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me OUTSIDE here!



Creative STAR[★]
Learning Ltd

DEVELOPING YOUR SCHOOL GROUNDS OR OUTDOOR SPACE



This handout has been compiled to give schools and early years and childcare settings some advice about what to do and who can help. It is not exhaustive and it is up to each establishment to ensure a holistic and thorough approach has been taken to developing any outdoor space.

“Quality play spaces must be attractive, challenging and flexible as well as safe and accessible, but like the beach never finished – they should be in a state of constant change.”¹

¹ <http://www.playwales.org.uk/login/uploaded/documents/INFORMATION%20SHEETS/role%20of%20adults%20in%20childrens%20play.pdf>

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1. The need for naturalising outdoor spaces

There is increasing recognition that children need daily contact with nature. There are many benefits such as:

- *“Proximity to, views of and daily exposure to natural settings increase children’s ability to focus and enhances cognitive abilities.”* Wells (2000)
- *“Children who experience school grounds with diverse natural settings are more physically active, more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another and more creative.”* Bell et al (2006)
- *“Talking to trees and hiding in trees precedes saving trees.”* David Sobel, Childhood and Nature (2008)
- Nearby levels of nature moderate the impact of stressful life events on the psychological wellbeing of children. the life stress impact is lower among children with high levels of nearby nature than among those with little nearby nature.” Wells & Evans (2003)

This is recognised in the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan which has the following outcome for play in schools:

“All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.”²



2. Learning for sustainability and developing school grounds

Schools and early years establishments need to consider the environmental, social and financial sustainability of any developments:

- Plant native species as much as possible. Through careful selection of plants and features, the biodiversity value of the school grounds can be increased which benefits the wider community and natural heritage of any community. Wildlife need native species.
- Make your grounds a home for wildlife. Have bird feeders, log piles, minibeast homes, leaf piles, etc.
- Create wild play spaces. Children need to feel a sense of wildness so having hedges they can crawl into, shrubs which can be used to make dens, trees to climb and plant woods so that eventually the school has natural spaces.
- Source ethical and environmentally sustainable products. Re-use household items. Ask your suppliers to tell you the sources of their products and the amount of air miles involved. Use local tradespeople and bespoke solutions as much as possible.
- Develop sustainable routines. This means having a clear maintenance plan. Consider using the principles of permaculture into your approach which includes trying to re-use and recycle all waste on site.

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00437132.pdf>

- Involve families in the development process. This means that parents and carers find out more and can support the nursery. ELC communities can be grown and strengthened in a participative process.

This section is extracted from Learning for Sustainability Report p20-22 <https://bit.ly/2VwG9tD>

“Pupils learn through their entire experience at school, not just through the formal curriculum. The design and management of the school campus has a strong influence on what pupils understand about learning for sustainability. Research demonstrates the significance of ‘buildings as pedagogy’; children learn from the buildings and grounds themselves, and what the adult world values in building and managing them the way they do. Failure to exemplify principles of sustainability in the school campus will undermine learning for sustainability. School estates also have a contribution year-on-year to the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions introduced by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as well as leading by example in matters of environmental performance and social inclusion.

School campuses can support learning for sustainability by growing food, supporting active travel, reducing energy and waste and providing well-designed environments for outdoor learning and play. They have the potential to be accessible hubs that engage with and serve their local community, celebrate local diversity and distinctiveness and offer pupils and the community, meaningful opportunities to make the school and local community more sustainable.

School grounds can play a significant role in delivering learning for sustainability. They provide an accessible space for curriculum-based outdoor learning and offer the opportunity for pupils to connect with nature on a daily basis and throughout the seasons. By helping to develop and look after their school grounds, pupils can become active stewards of the environment.

Good Places Better Health for Scotland’s Children recognises the importance of these childhood experiences in shaping the development of sustainable attitudes and behaviours in adulthood. It also highlights the importance of well-designed school grounds in supporting physical health and emotional wellbeing and the value of natural play in school as a means of nurturing resilience, developing interpersonal skills and supporting self-esteem.

A growing number of schools are demonstrating good practice in the use of their outdoor spaces, supported at national level by organisations such as Eco-Schools, Grounds for Learning, The Conservation Volunteers and the John Muir Award. However, too many of our pupils are growing up in ‘sterile’ and unimaginative outdoor environments and missing these vital childhood experiences. As with school buildings, there is a need for local authority school estate management to provide more proactive support for the development of school grounds that deliver learning for sustainability.”



