

Use and development of the school grounds at Roseburn Primary School, Edinburgh.

Morag Boyd
LtL Accredited Professional
Tel: 07936 159914



[Type here][Type here]

Introduction.

An assessment visit was carried out to Roseburn Primary School on Monday 21st February 2022. Time was spent viewing the grounds as they are, observing the children's use of the grounds. Sessions were conducted with pupils across the year groups, and observations carried out at playtime and lunchtime. Discussions held with the head teacher and playground supervisors. I also had the opportunity to speak with teaching staff and with a small group of parents.

An informative tour of the school grounds was carried out. The children took part in a session identifying how they felt about the existing facilities and what they would like to be able to do at playtime. I observed the children using the playground at break and lunchtime and took time to chat to them about their likes and dislikes at this time.

The school and existing school grounds.

Roseburn Primary School provides non-denominational education in the North West of Edinburgh. The school has around 260 children in P1 to P7 with 11 classes, and 30 children in their separate nursery building within the school grounds

Outdoor space is of a good size for the number of children within the school, but mostly laid to tarmac. There are good range of facilities and resources, these are discussed below with photographs. However there is plenty of opportunity to further develop and enhance the opportunities for learning and play within the grounds. There is a small wildlife garden that could be developed with learning opportunities in mind, an outdoor classroom that has given some concern for safety and a range of existing opportunities such as a small climbing wall (underused), a fixed tunnel that could be developed into a more extensive play area

What we did – the format of the visit.

1. Tour of existing playground with head teacher and then with parents.
2. Observations of children's use of existing facilities and discussions with playground staff.
3. Discussion with teachers
4. Session with children.

What we saw - the grounds as they are now and how children use them and some suggested management strategies and interventions.

This section presents the different areas of the grounds as I saw them during the visit and as I saw them being used by the children. It addresses some of the concerns about the use of the areas and makes suggestions about how to extend play, what interventions may be appropriate and initial suggestions for progressing ideas. Further ideas are given in the section – *Summary of Ideas* with visuals to provoke your imagination when planning.

Roseburn Primary has good sized grounds, wrapping around the school, with a small area to the front used by the infants and a larger area to the back, used by the older children. There are many good points about the existing grounds, there has been thought and consideration put into the range of opportunities offered for play and, less so, for learning. However, health and safety considerations have required a few items to be removed in recent times. There is plenty of scope for small and larger scale interventions to be made, however. The map below shows the layout of the grounds.



Most of the grounds are laid to tarmac. There is little variety in the underfoot surfaces within the grounds, but where there are, children are drawn to these different surfaces.

The photographs below show the current range of facilities within the grounds. The use of these are discussed. Ideas for expansion of the different facilities will also be discussed in relation to the photos, with ideas for entirely new interventions discussed in the “*summary of ideas*” section.

[Type here][Type here]



Front playground. Used by primary one and two. This is the first area arrived at on visiting the school. We discussed making it welcoming and increasing opportunities for play within this long thin space.

Observation.

The children, as always, fully utilised the small number of opportunities offered – the wall was used to climb and sit on. The ramps to the school entrance to run up, to sit on and to hide from friends. The netball hoops were used for climbing (when not observed) and the benches mainly for putting jackets, with the occasional short period of sitting. Considerations.

The space is very long and thin and some more active children were zooming around.

Benches are located along the edges with a couple of planters, again often used for sitting or putting jackets on. Whilst this is a small space, it may be beneficial to break the space into smaller areas, to slow down the running and allow those who don't want to participate in fast paced activities small gathering areas to group in. It is still, however, important to maintain adequate space for physical exercise.



In this area there are few interventions – it is crying out for the railings to be used – for example for weaving materials, for attaching den building kit to, for creating water play areas. The wall space on the ramps could be used to place climbing holds – a traverse wall at low level. OR simply inserting a few heavy-duty eyes to allow attachment of different materials on a temporary basis – tarpaulin to provide a “graffiti wall” – easily washed down and put away when not in use. Easels could be hung from the walls to allow art activities outdoors or use of paper – class time spent outdoors without having to chase pieces of lost paper, large art in an outdoor space that can be relocated indoors when complete. Blackboards could be attached to the walls for informal or class use.

The wall edges of the playground would be the obvious place to locate some permanent, lockable outdoor storage that could house outdoor equipment in a way that children can access it – relying on playground supervisors to take out and put away resources is never satisfactory.

There is no outdoor shelter and limited seating in this part of the playground – I think this is a vital facility to introduce, along with more seating that enables children to gather in groups. Shelters and seating could be positioned in such a way that it breaks up the long running strip and provides sheltered and “safe” zones within the area, so that quieter children are not pushed to the edges by more robust children. For images see the *Summary of Ideas* section.

Back playground.



