



Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) CIC

May 2026

Congratulations on achieving your second Platinum OPAL Award! This is a remarkable milestone that recognises the commitment, creativity, and perseverance you have shown in building the conditions for rich and meaningful play at Holmer Lake Primary School.

Your journey so far has been an inspiring one. By setting up clear systems and a whole school approach to play, you have created a culture where children feel a genuine sense of permission to play in the ways that matter most to them. The freedom to play across ages, and to explore such a wide variety of play types, is having a tangible impact on children's enjoyment, wellbeing, and development.

The passion, drive and dedication of your team shines through, and Mrs Watson deserves special recognition for the role she has played in helping to make this possible. It is clear to see how deeply OPAL play is now embedded across the whole school, and the impact this is having is truly inspiring.

There is a real sense of permission, freedom and adventure in your playground. The joy, creativity and engagement from children of all ages is wonderful to see, and it's clear that something very special has been created. You really have created a little bit of magic for the children at your school, and that is something to be incredibly proud of.

Holmer Lake Primary has shown true leadership in play. Your Platinum Award is richly deserved, and we cannot wait to see how your plans continue to unfold in the years ahead.

With warm congratulations,

Kaleigh Atkinson, OPAL West Midland



T: 01761 462991 M: 07870 284517 E: opalcic@opalcic.org

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk



@OPAL_CIC



OpalOutdoorplay

Registered Office: Dingle Cottage, Street End Lane, Blagdon, Bristol, BS40 7TW Company No: 7659212 VAT No: 207537807

Children &
Young People Now
Awards 2023

Winner



Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) CIC

End of OPAL Primary Programme audit record sheet	
Name of school	Holmer Lake Primary School
Date	Wednesday 4 th March 2026
Name of OPAL mentor	Kaleigh Atkinson
Names of OPAL working group	Harv (HT); Helen (AHT and Curricular Lead for Play); Anna (AHT); Katie (new Curricular Lead for Play)

Definitions of scores: score between 4 and 1, with 4 being highest			
4	Excellent	2	Emerging, improvements desirable
3	Good, improvements possible	1	Underdeveloped, improvements needed

Score Total	
(max score 72)	70.5
Percent Score	
(score / 72 x 100)	98%
Award Level	
Silver 65-74%	
Gold 75%-89%	
Platinum 90%-100%	



T: 01761 462991 M: 07870 284517 E: opalcic@opalcic.org

www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk



@OPAL_CIC



OpalOutdoorplay

Registered Office: Dingle Cottage, Street End Lane, Blagdon, Bristol, BS40 7TW Company No: 7659212 VAT No: 207537807



1	Leadership, Policy and Communication (max score 12)	Score	Progress/Evidence	Next Steps
1.1	<p>Champions and identified leaders: Has identified long-term strategic planning roles, operational leadership with protected time and a champion Governor for play. An OPAL Working Group (WG) meets regularly, at least every half term, with recorded meetings making key decisions to sustain play. The Curricular lead and Play Coordinator roles must be written, agreed by the school's governing structure and included in school structure documentation.</p>	4	<p>A strong working group is still in place, with Harv, Anna and Helen meeting and discussing OPAL regularly. Katie will come on board to join the Opal working group after Easter and has a TLR for her OPAL role. SLT are on duty every day and are still recording and opal updates on CPOMS so there is rigorous whole school communication in place.</p>	
1.2	<p>Policy and Planning: Play policy, strategy and action plan in place, ratified, easily available and parents, children and staff are aware of them. The school has a Charter for Play (or equivalent), and a live Grounds Master Plan is in place. Policy summary in staff/parent induction pack. Article 31 UNRC acknowledged and actioned within school.</p>	4	<p>The original play policy is still in place and is shared with any new parents. There is a slot in the new reception meeting and OPAL is also presented to parents of any in year transfers. During the prospective parents meeting in October, there is also a tour of the playground and introduction to OPAL. Holmer Lake have also adopted a full active uniform. There is a reviewed grounds plan in place, and the team are always discussing their next areas for development. The areas for development which are currently in the pipeline include climbing domes, hammocks and more swinging opportunities.</p>	



