

Case Study Template



Project Title:

Developing play at Ashley School

Healthy Schools Theme:

Physical activity and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

School Context:

Walton on Thames Surrey

Number of pupils: 540

	Pupils	School	National
% English as additional language (EAL)	6.9		21.3
% Free School Meals		1	14.6
% SEN		10.6	12.2
% SEN Statement		2.2	3.1

Identified Priority:

To improve play time for all children and continue to develop our outdoor areas prioritising the courtyard. It was recognised and identified that children needed more exciting and meaningful outdoor areas. A play questionnaire was carried out Summer 2017 as a baseline. The questions covered happiness, feeling safe, rules, managing risk, adult advice as well as finding out which areas and equipment the children value most.

Outcomes:

Original outcomes (Silver Award)

By Summer 2017, 75% of pupils say their playtimes have improved.

The understanding of play as an extension of learning has been shared with children, parents, governors

and staff.

To encourage our children to become more confident, be better negotiators and reconnect with the natural world and harness the benefits that being outdoors can bring.

Provide areas which encourage unstructured play/loose parts.

Outcomes (Gold Award)

Parents and children will be aware of the progress we are making in our outdoor spaces.

By Summer 2019, 75% of pupils say playtimes have improved.

Our school will have clearly defined areas in the playground and enhance our current provision so that all children have spaces to play.

Juniors will be protected from the elements so that they can use the courtyard area all year round for play and for learning.

Activities / Interventions:

Year 3 children to design a plan for the courtyard as part of their DFC project.

Message sent out to whole school via the newsletter to ask for second hand toys, games, drawing equipment etc.

Year 3 to organise a timetable for a 'Courtyard Crew'.

Boot/trainer sheds built at the edge of the field. Welly racks installed outside classrooms.

Implement qualified member of staff specifically in Play work to manage and coordinate all play related activities.

From the courtyard designs, storage has been ordered and built such as storage benches, storage sheds for beanbags and other soft furnishings. Trellis to allow for the children to grow plants and flowers in containers. Shade sail to provide shade in the summer and protection in the winter. Games and books. Lego wall with Lego. The courtyard now provides a wonderful quiet and safe area for those junior children who require a calmer play time.

Courtyard Crew – Daily timetable in place which has enabled the courtyard to be used every lunchtime.

The Courtyard Crew is made up from Year 3 children with set adult supervision each day. They organise games, manage positive behaviour and supervise the tidying away of equipment/games.

Parents sent in toys, games, paper/colouring books that they no longer used at home for the children to use in the courtyard at playtimes.

Main playground

Trainer sheds for Year groups 3- 6 and welly racks for year groups R, 1 and 2 installed and children are now able to go on the field at all playtimes throughout the year.

Play Coordinator has been put in place to maintain and run all outdoor areas ensuring that equipment is maintained and kept safe and secure and that the Play Leaders are appropriately coordinated.

Impact:

What has been the actual impact?

Our children have year-round access to our field and a greater choice of playtime activities. They are becoming more creative, imaginative and resilient in their play. Anecdotally, there has been a reduction in accidents and incidents since our children have access to the field. Children also have access to the 'Courtyard', a quieter area that is manned and led by the children in Y3 and overseen by an adult.

Did you meet/exceed your original expected outcomes? How do you know?

Yes. 79% children are happy and busy at playtimes exceeding our target of 75% (Summer 2017). We carried out a survey in May 2019.

What was the original baseline data? What was the final data that you captured?

Baseline data was a survey carried out in December 2017: 66% of our children are happy with their playtimes – a

12% increase on the same time period in 2016. Our target is 75% by May 2019.

We decided to give ourselves an 18 month period before we collected new data as there were a number of 'infrastructure' projects (such as play storage and courtyard organisation) to complete before we could introduce new initiatives to make our outdoor spaces / playtimes more diverse, stimulating and meaningful.

So – did 75% or more (what was your data) pupils say playtime has improved?