An extensive area laid almost entirely to tarmac. Within the area surrounded by high walls and railings there are a range of planters, a tunnel, an area designated for football, a fixed, double sided blackboard, a short traverse wall, a variety of individual seats and benches, and a friendship bench.

observation

Much of the playtime activity in this area was playing football and basketball. The tunnel was, today, little used and the blackboard was used for making marks with water as no chalk was available. Children gathered on the circle of soft surface left behind after removal of a climbing frame – this was used for sitting and lying on. The steps at the back of the nursery building were

always occupied by children sitting, climbing and jumping. There was little conflict between children using the space.

Again, there are few areas of shelter and seating is unimaginative and mainly linear. Grouping seating provides more social opportunities and enables the development of friendship groups, calms playground wildness and reduces the exclusion of children to the edges of active areas.

Outdoor classroom

[Type here][Type here]



Within the rear playground is the wonderful, open, outdoor classroom. There was some discussion about the safety of the classroom as highlighted in a recent ROSPA inspection. Benches around the edge of the building were considered to encourage the potential for children to fall over the timber walls. On observation of the children's use of the classroom during break there was little indication that the children were at any level of risk – those that did stand on the seats showed awareness of any risk and did not appear at any risk. Options to remove risk include infilling the “windows” with Perspex – I feel this would lose the outdoor quality that the classroom offers. IT may be possible to “rail off” the lower part of the opening, but in my mind, this would encourage climbing and higher risk. Removal of the benches from the edges would lower the risk and replacement seating towards the inner area could replace them. However, this would reduce the useability of the space for teaching. If the options are to remove the classroom altogether if the risk level cannot be lowered, then the final option would be my choice.

Wildlife garden

[Type here][Type here]



I loved this space! With an overgrown willow arch that requires some maintenance, raised beds, walled, enclosed, intimate space, I think this area lots of potential for learning. The area was popular with small groups looking for space away from the bustle of the playground, and individuals wanting time alone. I would like to see more learning opportunities in the way of the installation of flap doors and trap doors (further information in the Summary of Ideas section). Perhaps a small pond (additional information as before). Children could get involved in investigating the wildlife that uses the garden – carrying out observations and surveys of what they see there. They could create interpretive panels to display information about the creatures and plants that live there, investigate what best to plant to encourage more wildlife and follow through with maintaining the planted areas. Introduction of a few, small, trees was discussed. In a small area like this it would be sensible to choose trees carefully, selecting small, native understory types such as hazel, small willows, hawthorn, maybe crab-apple. Larger trees would quickly overwhelm the small area.



Adjoining the wildlife garden, it was lovely to see a well-maintained bottle greenhouse. Kudos to the school!

The puddle!



This area provoked some discussion with playground staff – it was hugely popular with the children, less so with staff dealing with wet and muddy children after play. But as you can see from the picture it is much used for investigation. At any time there was always a child in or close to the water. How to manage the play?

[Type here][Type here]

This area drains away when the weather is dry – on the day of my visit it was sunshine and heavy showers. The area offers interesting learning opportunities – qualities of materials, weather, science – evaporation etc. This appeared to be the only puddle that forms in the grounds for this sort of investigation. It would be a shame to remove this opportunity and the pleasure that children get from using the area.

I would investigate the opportunities to ensure children using this space are adequately clothed – wellies on and allowed to play. Trainers – no. Formalising the space with seating or a different surrounding surface, some playground painting that indicates appropriate use perhaps. Make it into a feature rather than a problem. Provide loose materials to encourage building of bridges to traverse the area, perhaps more solid blocks to create moveable stepping stones.



Planters.

A strength of the existing playground – there are a good range of strong and attractive planters, with imaginative locations. I would like to see seating associated with the planters to enable children to sit within more natural surroundings. Grouping seats and perhaps



shelters around existing planters would be an easy design starting point. The existing “Kindness bench” is well used – I saw children using it and being approached by others, I saw children who were hurt using the kindness bench as a quiet place to recover their composure. I also discussed its use with supervisors who said it was a good place for them to spot children who were unhappy or left out and intervene.

Climbing frame and trim trail

The photograph below shows the remnants of the trim trail after health and safety considerations required the removal of the climbing frame. This is much missed by the children – climbing and jumping is an intrinsic part of physical play and without the formal climbing area, children are forced to, and will, climb on anything and everything that offers itself. Replacement of the climbing frame is something that requires serious consideration.



This was a particularly popular part of the playground, but not just for climbing on – it was used for seating, for “hanging out” with friends (often groups of children climbing and hanging and talking around this area). It would be good to extend and improve the trim trail, linking it via other physical challenges to the tunnel and beyond.

[Type here][Type here]



Playground surfaces.

The rubberised, soft surface that used to be underneath the climbing frames is still used by the children. It acts as a gathering area, a place for sitting on the ground, lying down, grouping objects. Their use of this surface demonstrates a need for variety underfoot. In an almost entirely tarmacked playground some thought needs to be given as to how to break this up – there are a range of possibilities – grass (if grassed areas are introduced, creation of mounds and hummocks could be included), sand – from a small enclosed sand pit, to a large “beach” area (see Summary of Ideas for more information). Areas that are edged and hold gravel, as paths or sensory areas, areas of bark chips, Astro turf, raised stepping stones, circles of different textures. Again considered in relation to other interventions such as seating or zonation of quieter and more active areas.