<p>1. Communication and participation: Play is regularly communicated and celebrated (awards) with children, parents and staff. Play assemblies are held regularly. The Play Team are coherent, with a clear delivery and reflection process, their work celebrated internally and externally. The Governors (or equivalent) are aware, understanding and supportive of play. School often communicates with parents via website, newsletter etc. Play events for staff and parents are regular. Governor visits are recorded and shared with Governing body.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Play assemblies still take place around every half term with additional ones available if needed. These still follow the CINI format and also link to school's SMARTER code. The children really enjoy the celebration aspect and Helen ensures that they celebrate all different play types. Sometimes, they will put together an RBA in assembly with children and feel that the children are really tuned into how to manage the risk in their play environment now. Assemblies also feature an OPAL quick quiz and play awards. Recently, they have introduced secret play detectives which the children have responded really well to. Child play rangers- meet every half term and wear hi vis in the playground to stand out. They write a big wish list at each meeting- sometimes this is for new equipment and sometimes it might be reintroducing something that had phased out, e.g. they wanted combat corner back and more utensils in mud kitchen. There is a new opportunity to join the play rangers twice a year. Children are proud to hold this responsibility with one child's attendance especially improving since becoming a play ranger. A learning walk checklist is in place for SLT to monitor opal- check everything is functioning and that everything is kept to a consistent standard. SLT currently do two duties a week, one in the hall to support with free flow lunches and one outdoors. The play assemblies are attended by teaching staff too, so everyone holds a shared standard. All new</p>	<p>Katie to join OPAL college.</p>
--	--	------------------------------------



			members of the staff team are asked to include a lunchtime observation as part of their induction. New play team members buddy up with other members of the team to learn about the different zones, before taking over a supervision range. All members of staff completed the RAPID training in September, using Opal College.	
	TOTAL /12	12		

2	Access and Inclusion (max score 12)	Score	Progress/Evidence	Next Steps
2.1	<p>Equality of access: Equality of access for all children to an integrated and rich play offer regardless of gender, ethnicity, special needs or social and emotional states. Clearly defined spaces for calm, sensory and refuge. Integration of all ages. Children's choice and right to play are respected in their time. Article 31 respected and play not withdrawn as a punishment. Appropriate clothing is available to all regardless of income. There is sufficient challenge for all children of all heights and ability.</p>	4	<p>The levels of inclusion within the playground are high, with all play needs are met through the rich and varied play environment. Those children with additional needs are openly accessing all areas and Helen ensures she asks individual children with specific needs if they need anything amending to allow them to access. There is a calmer area in the play shed which is quieter and was effectively used whilst introducing the reception children to before OPAL play. There is no longer a need for 1:1 support in the play environment due to the high levels of engagement.</p>	



2. 2	<p>All-weather and seasonal access: all the site is accessible and used, appropriate supervision practice is in place to allow for this. Appropriate footwear and clothing is expected for both children and adults. Wet play is rare and all staff know the criteria. Surfacing has been addressed to ensure all weather access. All weather and messy play clothing available, adaptations to grounds surfacing to increase use is evident. Suitable storage and systems for wellies are in place and work well. Matting and specific flooring reduces mess on boundary areas.</p>	4	<p>Muddy play is very much on the agenda at Holmer Lake!! The children are now Out in the majority of weather- only need to stay in if there is torrential rain or it's really icy. The outdoor provision stays the same, with everything accessible apart from the fancy dress and cardboard. Over the winter period, the team do rest some areas of field as it becomes very boggy. To ensure the woodland area remained useable over the winter, the team covered it with a thick layer of wood chip. It's evident that the mud slide has been well used in the winter too! The school now have a good stock of waterproofs and wellies for all children to access. These are looked after and are stored under the canopy for easy access. Brooms and welly brushes are available, and the children keep these areas clean and well maintained.</p>	
---------	---	---	---	--



2. 3	Extended access: the play offer is available before and after school and, where possible, included in holiday and other provisions that use the site. Informal access to the improved grounds – opportunities for regular stay and play, parent visits are enabled and supported.	4	Parent play sessions now take place every term and are used as a fundraiser for OPAL by offering a tuck shop. These are well attended with around 70 parents at each session and lots of positive feedback shared from parents. An OPAL after school club is led by Alisha and the wraparound and holiday club provision also use OPAL areas with their own RBAs in place.	
	TOTAL /12	12		



