



Newsletter Friday 18th July 2025

OPAL news



We were assessed last week and are thrilled to tell you that we have received our second Platinum Award, one of only five schools in the country. Ingrid, the assessor, wrote this:

On behalf of the entire OPAL team, I am absolutely delighted to offer our warmest **congratulations** on achieving your second OPAL Platinum Award—the highest level of accreditation within the OPAL programme. This is a remarkable and rare achievement that reflects your school's outstanding commitment to creating a rich, inclusive, and empowering culture of outdoor play. Platinum status is not awarded lightly. It recognises schools that go above and beyond in transforming the quality of children's play experiences. Your journey is a shining example of how creativity, courage, and whole school cultural change can come together to make a lasting difference in children's lives.

At Leyburn Primary School, your approach to outdoor play has been both innovative and inspiring. I would particularly like to highlight three exceptional aspects of your provision:

Firstly, your creative grounds development features are wonderful. The access to the natural environment, including your woodland with hammocks, slacklining, and opportunities to build dens, provides excitement and adventure. The array of loose parts, mud kitchen, sand pit, water zone, and daily music

further enrich the children's experience. Children also have access to a designated sports zone and can be seen scattered everywhere across your playful site. This diverse environment offers children powerful opportunities to develop a multitude of skills, socialize with friends, develop physical literacy and confidence, and test their limits in meaningful and exhilarating ways.

Secondly, it is clear that children feel trusted and cared for at Leyburn. I had wonderful conversations with children who genuinely enjoy their daily playtimes, love coming to school, and respect their friends' needs and differences. The children are adventurous, resilient, and show positive regard for one another. Your playground truly feels like a festival where everyone participates and chooses their own activities.

Finally, your inclusive approach to supporting children with SEND and being trauma-aware highlights the school's commitment to enabling children to feel valued, safe, and connected. Both children and staff are able to be empathetic and offer exponential emotional support on a daily basis. This is combined with the specialized support for children with SEND who now have access to sensory playful spaces and tailored opportunities to play across your site.

This fantastic achievement could not have been possible without the vision and dedication of yourself as Headteacher, your key Leads, Hannah and Kelly and the creativity and commitment of your staff and play team, and the energy and imagination of your pupils. Together, you have created a play culture that is vibrant, inclusive, and alive with possibility. The impact on your children is clearly visible: they are more confident, adventurous, and connected. Your behaviour, attendance and school uptake has dramatically improved and children are learning vital life skills through joyful, self-directed play—and building memories that will last a lifetime. Your leadership continues to inspire others, and we are proud to celebrate your achievement as part of the OPAL community.

You are now well on your way to becoming an OPAL Honours school, this is a school who has achieved 3 consecutive Platinum OPAL

awards and shows exceptional commitment and sustained excellence in all areas of play in a primary school.

National Year of Reading 2026



As part of the National Year of Reading, we're encouraging all our families to keep the love of reading alive over the summer break. Reading just a little each day can make a big difference to your child's confidence, creativity, and learning. Here are some fun and simple ideas to help keep reading going during the holidays:

- **Visit your local library** – Many libraries run free summer reading challenges with fun themes, stickers, and rewards.
- **Read together** – Sharing a book with your child, even for just 10 minutes a day, builds vocabulary and creates special moments.
- **Create a summer reading corner** – A cosy space with some favourite books can inspire quiet reading time.
- **Take books outdoors** – Read in the park, in the garden, or even at the beach for a change of scene.
- **Try audiobooks** – Perfect for car journeys or winding down before bed, and great for reluctant readers.
- **Start a mini book club** – Encourage your child to read the same book as a friend, sibling, or grandparent and chat about it together.
- **Explore different genres** – Try comics, poetry, fact books, joke books, or magazines to spark new interests.
- **Keep a reading journal** – Children can draw pictures, write reviews, or note

favourite quotes from what they've read.

- **Let them choose** – Giving children the freedom to choose what they read helps build enthusiasm and independence.
- **Pair books with activities** – Read a story about cooking, nature, or space, then do a related activity at home.

Let's make this summer a season full of stories, imagination, and fun. Happy reading!



There are more ideas on this great [blog](#):

Here's a great start locally:



When we return in September, we will be asking you to share some of the ideas that you have tried and to be part of a family group to support reading for all of our children.

A Big Thank You to Our Parents and Families

As we come to the end of a fantastic school year, we want to say a heartfelt thank you to all our parents and families for your incredible support. Whether it's joining us for picnics, sharing lunches, reading with the children, or helping out on trips and visits — your involvement means the world to us.

A special thank you for supporting sports days, donating items for our OPAL playtimes, organising the uniform exchange and contributing so generously to our wonderful PTFA. These acts of kindness and community spirit help make our school a truly special place.

We couldn't do any of this without you so thank you!



And finally....

We would also like to say goodbye and thank you to Mr Clifton who has worked with us at Leyburn over the past two years, teaching in Years 1 and 2. We will all miss him

Have a great summer everyone, especially our wonderful year 6s who said a final '**farewell**' to us today, before the next stage of their lives begins.