General observations and comments.

The weather on the day of the visit was dull and showery. This clearly affected the choices of activities the children took part in. There were few resources for the children to play with – balls for football and basketball. The blackboard didn't have any chalk provided – but children improvised using water and bouncing balls in puddles and onto the board – maybe provide water and paintbrushes as a clean alternative to chalk?

In conversation with individual children during break I was told that they wanted more access to equipment – this has increased recently as covid rules have eased and should continue in this vein.

What we were told – the good, the problems and the aims for improvement.

Discussion with teachers.

In discussion with the teaching staff it was discovered that there is a positive desire to take learning outdoors, but that opportunities in the grounds are seen as low. This may stem from a lack of confidence in the variety and range of outdoor learning that can be undertaken and may indicate a need for further training in outdoor learning.

Lack of shelter, lack of outdoor storage and lack of natural surroundings along with the need for simple, starter ideas, contribute to reticence in taking learning outdoors.

Collating this information, it seems there is a desire to take learning outdoors and to have the school grounds developed in a way to support this. Literacy and numeracy were highlighted as opportunities. It seems that the grounds do already offer some of the opportunities, however teachers' confidence and ideas could be supported.

Recommendation: develop teachers' outdoor learning skills through training in taking learning outdoors – literacy outdoors and numeracy outdoors may be good starting points.

Developing outdoor resources – water play areas, sand play, stimulation for literacy and numeracy would be beneficial. The introduction of varied opportunities would not only expand playtime activities but could be used to develop outdoor learning.

Loose parts play is something staff, parents and children find desirable. The issue of storage for loose parts must be resolved, with child accessible storage being essential and children trained how to take out and put away materials used. Given the array of materials required for a successful loose parts play strategy, it is essential that a well-structured, well organised and well managed system is put in place, with materials being accessed and put away by children, broken materials identified and separated/replaced, and everything returned at the end of break time.

We also discussed the issue of wet weather restrictions and whether the provision of more outdoor shelters would encourage children to want to stay outdoors in the rain.

Session With the children

[Type here][Type here]

A session was run with the children to identify their feelings about their outdoor environment.

Likes and dislikes.

The children were asked to identify resources, areas and activities in the existing grounds that they liked. These are things to keep or improve.

Resources and areas of the grounds we don't like (Helpful in identifying things we need to address, change, improve, remove).

Children at Rosebank were generally happy with their grounds. They enjoy the space to run and play. Most of the dislikes were linked to things they felt were missing – and things recently removed, a resistance to change.

There was desire for sheltered areas, a quiet place to go to get away from the busyness of the playground, the lack of seating and there being no grass.

Current activities.

When asked what they currently do in the playground, a range of activities was given, including playing football, playing on the trim trail, relaxing and chatting to friends, tag and running around games, lots of different imaginary games, and playing games organised by playground staff. Sports activities were popular, hide and seek, and playing with the limited equipment when it was made available. A full list is in the appendices.

This activity highlighted a lack of variety within the playground, and some conflict between the different activities the children want to undertake.

Things they would like to be able to do.

Finally children were asked to select pictures of different environments and describe what they would do if they were there. This activity enabled children to think of things they would like to do.

From responses to pictures, there were a variety of activities the children would like to be able to do. They would like areas to take part in physical activities such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing, hanging upside down etc. They want opportunities to run and to hide. To be with friends and to be alone. To sit in groups and to lie down in the shade. To have a party with friends and conversely just to stand alone and enjoy the surroundings.

The children would like opportunities to take part in creative activities such as art, drama, singing, dancing and listening to music. They also wanted the opportunity to build things – from dens to treehouses.

They would also like opportunities to gather with friends in comfortable and sheltered areas, to read, to hide or be alone.

Natural surroundings were also mentioned frequently – being able to pick flowers, smell flowers, play in amongst flowers. Run in and out of trees in a forest.

Water and sand play areas were also selected frequently in this activity.

(see *appendix 3* for full list of responses to photographs).

What we can learn from this.

From these discussions we can identify a need for a broad range of play and learning experiences outside for children of all ages in the grounds at Roseburn Primary. We identified a huge desire from both staff and children to improve the opportunities within the playground for play and learning. We also identified a desire to encourage biodiversity, and children’s connection with nature, and a general interest and enthusiasm in developing more open ended, free play for children of all ages.

We identified several issues with the grounds at Roseburn and discussed potential ways to address these as part of the ongoing improvement project. Examples included –

We discussed the potential for learning and play of loose materials. Further support from LtL would be available to source and suggest ideas (see below for more information on loose materials). It is important to ensure all playground storage facilities are child accessible and that children are trained in the putting away and bringing out of resources and ways of managing broken items. This enables the children to self-select resources and reduces the burden on support staff.