3	Care and Maintenance (max score 8)	Score	Progress/Evidence	Next Steps
3.1	<p>Care and maintenance/replacement: no litter, sustainable planting, rewilding of site and maintenance regime adds to play value. The play team has a budget for consumables or a system in place for ordering. A replacement process is in place, regular appeals for loose parts via bingo, treasure hunts or similar, contacts with local businesses made. System for broken loose parts and replenishment. (If no field, effort has been made to regreen and incorporate natural play affordances) Site care plan or systems in place.</p>	4	<p>At tidy up time, each class is responsible for an individual area, with their teachers joining them in that space to do the final check. SLT do daily scan of each area when on duty and Helen does a Friday HS check on different loose parts. There is an 'OPAL Hospital' area in place for things that break during week and these are then checked as to whether they can be fixed or need to be thrown away. CPOMS is still used effectively to log risks and issues arising for OPAL- everyone checks that daily so share alerts are shared quickly. The team have been active in finding local support for their OPAL grounds. A local handyman has made some lovely social spaces in the woodland area. They also access the Veolia reuse centre in Telford as a charity- giving access to a range of loose parts and wheeled play. Parents buy in is good and they still donate a small amount.</p>	



3.2	<p>Health and safety: Daily, weekly and termly inspections in place and regular including external inspections of play equipment and tree inspections/surveys. A process in place for new resources and safe enough checking systems. Loose parts bin on site, children aware of procedures. Children and adults are all aware of the process to manage damaged loose parts. Suitable safe storage in place. Recycling in place where possible. Children and adults understand the risk-benefit approach and engage in dynamic risk assessment as appropriate. All personnel involved in decision making, from governors to SMSAs, are trained in the risk-benefit approach. Everyone working with or making decisions for children should have information, knowledge and application of the risk-benefit approach. Children are active, informed, experienced and competent in dynamic risk management of their own play. Through play assemblies, all staff interactions and signage, children are supported and trusted to manage the day-to-day risks and challenges their play offers, prevent accidents for themselves and their peers and learn from their own mistakes. Parents are informed, updated and understand the approach.</p>	4	<p>Thorough RBAs in place for different areas- these are shared in assemblies with all children and staff. The play team are fully engaged with the risk benefit approach, and this approach is fully embedded. Children take their inhalers out in an orange bumbag, and all staff have an asthma list on their lanyards and do spot checks every week in bumbags. There are also two emergency inhalers in the playground if needed. The play team are now feeling far more confident in supporting riskier play and will call for support from SLT to clarify and share what they have discussed with the children. There is Lots of communication as a team and a common voice is building throughout the team. Risks- wheeled trolleys; tree climbing; scrambling in bushes. Editing RBAs in light of concerns or accidents/ near misses. Children adept at RBA.</p>	<p>Use your play assemblies to show examples of more adventurous play from other schools- discuss what children would need to be checking for/ saying to each other etc. This will allow you to give the children ideas of that they might make with the loose parts but also develop that strong dynamic risk management skills.</p> <p>Watch Tea with OPAL sessions as a play team- find a mini presentation that fits something you are working on, such as Playwork 101; Risks and Benefits etc- watch and discuss these as a team.</p> <p>When introducing larger loose parts (pallets, cable drums etc), put some posters up to remind of safe handling- e.g....</p> <p>If it's bigger than you, it takes 2</p> <p>If it's longer than you, it takes 2</p> <p>Build, Use, Climb... NEVER at the same time</p>
TOTAL /8		8		