79% children are happy and busy at playtimes compared with 66% in December 2017. Data based on the results of a survey carried out in May 2019.

Do parents, children, governors and staff understand that play is an extension of learning? How do you know?

We have worked very hard to involve the whole school community in 'The Play Project' since its inception in 2015. Governors received termly reports on what has been happening; the parent community has supported changes to our outdoor spaces through regular fund-raising and Working Parties (to dig large sandpits, clear outdoor learning areas etc.).

At the beginning of the academic year (2018-19) staff were introduced to the theory of "Messy Play" at an Inset Training day: this highlighted play within our school; encouraged staff to help children manage risk and shared the philosophy behind constructive play and children's health and well-being. Staff hold termly 'Teacher Play Dates' to connect with the children and encourage imaginative play, or teach an 'old-fashioned' game (What's the time Mr Wolf).

Our Year 5 play leaders take great pride in their role and often take the initiative, running lunchtime 'Mini-Olympics' / Tournaments; Lego-building challenges or Chalk-drawing competitions. Our Sports Providers run regular athletics / netball / football sessions during lunchtimes, focussing our more sport-orientated children. Each Year group has been allocated an outdoor play area to supervise: for example, Year 1 are Willow Warriors and year 2 are Sandpit Samurai, supervising the lunchtime use of our sandpit.

Through organising and running the quieter space in our courtyard, our Year 3 teams are learning practical communication skills and responsibility. We have clocks in three key areas of our outdoor spaces which encourage / embed time-reading skills as well as a supply of tape measures and large compasses which can be used with chalk. Children often take their learning into their play: construction with Deckciting blocks elicits teamwork and talk of balance / safety / potential and problem solving skills and will frequently reference topic / enquiry work.

"When my son comes home and he has sand in his shoes, or a smudgy top, I know he's had a good day." (parent of Year 1 child)

"It can be tricky being part of the courtyard crew because you have to organise people" (Year 3 child)

"Please come and see our volcano – it's a fine example of teamwork!" (Year 5 Child) "It's a sand processing plant. The dirty sand goes in here and then it gets cleaner as it goes through all the sieving..." (Year 4 child)

"I like the courtyard because there's so much to do – Top Trumps, Chalkboards or building. It's quieter" (Year 3 child)

"The children are eager to tell me what they have done at play and lunchtimes – it's not just complaints" (Year 2 teacher)

Are pupils more confident etc?

Our SEND children have benefitted enormously from the greater diversity of play options. They feel 'safer' in the courtyard because it is more intimate and quieter: here they can read, draw, construct with lego / k-nex or play top trumps. There is a marked improvement in fine(er) motor skills and balance and co-ordination. Our children love playtime: we know because they are keen to share what they have done / achieved during their 'free time'. Children are constantly re-inventing ways in which to use our tyres, large and small: the loose parts are endlessly re-configured in ever imaginative ways. Recent visitors to our school have commented on the wide range of opportunities and rich play environment in our school.

"I like the hammock because it makes me feel safe - and it's bouncy." (SEND child Year 2)

Next Steps:

Plant mature tree in the centre of the courtyard to provide shelter, shade and seating area for children. To continue to develop the mound, this will change the shape and structure of the field but also allow children to play on it.

Play Coordinator to work with schools within the GST to share good practice and support them to develop their play areas.

Further Play work training to be investigated for support staff.

For our play areas to be accessible and to have accessible equipment for children with SEND.

I.E. Create an accessible path on the field for wheelchair/walker users all year round.

Senior Leader Quote:

'The transition, development and improvement of our outdoor space has drastically improved the wellbeing of the children. Playtimes are engaging, fulfilling and exciting. Different opportunities are available for those who want to climb, build and explore as well as those who prefer quieter zones to read, draw or play. Due to the large loose parts accessible, children are allowed to manage their own risks. Staff question and engage to enable children to think about the risk factors themselves and adapt appropriately'.

Juliet Rayner
KS1 Phase Leader

Photograph(s): Photos available to see on the Ashley School website under 'The Play Project'.