



St Michaels and All Angels Infant School School Grounds NOW & FUTURE

Report from the Landscape Strategy Workshops – February 2020



DRAFT June 2020

Introduction

Two workshops were planned to support development of a Landscape Strategy for the school grounds, to guide how they develop, are used, designed and managed in the future.

This report summarises the main findings from the workshops to help the school review the outside learning environment and make positive change for pupils of all ages at the school

The workshops took place on the 28th February, and XXXX 2020
Facilitation of the events were provided by Catherine Eldred, Principal Landscape Architect of the Landscape Strategy Team, at Hampshire County Council.



Contents

This report summarises the main findings from the workshops taking place to help the school review the school environment.

"Where are we NOW?"

22 people attended Workshop 1 including Mr Bowen, Executive Headteacher of The Oaks CE Learning Foundation, Mrs Flynn, Head of School of St Michaels and All Angels Infant School, governors, parents, teaching and support staff, and pupils of all ages.

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 - Play, Socialising, Breaks and Lunchtimes
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 - Natural Environment
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 - Welcome, arrival, access and circulation
 - Community and Context

"Where do we want to be?"

A similar number attended Workshop 2 and this lead on from Workshop 1. On this occasion however we concentrated on looking to the future of the school grounds and how they could develop for the future.

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Where are we NOW ?

Rate the Space—

Participants worked in groups to record their thoughts on a series of 13 cards, as illustrated below. Feedback was given to cover the range of cards. All cards were collected. The following pages show the record created, and which will be referred to as part of Workshop 2.



Location 1

Location 1 is known as 'The Spiritual Garden' and it's designed to be a 'refreshing' space to where children can think freely. Some students suggest it feels 'magical' whilst others feel sad because it doesn't receive much use. It was given an average score of 5/10 for quality, but only 1/10 for how often it gets used. This may be because it's too far away from the playgroup to be used more by them too.



Location 2

Location 2 is 'The Playground' and it's used at breaktime and lunchtime every day. It feels 'fun' but it's only used for running games as there's not much to do on it. It was rated as a 5/10 for quality but a 10/10 for usage as it's the 'main play area' for all the children.



Location 3 is known as 'The Shelter' or 'The Outdoor Classroom'. Children can read stories or play here when it rains. Another use is as a sitting area at some school events. Some feel like the space is 'too small' and there were suggestions that a picnic bench could be added. It received a score of 6/10 for quality; perhaps because it's 'not comfy' and an average score of 8/10 for how well it gets used as it's 'not practical'.

Location 6 is known as 'The Trim Trail' and it can be used for climbing and other games at breaktime. To most it feels 'fun', however a minority suggest it's 'a bit small' and 'too compact'. The quality score was 9/10 and it received the same score for how well used it is. It's very popular but can only be used in small groups.



Location 4

Location 4 is 'The Grass Area' and it has several logistical purposes such as being a space for pupils to 'line up' and it's an access route to the toilets. It feels 'muddy and irritating' so the score for quality was 3/10. It is hoped that the drainage system in this area could be improved. An 8/10 was given for how well it gets used.



Location 5

Location 5 is 'The Field' and it's used for playing football on in the summer months. It is a big 'open' space that also hosts running races when the track is painted. It scored 6/10 for quality and 7/10 for how well it gets used but this is very weather dependent.



Location 6

Where are we NOW ?...Cont'd



Location 7

Location 7 is 'The Field' and it's used as a play area for lots of different games. The pupils said it felt 'good', yet they only scored the quality as being 5/10. The score for how much it gets used was just one mark higher at 6/10.