4	Staffing (max score 12)	Score	Progress/Evidence	Next Steps
4. 1	Staff training and practice: Play team have a good understanding of playwork practice, the application of a playwork approach is evident and at least one member of the team has more advanced training. All Play team members have completed the playwork essentials training. Playwork practise is evident in the play team's work. OPAL college being utilised by the Play team. Annual INSET refresher training planned.	3	Each zone has responsibilities attached to it- still requires a lot of encouragement in terms of active supervision and asking them to enhance the areas. In terms of behaviour management, SLT discuss how to step in earlier and be suggestive rather than leave and need to be authoritative. An annual refresher is in place for RAPID and OPAL discussion.	Revisit the playwork essentials or potentially look at PARS playwork level 2 for Katie. Use OPAL College as part of play team meetings- 5 minutes of collecting ideas and 10 mins of planning for next half term in their areas as a whole team approach. Maybe righting a half termly review of each space- or keeping a play team journal will help the team reflect on how the children have been playing and how they might develop and enhance this.



4. 2	Play supervision and management: Play team have training and development time, are recognised and well managed. The play team meets for at least 20 minutes at least six times a year to plan, reflect, evaluate and improve its playwork practice. The play team and play team members are valued and included as whole school staff. This may include team photos, appropriate work clothing, recognition and praise. Play team members have line management and professional development. Training needs are identified and provided for. Plan in place for regular training to include annual RB Training and Playwork Training. Systems in place for introducing new play team staff members to OPAL and ensure training undertaken.	4	As a small team, there is good communication in place at all times. The TA's get dedicated time together on each CPD day. Official OPAL meetings take at least every term and half term if possible. The whole team are well equipped for all weather play with wellies and water proofs and a good attitude! There is evidently good communication and relationships between children and adults. Training needs for new staff are in place. The team change supervision zones regularly, but their strengths and skills are used effectively. Helen line manages the team well.	Us the TA meeting time to plan for play too!
---------	--	---	---	--



4. 3	Supervision practices: Clear practices in place to support play, manage queuing, tidy ups and behaviour issues. The school has a written plan of where and when direct, remote and ranging supervision is taking place. Supervisors have an active role in increasing and enabling a rich play environment. Tidy up time should not exceed four minutes. Children should be encouraged to tidy up efficiently and quickly and any kind of lining up should be minimised. Queuing should be minimal (if at all) reviewed and evaluated. Playground and school behaviour policies should be fully integrated and children's play needs respected.	4	The whole site is well supervised, with adults secure in their role. SLT support on the playground every day too. Children in KS2 now have the opportunity to eat lunch whenever they like- this free flow approach to lunch means that they are able to eat in mixed age groups and that children have a real sense of agency within that lunchtime hour. There is a real sense of flow around the play environment- no area feels too busy or dominated and no children are queuing for a turn on anything. Tidy up time is quick and effective with all children playing their part.	
TOTAL /12		11		



5	Play Value (max score 28)	Score	Progress/Evidence	Next Steps
5.1	<p>Fabricated loose parts: Opportunities to play creatively with a wide variety of fabricated loose materials, accessible to all, distributed across the site and stored in ways that are sustainable. Storage of appropriate size in relation to the number of pupils and loose parts required. Children can get pieces out and tidy away easily. There are a large variety of small, medium and large loose parts available. Children can independently access and put away materials. Small world toys are available in a protected space. Separate small world boxes for animals, cars, figures etc. Small world rockery/garden. These are kept separately from the loose parts, so they don't get mixed up and lost.</p>	3.5	<p>There is a good supply of loose parts around the entire site. These are well maintained. Children can independently access and put away resources and small world is now in the play shed which is a calmer and protected space. On the wish list are some large plastic pallets. The team have hammocks ready to go out once the play assembly has been held.</p>	<p>Start to include more big stuff on the field!!! Consider where you can allow for building over a longer period of time (such as a week) and demarcate this for the children. Move the large items from behind the current den to allow for better access. Use some photos from opal college to show what is possible!</p> <p>Water play- include a water source on the field too. Extend the water play area with a larger supply of loose parts (guttering/ pips etc).</p> <p>Tinker table/ investigation station- taking apart old electronics etc.</p> <p>Use the play team to create brainstorms for water play/ arts and crafts using Opal college and the bright ideas book.</p>