During the visit we discussed the requirement to develop a plan to take forward ideas into reality. The appendices of this report offer some ideas about how to take discussions and plans forward, involving the whole school community. It is important to get parents and carers on board, the idea of extensive outdoor learning and play, and the requirement for adult support, can be a stumbling block, and so parents should be involved from the outset.

Next Steps - Developing a school grounds plan

There are many ideas that need to now be progressed into actual solutions. The school now needs to undertake some activities with children and staff to decide how to turn these ideas into on the ground solutions, and to prioritise what will be done first.

1. Establish a playground group to help continue the consultation with the whole school community and plan the identified improvements. Group members should include staff representation, support staff reps, Parent Council reps, pupil reps and the Janitor.

2. Create a consultation display by developing a base plan (or an aerial map printed from the internet) showing the footprint of the building and the surrounding grounds, using the attached example photos, pupil drawings, comments and quotes to identify potential improvements and suggested locations. Grounds for Learning have developed different approaches for carrying out consultation. I have attached some ideas for consultation activities in the appendices.

3. Prioritise - using feedback from the school community regarding your grounds plan, identify your priorities (for example very popular ideas, quick wins or improvements you know you can access funding for). Try to identify resources that will fulfil a variety of functions or resources that can be grouped together to meet need (for example the addition of a stage for drama, dance and music, but which would also serve as a place to gather a class during a lesson outdoors).

4. Identify what support you need to achieve your goals. Ask three questions:
 - a) What resources can the school community develop themselves, for example through classes linking improvements to a current topic, an eco-action day or parent action day? What resources can you request, or source, for free?
 - b) What resources can be simply purchased from a catalogue and delivered, for example additional outdoor chest storage or seating?
 - c) 3). What resources are you going to need external help to implement, for example from the local authority, a landscape or play contractor or an artist / craftsman?

Once you have a prioritised list of ideas, you have identified the locations, you have identified what the school community can do and what you will need help with, the last stage is to think about implementation.

Implementation.

The first step is to group the improvements into timelines. What can be achieved NOW? What can be achieved SOON? What can be achieved LATER (with later being the next academic year, for example, because it will require more fundraising or specialist support or it's simply not an immediate priority). Set timescales that suit you as a school community.

Share the outcome with the whole school community. When you have identified what the school community can do, in terms of implementing the plan, divide the responsibility up, for example is there an aspect of the project that a class or year group could take on from start to finish as part of a related topic or as an enterprise project? Is there something that the PTA / Parent Council can be responsible for implementing? Would it be useful to contact a volunteer organisation to request help with labour support?

Organisations that may be able to help include -

[Type here][Type here]

- - TCV <http://www.tcv.org.uk/scotland>
- - The Princes Trust
<https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/where-we-work/scotland>
- - Business in the Community Scotland
<https://www.bitc.org.uk/business-in-the-community-scotland/>

Communication

It is important to communicate the new vision with all parties – staff, parents, children, neighbours. **Parents** may be able to offer practical such as providing donations, offering labour or resources.

Playground support staff need to be part of the process of change from the outset and may need support with developing the way in which they supervise children to allow more open-ended free play and allowing children the opportunity to be out of view, for example.

Ongoing communication with **children** will be important with regards to developing responsible play, involvement in implementing change, the importance of supporting each other, maintenance and taking care of their grounds.

Teaching staff may also need support - new outdoor spaces offer new opportunities, and often staff need support to implement outdoor learning. It can be daunting, even for experienced staff.

Finally, don't forget to contact the **authority** to let them know about your plans, for example the Clerk of Works or Asset Management. Permission will need to be sought for any planned, longer term landscape changes and there may be underground services or building regulations you need to be aware of. Discussions with Land Services may be required if the developments introduce any grass areas that need mowing.

Summary of ideas

Below is a list of ideas generated during discussions with staff, HT and children in our session at Roseburn Primary School. I have also added in ideas of my own that may not have been discussed but are worth considering. Following The extended consultation that the school needs to carry out, you may have additional ideas to consider. These are a starting point.

Quiet areas and areas to sit and relax.

At present there are few specific areas where children can sit quietly, either by themselves or with friends. The playground is a good size and there are many opportunities to create spaces with different purposes. They would benefit from areas with seating, shelter, calm areas perhaps with associated planting and a natural feel. One of the biggest issues raised by children was the lack of quiet space.

Additional photos of some seating ideas are located in the appendices.

Places to hide and be alone.

The children love to hide. The adults are not so keen! However, through the development of seating areas, nature areas and active areas, the number of potential hiding places should increase dramatically. The selection and positioning of planters, seating areas, benches and the like should be considered as well as the primary purpose. Some areas should be carefully designed as areas where one or two children can go to get quiet space. Both staff and children may need training and support to ensure these areas are well and appropriately used.

