



Part of  
**OUR LADY  
OF LOURDES**

CATHOLIC MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Blessed Robert Widmerpool Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy  
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Head Teacher: Mrs L Maylard-Mason

Dear Parents,

In the academic year of 2024-25, Blessed Robert Widmerpool CVA will begin a programme to improve pupils' opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play.

In what ways, if any, do you think you benefited from playtime? Thinking about your own childhood, what did you like playing at school or at home? Children today don't have the same freedoms we once did, so we want to give children back time to really enjoy and learn from play.



**The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme** is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, your children also learn when they play. As 20% of their time in school is playtime, we want to make sure that this amount of time (equivalent to 1.4 years of primary school) is as good as possible.

One reason BRW is carrying out this programme is that childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met out of school.

- Average screen time per day is six hours.
- Average outdoor play time per week is five hours.
- Percentage of UK children who only play outdoors with other children at school is 56%.

There are many proven benefits for schools that carry out the OPAL Primary Programme. They usually include: more enjoyment of school, less teaching time lost to disputes between children, fewer accidents and greatly improved behaviour.

Play is not messing about! It is the process evolution has come up with to enable children to learn all of the things that cannot be taught, while also having so much fun. There are certain things children **must** have in order to be able to play. These include:

- Having clothes that they can play in.
- Having things to play with.
- Having a certain amount of freedom.

If you would like to see an example of an established 'OPAL' school in action, take a look here:

[OPAL Playtimes](#)

As BRW starts our OPAL journey to improve play opportunities for your children, you may find us requesting resources (and any building skills/contacts you may have!) from you and making changes





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about how the children use the school grounds. They may use more of the grounds, for more of the year. Your children may get a bit messier, be exposed to more challenges and have greater freedoms to play where, with whom and how they like. The experiences the school is fostering are essential for children's physical and mental wellbeing and are in line with all current good practice advice on health and safety, wellbeing and development.

BRW will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and there will be an opportunity to come and talk to the OPAL mentor at your child's school. If you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please have a look at the OPAL website ([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)), where you will find lots of useful information and several videos about the programme.

In the coming 18 months you will be invited to events where you can come and see for yourselves what is happening and have the opportunity to join in too.

We are really excited about this project and hope that you will support us in our efforts to improve playtime for all children.

Finally, we value your views and would appreciate knowing more about what your opinions on play. Please complete a quick survey here:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeOLKftHncchsx0hpeGENlnx96EiCVEGorC-ZD5XNGOlfgbkg/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeOLKftHncchsx0hpeGENlnx96EiCVEGorC-ZD5XNGOlfgbkg/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Best wishes,

Mrs C Hautenne (Acting Head-of-School)

Ms W Syalon (OPAL Mentor)