5. 2	Natural loose parts and materials: Opportunities to change the environment/space with natural loose parts – sand, water, soil, messy play (café/lab). Children can access nature whatever the play space available. There is a sandpit large enough for at least ten children to play in comfortably. Children have access to water in their daily play. Children have access to large messy kitchens/café/laboratories with nearby suitable materials. Children can access plants with which they can interact and which provide resources for their play. Children have access to plentiful natural loose parts, e.g. rocks, stones, logs, leaves etc.	4	Excellent use of the natural environment- children have access to sand, water, soil and nature in their daily play and there are lots of opportunities to interact in the way they wish.	
	Social Spaces: small, medium and large spaces available across the site are attractive, varied and interesting, with materials available for children to create their own spaces. Where large expanses exist, children are given access to large loose parts, such as road barriers, tarps and plastic crates, which are suitable for the creation of multiple temporary social spaces.	4	There is a lovely variety of social spaces around the playground, including the play shed, small wooden huts and the caravan. Lots of tarpaulins and equipment are available for children to make their own shelters. During the summer, gazebos are introduced for shade.	Ensure a range of cushions, fabrics etc for summer social spaces.



5. 3	<p>Movement and Journeys: Opportunities to move around the site in many different ways. Upper body strength and vestibular development is provided for. The environment encourages movement and offers physical challenges for all children. Opportunities available where children can swing, hang upside down, climb. Children can access a variety of inclines, height and steps, slopes and levels. This is achieved through: tarmac bumps, varied topography, grassy mounds, astro and wood chip mounds. The environment enables and encourages children to move freely in multiple different ways. Children move in many ways – running, tumbling, crawling, wheeled activity, rocking, swinging, balancing, climbing and moving around freely using their whole bodies.</p>	4	<p>There is a great range of wheeled play available, including trikes, scooters, pushchairs and wheeled chairs. These are all checked regularly to ensure they are safe enough. Scooters can be used across the site, with larger wheels staying in the bottom playground.</p> <p>There are swinging and hanging opportunities on ‘Spyder’- the new climbing frame that the school have fundraised for.</p> <p>There will soon be more swinging opportunities as hammocks are ready to be added to the environment.</p>	<p>Make sure there are no exposed metal handles on the scooters and bikes.</p>
5. 5	<p>Affordance, variety and imagination: the site has a wide variety of ways to affect change and stimulate the imagination. Dressing up clothes are provided and maintained. Music is provided and operated by children. The site has a large variety of different materials, structures, opportunities and play affordances available. It is deliberately designed to provoke and</p>	4	<p>The team have thought carefully about increasing the affordance across the site. They have invested in a good quality speaker so that music can now be heard clearly. There is a good range of dressing up by the stage and an increased amount of colour and art around the playground which has been made by the art club.</p>	<p>More roles play equipment- e.g. old electronics.</p> <p>Even more colour and movement- bunting, an art gallery etc.</p>



	<p>engage children and young people’s imaginations and encourage fantasy, role play and discovery through, for example, sculptures, found objects, natural features, designed features and imaginative signage.</p>			
5. 6	<p>Ball games: a wide variety of ball games are on offer – but they do not dominate. Non-football play is protected from balls. The needs of non-footballers and footballers are proportionally represented in the allocation of time and space. The ability to experience and enjoy ball games and sports is not determined by age, gender, confidence or ability. Strategies are in place to allow improved experience across age, gender, confidence and ability. Provision is made for a full range of ball sports and for multiple games to take place across different spaces rather than one large one.</p>	4	<p>Ball games are still popular, although they don’t dominate a space in the playground anymore. Basketball available but not football. Howlers are working well to fulfil the need for long games on the field and are enjoyed by the older children especially.</p>	<p>Introduce Cricket and Rounders on the field.</p>



5. 7	Access to nature: The site, regardless of location, provides opportunity to engage with nature, planting and natural features. These include trees, bushes, plants, shrubs, wildflowers and long grass, sand, water, rocks, and a variety of levels. There is also a range of visual and sensory stimuli. In a hard tarmac playground, efforts are made to introduce planting and nature as much as possible. Children have all-year access to natural areas. A plan is in place, involving staff who maintain the grounds, to offer seasonal variation in nature play. Planning for planting and maintenance considers children's play needs all year round.	4		
	TOTAL /28	27.5		