

# Growing ideas

A child's play space can be easily filled with artificial turf, plastic and metal, but it takes some courage and vision to look beyond the easy standard fit, and build something that stirs a child's soul and unleashes their imagination.

Walford's Jubilee Secret Garden, located in their Junior School, recognises the need for children to flourish in a natural environment that stimulates both their imagination and their physical wellbeing.

Walford head of Junior School Rainer Mayer says the garden harks back to a time when young people were encouraged to find their own ways to play, interact with space, and layer their environment with fantastic adventures.

"Parts of the garden are dynamic enough to allow the girls to influence it – to build, dismantle and rebuild again and again," Mr Mayer says.

"It is a very tactile space that draws upon many elements and engages all their senses."

The garden is filled with robust plants that can tolerate inquiring minds and quizzical fingers. Water from a wine barrel flows along a watercourse and empties into a sand pit, encouraging experimentation and dirty hands.

From setting the water play in motion, organising activities in the shop, experimenting with the sound wall, building with tree branches or performing on stage, it is clear the garden helps initiate collaboration and participation



amongst Walford's Early Learning Centre and Junior School students.

Walford principal Rebecca Clarke says the garden is rich with opportunity for learning.

"Our teachers are making excellent use of the lessons it provides," Ms Clarke says. "The garden is truly a place of exploration, of creativity, a place to grow understanding." ●