

21/3/23

Dear Parents and Carers,



Blue Coat Primary School achieves OPAL's top award!

Yesterday, Blue Coat Primary School undertook a rigorous assessment from OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning). This involved an inspection of our outdoor play and learning provision for children as well as our strategic planning and management. We are delighted to announce that we were assessed as Platinum, the highest grade given for a third time. We were further awarded OPAL's highest accolade in being given their Honours Award.

The children have an amazing experience during play and outdoor provision at Blue Coat. This is as a result of the hard work and dedication of many members of our school community but, most notably, the Play Team. Donna, Tash, Kelly and Denise are fantastic at ensuring that children have a great experience every single day. Mr Haynes is constantly ensuring that his work within the team and also as the site manager focuses on providing children with an environment conducive to play. They are all led by Mrs Wharin as the play co-ordinator who has done an exceptional job in ensuring that Blue Coat has the highest standards of play.

Below is the commentary from OPAL:



“Huge congratulations to Blue Coat primary on achieving your third platinum OPAL award for outdoor play, and being awarded OPAL Honours school status. This is a significant achievement and one the whole school can be very proud of. It puts Blue Coat as one of the strongest schools in the country for the quality of their outdoor play provision. The school has demonstrated sustained commitment to high quality outdoor play for all their pupils. The team are strong advocates for children's right to play (as outlined in UNCRC article 31) and demonstrate this through their strategic planning, their play policy and daily practice. Play is not restricted to sunny, summer days or delivered by an external practitioner. Outdoor play is an established and valued part of the school's culture. The school community play together every day, whatever the weather. Together with Blue Coat's Forest School approach, this means that pupils at Blue Coat get to play and learn outdoors all year around, making the best of their fantastic grounds.

During the play observation, every child was active. I observed children swinging, scooting, climbing, digging, building, dancing, and playing sports. The grounds are well developed for play, hosting real boats, a giant outdoor stage, a 50 tonne sandpit, huge mud kitchen, chill out zone, meadow areas and sports pitches. There is a richness to the landscape and resources that promote creativity and imagination, fuelled by a well-stocked 'scrap shed'. The school has a Play Team that work together to open the whole site for play for all of the year, and support the children to learn to manage riskier and adventurous play. This team is successfully led by Play Coordinator Jo Wharin. Staff governor Kiri Smith observed that 'playtime feels like a huge party'. Curricular lead for play, Gwilym Evans leads school play assemblies and the school's pupil council, the 'Future Leaders', work so that all pupils have their say in future play developments. The school's site manager Jon Haynes plays a crucial role in maintaining the site with play opportunities in mind. Blue Coat's parent community has been supportive throughout the OPAL journey, providing waterproof coats and wellies of the children, donating scrap items for play, assisting with site work and the PTA continue to offer financial support. Head Teacher Glyn Jones has prioritised play and understands the value and benefits that play brings to the school community, and how it fits with the school's 'Future Ready' vision and Christian values of Respect, Responsibility, Creativity and Happiness. OPAL Honours status is an achievement for the whole school community, and the school is a national exemplar for primary school play.

Congratulations Blue Coat!”

Glyn Jones
Headteacher