3. The school grounds development process

The most established and learning-rich school grounds and outdoor spaces have come about through a *long-term approach* to its development. The school community accepts that the grounds make an important contribution to children's learning, well-being and sense of belonging to the local community. It is about a process and not an end product.

Just like any other school improvement, there is a cycle of self-evaluation and improvement. This is the approach advocated by Learning through Landscapes, the UK school grounds charity:

- Where are we now? (*What do we have? How do we use the school grounds? How do we feel about the grounds?*)
- Where do we want to be? (*What do we want to be able to do in the grounds? Developing a vision*)
- How will we get there? (*Solving problems, developing detailed designs*)
- Making the changes (*Implementing plans, celebrating achievements, managing our new grounds, using the new facilities*)
- Maintaining the impact

Do not underestimate the time it takes to create significant change. However, remember quick, cheap makeovers can brighten up an outdoor space and give everyone involved a sense of achievement. Likewise a few tweaks and changes can improve the space for wildlife or increase the biodiversity which require little time.



Who can help you begin?

Learning through Landscapes (Ltl) is the national school grounds charity that specialises in supporting schools through the process. Visit the website: <http://www.ltl.org.uk/scotland/index.php>. They have a list of accredited school grounds professionals. This is a fee-paying service

There are also lots of ideas that can be found on the Internet about improving outdoor spaces. Useful links include:

- Learning through Landscapes Scotland <https://ltl.org.uk/learning-through-landscapes-scotland/>
- I'm a teacher, get me OUTSIDE here! Blog <https://creativestarning.co.uk/developing-school-grounds-outdoor-spaces/>
- International School Grounds Alliance <https://www.internationalschoolgrounds.org>
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents <http://www.rospa.com/>
- London Play <http://www.londonplay.org.uk/>

Who needs to know?

Staff must seek permission from their head teacher or centre manager before embarking on any changes to the outdoor space.

Once you have consulted children, young people, the school and wider community and have put together some plans and proposals, then it is important to let relevant local authority departments know. Do not begin until their advice and requests have been considered.

Double check what is the school's responsibility to maintain, and what is a local authority responsibility. Some developments impact on services provided to schools and settings. For example, the maintenance and upkeep of new features including playground equipment, ponds, trees and benches is normally the responsibility of the education establishment.

Within the local authority, it can be worthwhile contacting the following departments or individuals for advice and suggestions (their job titles and departments may vary):

- Landscape services - they look after school grounds. Some can provide soil, bark chips, wood products or at least can advise on good places to find these items. Find out who is in charge of the grass cutting and how to get changes to this, if needed.
- Clerk of works – This person is involved in the maintenance matters pertaining to schools including security and therefore school boundaries
- Education managers, e.g. the Quality Improvement Officer that supports the school or setting
- Design and Development Officers. These professionals usually know about play equipment design and can give helpful advice about health and safety, access, maintenance issues, etc. in line with EU guidance and local authority expectations and guidelines.
- The local authority countryside ranger service or other environmental professionals for advice on biodiversity and the acquisition of natural resources.

The crime prevention officer or architectural liaison officer within your police force can advise on security matters pertaining to school grounds developments. This is worthwhile, if you are planning significant improvements. They will know the frequency, severity and types of vandalism which occur in a very localised way. Have a look at this blog post for more information:

<http://creativestarning.co.uk/developing-school-grounds-outdoor-spaces/crime-prevention-in-school-grounds/>

If contractors are used to create features, then they must be on the approved list of contractors held by the local authority.

Remember that a risk assessment will need to be in place for making any specific changes. Also once a feature is in place, then a risk benefit assessment may be required for its use. If in doubt, check local health and safety guidance. If none exists, contact the health and safety team, or one of the local authority services listed above, or a school grounds professional for advice.

Local organisations and professionals who can help

There are many partner providers and a variety of professionals who can provide support, training, advice and even occasionally resources. Many big companies have community days where staff come and help with practical changes. In some local authorities arrangement are in place to enable community service teams to assist with school grounds work.

If you work in a new-build school, then all changes, however minor, should be discussed the Services Manager or the company contact.