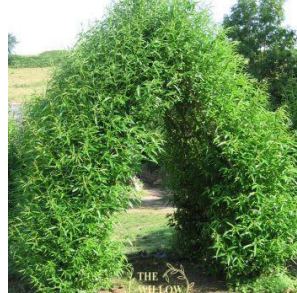


Willow structures.



The existing willow structure requires some maintenance. The new shoots require weaving back in to restore the shape of the structure -perhaps a class could take this on as a project? Maybe they will choose to create additional structures using planters elsewhere in the grounds. Some examples of willow structures are shown below.

[Type here][Type here]



Creative areas.

The children were keen to be able to become involved in creative activities at break time, such as art, drama, singing and dancing. A graffiti wall is can be very popular with children . This can simply be implemented initially by hanging plastic sheeting on a wall or fence and allowing paints to be used. This can then simply be washed down to create a new blank canvas. A simple and immediate solution. Blackboards could also be created using plywood and blackboard paint and situated on the many walls around the playground, for use during learning and play.

For drama and performance play and learning, an outdoor stage would be well used by children at break times and more formally for lessons. This provides a focal point for creative play, with storage of resources. This may take the form of a raised platform or stage, giving opportunities for outdoor performances, music and dancing during playtime or more formal class led activities. Incorporated into this area could be storage units to allow the storage of outdoor art equipment, outdoor musical instruments, or indeed any outdoor equipment. The children enjoy when they are allowed to use chalk during playtimes. This could be stored in this creative area. Perhaps this could be an area where outdoor art created in class is displayed.

Various options are available for stage construction depending on budget and permission given:

- Low budget/temporary – pallets with boards to create a flat surface.
- Mid budget – involve a joiner in creating an area of wooden decking
- More expensive – an off the shelf stage installed by a manufacturer



The addition of a low level, locked storage chest in this space could be used to store related play equipment, for example props and dressing up clothes. Poles could be installed to support the addition of a temporary shade sail or tarpaulin over the top and slippery wood when wet can be avoided by the addition of friction strips or using anti slip paint

Nature areas

The wildlife garden.

The wildlife garden is a wonderful oasis of peace tucked away within a corner of the grounds. The area is coming back into positive management and an effort needs to be made to keep it under control and to further develop what it offers. See the next section for descriptions of trap door beastie viewing opportunities.

There are plenty of other opportunities to bring nature into the grounds. The introduction of more permanent and movable planters into the grounds would offer the opportunity to demarcate areas as well as provide shelter, hiding places and offer learning opportunities.

- Use planters for growing plants to harvest as well as plants for wildlife and beauty. There are lots of potential locations for growing fruit and vegetables all around the grounds for the benefit of all. Keep costs down by using recycled and/or repurposed containers. Some examples you might like to consider are:
- Tyre stacks (3 or 4 high, but different heights together also provide interest). Line with weed suppressant membrane, stone in the bottom and top soil.
- Belfast sinks work well and can be sourced from architectural salvage yards e.g. <http://www.hargreavesreclaimedflooring.co.uk/architectural-salvage/4557232140>
- Wooden whiskey barrels – either half size or full size – again lined with weed suppressant membrane, stones in the base and imported soil. These are easily obtained from Ebay and Gumtree.
- Glasgow Wood Recycling Project will build raised beds to any size or shape using recycled scaffolding boards (all sanded / smooth and they can be treated or painted if required). Their recycled timber seats are just gorgeous – well worth considering for your new seating areas. <https://glasgowwood.org.uk/>
- Recycled plastic planters that can be built up to any height simply by clicking the boards together <http://www.linkabord.co.uk/>

- Plant in grow bags and hanging baskets – herbs, small onions, tomatoes, wild strawberries etc. Easy to maintain, can be spread around the grounds and can be taken home to look after in the holidays.
- Source chunky wooden sleepers to use as edging for raised beds. Readily available from most large garden centres and places like Wickes, e.g. <http://www.wickes.co.uk/Products/Gardens/Garden-Decor/Garden-Sleepers+Raised-Bed-Kits/c/1000733>



In addition to plants, the nature area could include log piles, flap doors and trap doors (flap doors are squares of fabric (try lino, old carpet, doormats, secured to the ground with tent pegs, and provide minibeast habitats that are easily viewed before being replaced in the same spot, trapdoors are similar, but made out of wood)), planters can be used to make ponds and bog gardens on a small scale if large scale ponds are not viable.

If there is an area within the grounds which is naturally boggy, consideration could be given to turning this into a **bog garden**. This is a fairly simple alternative to installing a **pond** (which could also be considered) and involved digging out the area, retaining the soil, lining the hole with pond liner and then

Within the wildlife garden, creation of a pond could be considered. Discussion with the local authority will be required as different councils have different policies regarding ponds within school grounds. A pond is a marvellous learning resource. This could be a small Belfast sink pond, or, slightly larger, conversion of one of the planters into a pond.



