enough sheds for all children to store their wellies in them.

Whilst we are waiting for the arrival of the sheds (4-6 weeks), we will be developing four key areas of our outdoor provision: **the mud kitchen, the musical hut, the digging area** and also **the galleon**. This is where we need your help to make the children's ideas a reality, and your trash to become our treasure!

## The Mud Kitchen



Having a mud kitchen in our outdoor environment will develop the children's socio-dramatic play which is important because it helps children develop language, creativity, self-confidence, and social skills.

How many of us as children made mud pies and potions/perfumes out of flower petals only to expect our parents and grandparents to buy it off us?

As stated before, we have a number of pallets available to use to create our mud kitchen but we need some help with the construction of them to create the units themselves. We are not precious about the design of the units but something like this would be great!



So...if you are at all handy and would be willing to give up some time to create these for us, we would love to hear from you. However, if you are not able to help in this way, there is another way you can contribute to the creation of our mud kitchen.

Do you know someone who is having a new kitchen and had a metal sink going to scrap? Do you have old microwave, kettle or toaster that is in the garage waiting for a visit to the tip? Let us take them off your hands as part of our provision for our mud kitchen.



Equally, you may have the following going spare at home:

- Old metal baking and muffin trays
- Metal cake tins
- Cutters that you no longer use
- Wooden and metal spoons
- Metal and plastic bowls
- Metal jugs and tea pots
- Metal and plastic plates, bowls and cups
- Old metal pots and pans

## The Galleon



If we are to be totally honest, this idea started off life as a boat! Why have a small boat when you can have a galleon?

This addition to the outdoor space supports the children's fantasy play, also known as pretend play or imaginative play, which is important for children's development because it helps them build social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

Yet again, we are calling on all those DIY enthusiasts who can use their carpentry skills to create a galleon/pirate ship out of pallets and other pieces of wood (all supplied by school, with the obligatory much-loved bunting). We would love something that looks like these, but very much open to any adaptations.



## Digging Area



Whilst continuing to develop the children's imaginative skills, the digging area (which we anticipate to be a very popular area) supports the children's perceptual, motor and physical development.

In order to access this area of the outdoor space, the children will need to wear their wellies. This is the area of our plan that is almost ready to introduce to the children once we have the wellie sheds.



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You can help us develop this space by donating any of the following things:

- Shovels
- Spoons
- Trowels
- Containers
- Watering cans
- Buckets
- Wheel barrows
- Plastic tubs
- Children's toys such as diggers, trucks etc

## Musical Performance Area and Dressing Up



We all know that our Newchurch Robins are exceptional when it comes to performing and so we wish to nurture this further. The children are always choreographing dances and singing. If you ever walk past school on lunchtime on a Friday, there is always music playing and children (and staff) dancing around. Once established, every day will feel like Friday!

We are going to make use of the chatty hut we currently have and make this into a 'Performance Palace' where children can dress up and perform. We have purchased an outdoor amplifier for the children to use.

In addition to this, we are creating a dressing up area for the children called 'Glad Rags' so we are looking for donations of:

- Hats
- Bags
- Sunglasses
- Feather boas
- Scarves
- Wigs etc

## Loose Parts Play



Loose parts play promotes children's imagination and problem-solving skills. With the loose parts, the children can build dens, create spaces of their choosing and make play opportunities with the materials available to them.

These materials may appear very random to us as adults but you would be surprised to see what the children make of them. In order to collect resources for this area of our project, we are going to have a class competition. Each class has been given an OPAL bingo card with the resources they need to collect. As a team, they need to see if they can fill their bingo card by collecting all the things on it. If they can get



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multiples of each item, that would be fantastic! For every class that completes their bingo card, there will be a treat! Please see the bingo card at the end of this letter.

### Teamwork makes the dream work!



As a staff we can keep chipping away at the changes but if we could ask for help with some of the construction and site changes, the children can be introduced to the areas sooner rather than later. Help constructing the wellie sheds would be amazing.

Therefore, to facilitate the construction of the galleon and the mud kitchen, as well as preparing the site for the changes, we are hoping to hold a Ground Force Day on **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April from 9:30am until 3pm** which is in the holidays but allows for the site to be clear. If you are able to support with the construction, decoration, planting etc please complete the googleform with your details and we will be in touch. You don't have to be an expert with power tools to get involved, there is something for everyone to do. Plenty of refreshments will be available. Here is the googleform:

<https://forms.gle/gjXeN8ePGREtW3b36> which will also be sent in a text.

### Collection of donation dates

Outside of the school, near the path, will be the location of our collection point. There will be a sign with details of what are collections for the week will be and bins, tubs etc for you to drop off anything that you think will be useful. So you can start rooting through your garages, cupboards, wardrobes, asking members of your family and the making connections with companies who may help us source some of our resources, here is a quick checklist of dates we will be collecting donations:

Dates	Collections of...
17.3.2025 – 28.3.2025	Dressing up clothes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hats</li> <li>• Bags</li> <li>• Sunglasses</li> <li>• Feather boas</li> <li>• Scarves</li> <li>• Wigs etc</li> </ul>
31.3.2025 – 4.4.2025	Digging area donations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shovels</li> <li>• Spoons</li> <li>• Trowels</li> <li>• Containers</li> <li>• Watering cans</li> <li>• Buckets</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheel barrows</li> <li>• Plastic tubs</li> <li>• Children's toys such as diggers, trucks etc</li> </ul>
22.4.2025 – 25.4.2025	Mud kitchen donations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old metal baking and muffin trays</li> <li>• Metal cake tins</li> <li>• Cutters that you no longer use</li> <li>• Wooden and metal spoons</li> <li>• Metal and plastic bowls</li> <li>• Metal jugs and tea pots</li> <li>• Metal and plastic plates, bowls and cups</li> <li>• Old metal pots and pans</li> </ul>
Every Friday from 17.3.2025	Loose parts bingo items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic cones</li> <li>• Cable drums</li> <li>• Milk crates</li> <li>• PVC pipes</li> <li>• Planks of wood</li> <li>• Bread trays</li> <li>• Old curtains</li> <li>• Old duvet covers</li> <li>• Plastic guttering</li> </ul>

We are sure you can see that this is a very ambitious project but one that will really transform not just our outdoor space, but the quality of play our Newchurch Robins experience. Not only that...it may put an end to those muddy shoes!

Many thanks in anticipation of your valued and unwavering support and thank you for taking the time to read this very long letter!

With kindest regards,

*Jayne Narraway*

Headteacher



# Loose Parts BINGO

How many of these can you collect? If you can collect more than one of the same thing, that is great!  
Remember, if your class manages to collect all the things on BINGO card, there is a treat!

		
Traffic cone	Cable drum (any size)	Milk crate
		
PVC pipes (any length)	Planks of wood (any length)	Bread tray
		
Old curtains	Old duvet cover	Plastic guttering (any length)



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