- Greenspace Officers can sometimes assist with advice
- The Conservation Volunteers provide advice and support. This is usually a fee-paying service <http://www.tcv.org.uk>
- RSPB have trained volunteers which can advise or support schools with bird related projects such as making the school grounds more bird friendly. Contact your local regional office.

Help! Different professionals are giving me different advice

Developing school grounds may involve seeking lots of different opinions from people who come from a variety of professional backgrounds with a particular interest or perspective. This means that advice given will be based upon this individual expertise. A lot of areas are “grey” where there is no right or wrong but simply different reasons for doing something. Education staff need to weigh up the pros and cons of any advice given and come to their own decision as ultimately the responsibility for the use, maintenance and management of the grounds rests with them.

Funding

There are grants and funds available to assist education establishments develop their grounds. Have a look at this blog post for funding and also read the blog post about the ins and outs of applying for extra funds. <https://creativestarlarning.co.uk/grants-outdoor-learning-and-play/>

It is often little changes can have a significant impact as much as big ones. Here’s an example of a blank outdoor space that was transformed for less than £1000:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19XUFxQc2GFvzx3tDHczf6T6kTVmZU8pb/view> and three years later, look at how it has continued to be used and developed: <https://vimeo.com/644898399>

4. Creating ongoing dialogue about the school grounds

Children have a right to be consulted over matters which affect them. Over recent years, it is recognised that consultation should not be one-off or occasional activities that are done to children by adults. Instead, there needs to be a clear commitment from practitioners to ensure that genuine participation in decision making processes is how a school operates. It defines the ethos within a setting.

All children can express very clear preferences. They need to be asked in ways that they understand and be free to respond using a variety of means appropriate to their age and ability. Children enjoy and benefit from being able to voice their opinions. It can help them to become more confident and independent. Such dialogue makes events more meaningful and relevant to children's interests.

As well as children, it is sensible to gain the perspective of other stakeholders including all staff, parents, nearby neighbours, the local council and so on. Try and take an approach that is genuinely environmentally sustainable. This means considering the benefits of all developments for wildlife as well as learning and play. Remember to focus on people's feelings as much as other matters. Encourage adults to consider their own childhood experiences of play and being outside.

5. Where do we begin?

Knowing how to get started is sometimes the toughest part of the school grounds development process. Below is a tried and tested approach to involving every child in a primary or secondary school. It is not used with nursery children. There are different ways to create on-going dialogue about the school grounds and you may prefer one of these. Bear in mind that these processes take time. It is basically kick starting the improvement process.

Try to avoid focusing on what people WANT in their grounds. Thinking about what we DO is more useful. It's also important to get everyone thinking about the differing needs within the outdoor space:

- Learning activities relating to ongoing classwork
- Playtimes
- Out of hours visitors
- Wildlife – the more biodiverse an outdoor space is, the better it becomes for people as well as wildlife

1. Take lots of photos and/or digital recordings

Before making any changes, encourage children to take lots of photos. You need ones taken from every angle so that you can get plenty of good before and after comparative photos. This is a good opportunity to explain or reinforce how to use a camera correctly, take good photos and upload them onto a computer. Some children will also enjoy using editing packages and evaluating the quality of their photos.

Have a look at Crimond School videos. Whilst dated, they show how children can plan and create their own videos:

- Pre-developments: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPt9cyhMN7s&t=4s>
- Deciding what needs improved: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2V6RgxVICo>

2. Survey your school grounds

The aim of this activity is to ensure that all children contribute to mapping their thoughts and feelings about their school grounds. The outcome is a map which indicates how the space is used

and what children think about it. This can help with making changes. For example, planting a hedge or woodland where children think there is a great view will not go down well.

Work in groups of 4 children

Each group needs: clipboard, set of coloured pens, map of the school grounds, camera or digital recorders, if necessary.

It is important that **everyone in the school uses the same colour-coding scheme**. Every person must mark on their group map:

- *NAVY BLUE - Where you play most often*
- *BLACK - Where you go to be alone*
- *LIGHT BLUE - The place with the best view*
- *GREEN - The place to find lots of wildlife: different sorts of plants and animals*
- *PURPLE - Best place for being physically active*
- *BROWN - The quietest space*
- *ORANGE - A good place to relax*
- *RED - A dangerous place*
- *PINK - A safe place*

So each group will have four crosses for each of the above colours/activities.