[Type here][Type here]



Mini pond made from a ceramic sink

Bug hotel.



<https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-families/family-wild-challenge/activities/build-a-minibeast-hotel/>

Fencing and walls can be used as areas to place bug small hotels or bird feeders. These are all lovely projects for classes to undertake.

Opportunities for physical play.

Feedback from the children and support staff highlighted the popularity of the trim trail. It is an area that many children want to use, and it could be beneficial to invest in extending and enlarging this facility. Given there is plenty of space available to the school, it would make sense to locate new equipment in another

part of the playground. However, it may also be an option to link the existing remnant of the trail to the tunnel with an extension section.



Through the consultation activities it should become more apparent what the importance of offering larger scale climbing, sliding, hiding, swinging physical apparatus is. There is plenty of space within the grounds to install this sort of equipment and many innovative, attractive and versatile designs to choose from, or you could go the route of installing bespoke active play apparatus. Installation

of this type of equipment may well be beneficial, but is a long term, high cost option that would be further down the line in terms of securing funding, Above are a couple of examples of equipment installed in other schools.

Provision of play equipment.

[Type here][Type here]

We discussed the importance of equipment storage being accessible to the children and organised in such a way that they can not only self-select equipment but put it away after play. We also discussed the importance of training children in how to do this and in implementing a system that ensures broken equipment is identified and repaired/replaced. We also discussed with the parent council the potential for part of their fundraising each year to be dedicated to outdoor play equipment.

A stock of loose parts play materials is essential to implementing a successful loose parts play strategy, in addition there needs to be a strategy to introducing them to the children. Play with loose parts is not always as constructive as it is wished for. Planning, introducing, and sustaining loose parts in the primary outdoor space would also help maintain continuity with the experiences children currently have within the nursery – an experience that is currently lost once a child transitions from nursery to P1. LtL can help with planning and introducing resources, with training for staff, with writing risk benefit assessments, with examples of ways to communicate with parents etc.

This recently published guide to loose parts is useful. It has a great user-friendly summary and we, along with several other organisations and individuals, contributed to its contents.

<https://www.playscotland.org/loose-parts-play-toolkit/>

Some of the keys to success and long term sustainability include planning, variety of materials, establishing routines, child friendly access and use for both play and learning. As the nursery children already have access, the parents (that will become P1 parents) will have more of an understanding of value.

Recommendation – LtL's Loose Parts training may be beneficial for supporting greater success in introducing loose parts to the staff and children.

The school will need to carry out further consultation to identify other outdoor play equipment (which should include creative play such as music, drama, art).

Outdoor storage.

There will be a requirement for additional secure outdoor storage facilities. Options would be, for example, a reading shed and low-level chest storage in a quiet area containing games, books etc, a suggested new stage area should incorporate storage containing props and dressing up materials.

To help support self-selection and tidying away consider establishing a rota of older pupils (say P6 reps who can then pass on their knowledge when they move up to P7) to help lift out materials from storage units onto the tarmac for children to select and also receive resources back at the end of play to return to the unit. This helps remove the likelihood of a bottle neck of children all trying to access the storage unit at the same time and also the chances of the materials being piled up inside the shed. It would also be worth considering a 'broken box' by the door for

[Type here][Type here]

materials that are returned to the unit at the end of the session but identified as damaged or broken. They can be placed in the box and then recycled, rather than being put away.

Water and sand play areas

The railings around the playground make water play a simple proposition. Simply made with a water butt, pipes and guttering, water play areas can easily be created. There are many different learning and play experiences to be had and this should not be limited only to the younger children. Likewise sand play is easy to implement, manage, and can be used as a learning tool too. Large scale sandpits can provide opportunities for science, maths, and creative learning.

This [article](#) on Creative Star Learning's website gives fabulous ideas for a simple water play area.



To finish up:

This report summarises the discussions and activities undertaken on our day with Roseburn Primary School. There is some way to go to take these ideas and move on with a workable plan. Appendix 1 gives some examples of activities you may like to undertake with staff and pupils to gather further and more detailed information and

[Type here][Type here]

to help prioritise ideas. I would also suggest that you take the opportunity to visit (with pupils if possible) other schools that have developed their grounds in a way that inspires you. If, at any time, you need more support from Learning Through Landscapes, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I hope that we will have further opportunities to help you take your vision further.

Morag Boyd
Grounds for Learning accredited professional.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Activities to use for consultation sessions.

Appendix 2: Useful links.

Appendix 3: Responses received through open ended photo activity

Appendix 4: Additional seating ideas.

APPENDIX 1

Activities to use for consultation sessions.

Activity 1 – observation

Activity 2 - What do you think?

Activity 3 – creating a breaktime diary

Activity 4 – Voting on a carousel.