Location 8

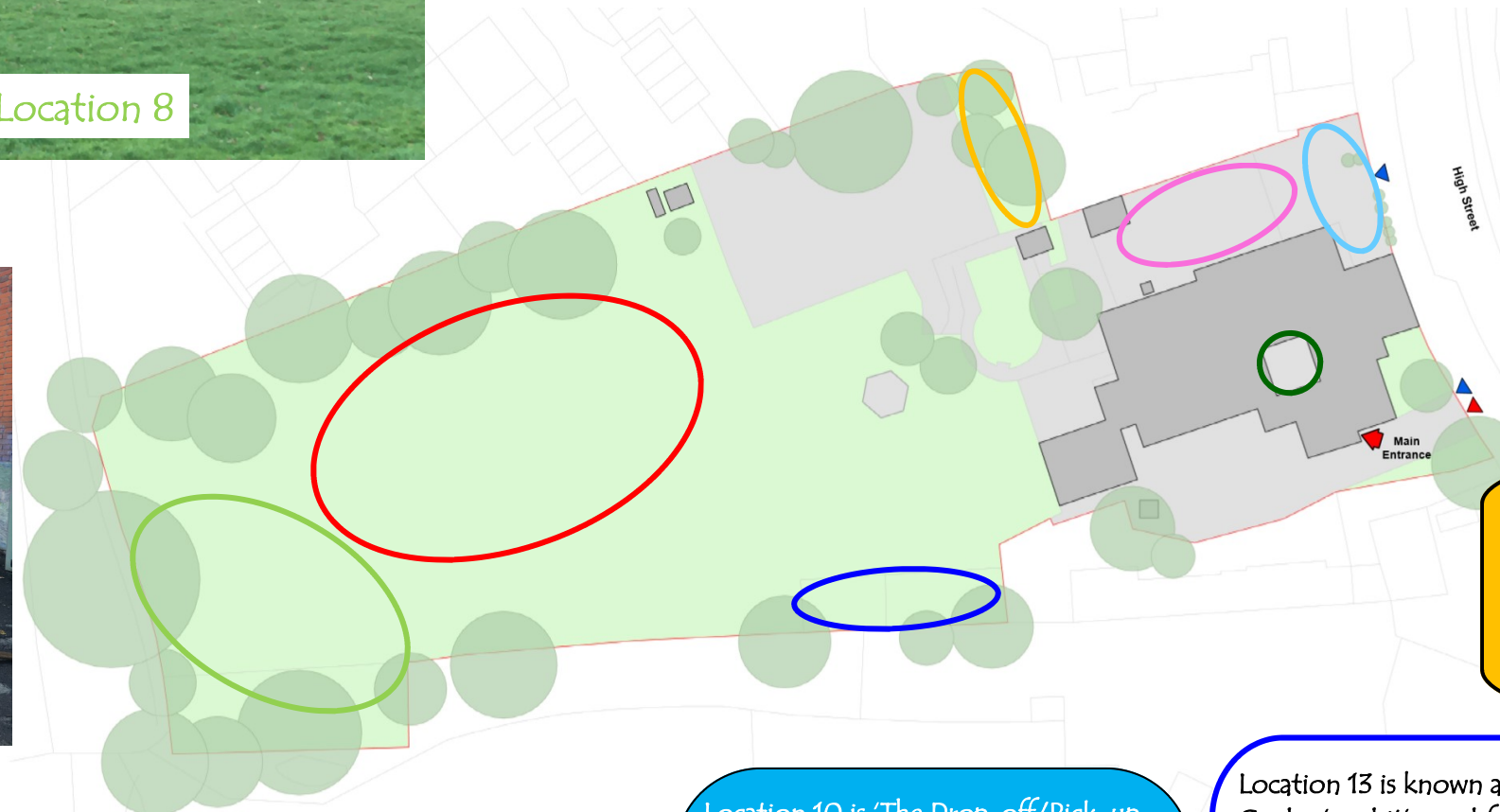
Location 8 is also 'The Field' and it's used for sports, reading books and finding minibeasts! Despite being an 'open' area, it feels 'boggy and muddy'. It's a lovely area but it's only used in good weather times which meant it scored 5/10 for quality. The same score was given for how well used it is as the primary use is in the summer months.



Location 11 is known as 'The Courtyard' or 'The Quad' and it's used for growing fruit and vegetables. It feels 'empty' and 'could do with brightening up'. A 6/10 was given for quality but only a 2/10 for usage as it's felt it could appeal to a wider audience, but currently isn't being used by many.



Location 9 is 'The Year 1 Playground' and it is used at playtime, and for some learning. It feels 'busy' as it is used every day by the reception children. The quality score was 7/10, however it is felt that some natural materials could be added to this area. The score for usage was a high 9/10 as it's an essential part of the EY curriculum.



