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Head of School: Ms N Edwards Chief Executive: Mr B Spinks



Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025

## Dear Parents/Carers

William Byrd School is about to start a programme to improve opportunities for physical activity, cooperation, coordination, resilience, imagination and enjoyment through improved play. After all, it is a child's basic human right.

The Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Primary Programme is the result of over 20 years of testing and development in over 800 schools and has been used in Spain, Canada, France and New Zealand. In 2018, OPAL won first prize in an EU-funded award for the best active school's programme in Europe and two UK national playwork awards. In 2019, OPAL was awarded a quarter of a million pounds by Sport England to bring the programme to many more schools.

OPAL 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 the school 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 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.

As the school improves play opportunities for your children, you may find the school is asking you for resources and is making changes 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.

The school 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 (<a href="www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk">www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk</a>), 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.

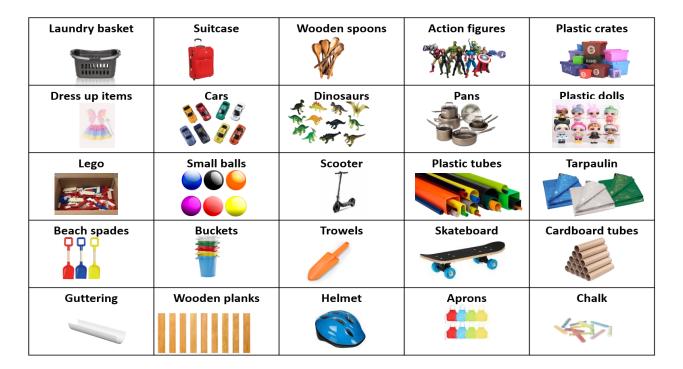
## The Bingo game:

During this week's assembly, the children have been introduced to a Bingo game (please see attached). The game has a list of resources we are gathering to support play at lunchtime. Every time a child brings an item from the list, it gets crossed over and the winning 3 classes, who collect everything from the list, will get a fun treat at the end!

Barnhill Community High | Belmore Primary Academy | William Byrd Primary Academy



## Get ready to play... OPAL BINGO



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

Best wishes, Ms N Edwards **Head of School** 