Activity 1: Observation

One of the best ways to see how your grounds are used is simply by observation. Below are just some techniques you can use to observe what is happening in your grounds:

| **Make a plan** of your grounds and observe how individuals move around the grounds during playtimes. You can focus on one individual at a time and for a limited period or the whole of a breaktime. Mark on the map where they go and note if they stay put in any particular place for a period of time. Note what they do and where they do it. Do this for several people from across the school community, ideally over a number of days and even at different times of year, and/or in different weather conditions.

| **Use photographs** of moments in time – take them from the same places in the grounds at different times of day to see how the grounds are used throughout the day.

| **Video** is a useful way to record what is going on in the grounds. If you make simple observations at specific times it is often surprising what you miss! If you make videos, however, when played back you can often spot something in the background that you wouldn't have otherwise noticed!

| **Finding out how specific features are currently used** is also very useful. Is the play equipment really getting use that is proportionate to its cost or would future development be better focused on different types of provision?

© 2014, *Learn and Play Out, Learning through Landscapes*, Routledge

Activity 2: What do you think?

You can find out a lot of information using questionnaires, but in order to do this you need to ask the right questions in the right way. Questionnaires can be completed by pupils, staff, parents, governors or the wider community. Pupils may be able to design questionnaires themselves, or you may need adults to put them together. To a certain extent it will depend on who you are asking to complete the questionnaire. When devising your questions, think about:

- | what you want to know?
- | the questions you need to ask to get useful answers
- | the age and ability of those filling in the questionnaire
- | the language and literacy skills of those filling in the questionnaire
- | what format the questionnaire might take. For example, you could use:
 - an online survey (such as Survey Monkey)
 - a written questionnaire
 - open-ended questions. These may be harder to analyse, but allow for people to express a wider range of ideas and issues
 - images as well as or instead of words.
- | how are you going to analyse the information you are gathering?
- | how are you going to present the results?
- | who will you present the results to?
- | how are you going to use the results?

© 2014, *Learn and Play Out, Learning through Landscapes*, Routledge

Activity 3: Creating a breaktime diary

Use this activity to gather information about how different year groups and boys and girls each use their school grounds during breaktime. The activity could also be repeated throughout the year to see how different seasons affect play.

What you need

- | a large sheet of plain paper or card
- | crayons, paints etc. Pictures from magazines or drawn by the pupils representing different activities
- | stickers or similar for recording.

Preparation

- | Encourage discussion about the different kinds of games/activities pupils take part in at breaktime. With older pupils discuss too the different spaces within the school grounds and what activities generally take place where.

- | Find pictures from magazines or encourage pupils to create their own pictures of these different activities.

- | Either individually or in small groups, get pupils to prepare a large sheet of paper or card representing each day of the week across one axis and each activity along the other. Decorate it with appropriate pictures. The chart could also include tick boxes for different outdoor spaces, and an opportunity to record the weather each day.

What to do

The aim is for each pupil to record the different games/activities they have taken part in during each breaktime over the period of one week. Provide different coloured stickers or crayons for girls and boys.

Extensions

- | Using maths and/or ICT skills, find different ways of analysing and representing the information gathered – for example, most and least popular activities, the differences and/or similarities between boys' and girls' activities, the impact of the weather on

[Type here][Type here]

activities etc.

| Make temporary changes to the school grounds – for example, restricting access to certain areas, changing flow with temporary barriers – and create a new breaktime diary to evaluate the effect.

© 2014, *Learn and Play Out*, Learning through Landscapes, Routledge.

Activity 4: Voting on a carousel

This activity can be used to look at what pupils would like to do at playtime but can also be used by everyone to gather a range of information.

1 Mark three large sheets of paper each with one of the following headings 'Active', 'Quiet' and 'Other'.

2 In small groups ask pupils to think about things they would like to be able to **do** in their grounds – this could include activities they do already but should also include those they would like to do but can't now. Get them to focus on verbs rather than nouns so you get 'we want to be able to play football' not 'we want Wembley stadium'.

3 Get them to put their ideas on sticky notes so that they can be stuck appropriately to the headed paper. Check ideas aren't repeated.

4 When this is done each person in the group is given three votes (sticky dots) and they can use up to three on each sheet. They can use their votes as they like – for example, three dots on one activity if they really, really want it, or one each for three different ideas – they decide. This voting usually gets rid of any silly ideas that were put on for fun.

5 When the voting is complete it should be clear which ideas are most popular, and which are low down on the priority list. Everyone also knows that they all had the same number of votes – whether the headteacher or youngest pupil!

This activity can also be carried out with people pretending to be someone else – for example, a midday supervisor or Year 1 pupil.

© 2014, *Learn and Play Out*, Learning through Landscapes, Routledge

APPENDIX 2 – useful links.

I would highly recommend you visit the Creative Star website. Packed full of not only school grounds improvement ideas, but outdoor learning lesson plans and much more.