Location 12 is 'The Football Pitch'. Some people suggested it felt 'unsafe', whilst others believe it's 'amazing'. It's only used by those that do play football, which meant it scored middle of the range 5/10 for both quality and usage.



Location 10 is 'The Drop-off/Pick-up Area' where parents collect their children at the end of the school day. Children use this area to play hopscotch, and sometimes it is used as an extra parking facility. It feels 'crowded' and it also seems like a bit of a 'waste of space' as there is not much to do. It received a quality score of 4/10 as "it's just a collection point". It was also scored low with 2/10 for how well it gets used.

Location 13 is known as 'Rosie's Garden' and it's used for growing and planting. It feels 'messy, underused and a bit sad'. The score for quality was 2/10 but this would be improved if it weren't so 'neglected'. The score for how well it gets used was 2/10 as it's not currently in a usable condition. It is hoped a revamp could be initiated to bring this area back to life.





Where are we NOW ?

Key points Participants worked together in groups to discuss how the grounds are currently used. Key points from the topics discussed are shown below.....

Access, Circulation, Arrival and Welcome

- Within the workshop there was a great deal of discussion on whether the Main Entrance to the school is in the best place. Access into the school is currently through a frontage space that is then rarely used for the majority of the rest of the day. It is also via the main road that was discussed concerning Health and Safety issues relating to the proximity to traffic. With all of that in mind, is there a possibility that an alternative access from Kings Close might be created taking much pupil and parent movement away from the busiest side of the school?

Play, Breaktimes and Socialising

- Although pupils do enjoy their break and lunchtimes it was thought by some at the workshop that there could be more for them to do in those times.
- The grounds are very large, however use of them is currently restricted due to the boggy conditions of the field which renders much of it unusable for much of the year. Pupils have dedicated spaces in which to play, but not freedom of the entire space to run freely and explore further.
- The toilets available to the children when they were outside were also mentioned as not like by many. Cold, and in a dark shade part of the site does not make them hugely popular to visit, and difficult to supervise by staff.

Health and Well Being

- Location of the school was discussed as concerns have been raised about the closeness of the main road that creates dust and noise pollution due to its proximity. Understandably any activities to the front of the school are more affected by this as against those that use the spaces further back.
- There are currently areas that encourage physical play, but due to being located on the field these are often out of bounds during the colder months due to the mud.
- It was said that there are currently few places for anyone to sit within the grounds that provide a place for peace and quiet.
- It was mentioned that an area to support imaginative play would be useful to have moving forward and that an area to "Grow your Own" fruit and vegetables would be good. The current area doesn't sadly get enough sun to be effective in its current location.

Outdoor Learning and Early Years

- It was agreed by many that outdoor learning activities take place mainly in the summer months, or in periods of dry weather.
- Year 1 sometimes use the Quad area for outside teaching and learning, the existing Outdoor Classroom sometimes gets used for Art activities, and Year R are always outside in their dedicated space enjoying the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- It was mentioned however that there are some limitations in this happening more, such as the Year R area not being big enough to allow bike and trike riding to happen very often, which helps to develop gross motor skills in the children.
- The Field area is rarely used though as it was described as "having nothing there" to enable this to happen more, and currently nothing to encourage it.

The Natural Environment

- The first topic of conversation around this subject was how boggy and waterlogged the grounds currently get, and how the end of the field is rarely used for anything because of this.
- The grounds do get used for developing an understanding of the flora and fauna around them at the school though with Tree Identification work taking place with Year R, Minibeast Hunts, and development of a Wildflower Area in recent years. There was also talk that there is a fox that comes to visit the grounds at times throughout the year.

Context and Community

- The wider aspect of being a school within Lyndhurst is enjoyed by many with the lovely view of the church that can be seen from within the grounds. The church is also visited by pupils once a month and is very much part of school life.
- Extra curricular activities take place throughout the year with Duke of Edinburgh award camping often taking place on the field, and Den Building activities being organized and run by Graham, an active member of the school community.
- It was also said at the workshops that the frontage of the school is very 'closed' to the general public passing by, and that perhaps it could be more welcoming?

Where do we want to be?....

"Our Vision" – Participants worked individually to complete the sentence.....

"We would like our school grounds to be a place where....."