<https://creativestarning.co.uk/c/developing-school-grounds-outdoor-spaces/>

Bug hotels:

<http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk/thingstodo/inaweekend/bug-mansion.asp>
[X](#)

Bird feeders, mammal habitats:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/downloads/how_to_poster/

Bog gardens:

<http://www.froglife.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Bog-garden.pdf>

Sand play: <https://www.ltl.org.uk/resources/results.php?id=455>

<http://www.rospa.com/play-safety/advice/sand-play/>

The area of the LtL website that focuses on risk and challenge in school grounds, including all our current risk benefit assessments such as play and learning with loose materials) can be found via this link:

<https://www.ltl.org.uk/spaces/managingriskinschoolgrounds.php>

ideas for growing plants:

<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/home>

[Growing vegetables in school gardens / RHS Campaign for School Gardening](#)

APPENDIX 3

Responses received through open ended photo activity

The responses made in this session can reveal a lot about wants and wishes for their playground area. They are given the opportunity to think about things they want to be able to do, as opposed to things they want to have. It's well worth reading through the responses.

- Picked a picture of a colourful garden – “good for sensory”; “good to just plant things in”; “plant flowers”; “plant seeds”; “hide and seek”; “hide in bushes”; “jump obstacles”.
- Picked a picture of a cave amongst trees – “good for time alone”; “if you want to tell your friend something private”; “fun to play in”.
- Picked a picture of a fallen tree trunk carved with steps and climbing holds – “factory games”; “climb and play”.
- Picked a picture of a grassy hump with steps up it and sloping sides – “sleep on it”; “I would walk around it”; “play with my friends”.
- Picked a picture of rugs and towels on the ground – “reading station”; “relaxing”; “drawing”
- Picked a picture of sand in a desert – “I would play in the sand”; “desert games”; “writing in mud”; “sand sledging”; sand castles”; “writing with sticks”
- Picked a picture of a wide, flat topped grassy mound – “play football”; “play tig”; “play king of the hill”
- Picked a picture of a muddy swamp – “play stuck in the mud”.
- Picked a picture of a woodland – “hide and seek”; “climb trees”; “search out plants”.
- Picked a picture of a curved, colourful seat – “chatting zone”; “make a cottage or home” “gym with weights”.
- Picked a picture of a rainforest – “hide and seek”; “chatting zone”.
- Picked a picture of a long, winding boardwalk – “play on your bike”.
- Picked a picture of a water butt – “jump in it”; “bathing area”; “warm in winter, cool in summer”; “jacuzzi”; “watering plants”; “planting plants”; “drinking water”.
- Picked a picture of a den in a woodland – “fun for hide and seek”; “sitting and reading”; “sleep there”
- Picked a picture of a graffiti wall – “I would chat with my friend”; “play and have lunch”; “do more graffiti”; “spray”; “races”; “skateboarding”; “monkey boards”.
- Picked a picture of a wide, grassy wildflower meadow – “hide and seek”; “tig”

Children's likes and dislikes.

Resources, areas and activities in the grounds that we like.

(Helpful to identify what to keep / what to make even better)

- The tunnel
- The tyres
- The garden
- Benches
- Basketball
- Lots of space
- Outdoor classroom
- Football
- The bins (to keep their space tidy)
- Stepping stones
- Rock climbing
- Cart wheels
- Chatting
- Having fun
- Walking round the playground
- Talking to friends
- Playing tig
-

Resources and areas of the grounds we don't like

(Helpful in identifying things we need to address, change, improve, remove)

- Removal of the climbing frame
- Removal of ropes around bars
- Crowded playground
- No monkey bars
- No badminton facilities
- No football nets

Activities we currently do in the playground now

(highlights how broad the current play experiences are and helps to identify any experiences that appear to be missing). These were responses received both in the class session and through informal discussions with children at playtime.

- Playing tig.
- Imaginary games – Sonic, horses etc.
- Playing football.
- Playing on the trim trail
- Being weird with my friends.

[Type here][Type here]

- Talking to my friends.
- Singing.
- Walking around and talking to my friends.
- Racing.
- Sing and shout.
- Play basketball.
- Eating.
- Playing hide and seek.

Activities we'd like to be able to do.

- Gymnastics.
- Jump in puddles.
- Read in a shelter or tent.
- Climb trees.
- Build dens.
- Dance to music.
- Ride our bikes.
- Build stuff.
- Draw and read.

[Type here][Type here]

APPENDIX 4.
Additional ideas for seating areas.



[Type here][Type here]



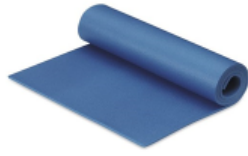
Somewhere to sit.....and play.



[Type here][Type here]



Moveable seating for socialising / gathering in any space and using outdoors during class time



Waterproof backed picnic blankets



Waterproof beanbags



Foam block on top that can be removed when required



Re using wooden pallets



Recycled plastic picnic tables

[Type here][Type here]

Sample questions for parents.

1. What do you know about what your child does at playtime?
2. Are you familiar with the school playground and the opportunities it offers?
- 3.

[Type here][Type here]