Back inside, each group adds their results to the whole class map. This will mean that the class map will now have up to 32 of each coloured cross. This will start telling a story about how the children perceive the school grounds.

Once every class has their own map, this can be collated onto a giant school map. At this point, each cross may represent 10 children.

It's important to have both class and a whole school map, as different aged children may have different perceptions. Also, if you have grounds that are segregated for playtimes, the younger and older children will know different parts of the ground. (NB Segregated playgrounds do not seem to be a good thing according to most research. It's would appear it's better for children of all abilities and ages to play together).

From here you can look at the results with the children. This could be a good job for the pupil council or a P5 or P6 class tasked with overseeing the project. (In my experience P7 classes have too much going on to manage a school ground improvement project on top of tests, transitions, etc. Also they don't always have time to see their ideas and efforts come to fruition). It is interesting to see the children's perceptions. It also means that when it comes to planning changes, a wilder space growing nettles and thistles isn't put beside a physically active space where footballs are always needing retrieved from the wild space.

Many primary schools often start this process with the Primary 6 and 7 classes. The children become trained up and then assist the younger children with the mapping process. Taking photos can help for displays and additional evidence to back up the children's perceptions. Alternatively, pairing older children with younger ones and doing the activity *en masse* is possible too.

3. Have a slideshow!

Very often children and adults have little idea of the potential of school grounds simply because they have not seen what a well-developed outside space can look like. At an assembly have a range of photos to show children. These can be used to emphasise the above points (learning, play, wildlife, other visitors).

4. Rate the Grounds

This activity works well for Level 2 Information Handling. Every child gives the school grounds a mark out of 10. If they think no changes are needed then rate the grounds “10”. If you think lots need improved, then rate the grounds “1” or “2”. The challenge is then to work out the mean, median and mode of the results. Parents and staff perceptions can also be compared with the children’s. This activity can be done before and after a specific period of development so provides a simple form of data collection.

5. Love your school grounds

This is a useful Valentine’s Day activity. The children each need to make one large heart and one small heart with space to write on the back. Next, the children go outside and decide where each of their hearts must go:

- The big heart belongs to the place or feature the child most loves in the school grounds. Ask them to write on the heart why this is so.
- The little heart should be put in a place which needs a little more love. The children can write on this heart why this is so.

If making hearts is too much of a hassle, use luggage tags or anything that allows quick and simple placement outside. This is an ideal time to involve staff and any interested parents – as it’s quick, it can be done at the start or end of the school day when parents are present or as part of an open day or parent meeting session in the summer term.

Once the hearts have been placed, they can be photographed and gathered up and summarised – a quick display of ideas and sorting into rough categories can work well.

With the places that need more love, this is the start of your action plan.

Place needing more love	Solutions	Now	Soon	Later
Litter in the far corner of the play ground	Move a litter bin there See if any children or class are up for litter picks to help the janny Look on the Eco School website for more litter reducing ideas	X		
No trees on the playing field	Plant some next winter. There’s space on the playing field.		X	
Nothing to do at playtimes	Introduce a Scrapstore Playpod			x
	Do this as a P1-3 enterprise project and ask parents and local community to donate unwanted materials		X	

The “Now, Soon, Later” columns are very useful for creating an action plan:

- NOW – This is action which can be taken within a term. Low cost, minimum permission needed, doable
- SOON – This will take a year or so to implement. The solutions require either more time or more money or both.
- LATER – This column is for the seriously big ideas. For example, a swimming pool is very expensive and can take years to come about owing to the rules and regulations around swimming pools.

Because there can be lots of suggestions, time is needed to do the sorting and collating of ideas.

6. Design considerations

Much research now points towards naturalising a school grounds to improve its value for learning, playing and wildlife. This does not have to be an expensive investment. Going “skinted” not “minted” and for simple things that can be done by classes and the community is often a good way to go. It also means if you are prone to vandalism, you can easily and quickly fix the damage. Have a look at the “Mess, Mud and Magic” pdf for doable ideas and case studies. It’s aimed at ELC staff but relevant especially the latter half of the document <https://creativestarning.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Mud-Mess-Magic-Draft.pdf>

Develop a scale plan

Whether your school intends to develop one area of the grounds or give the whole place a makeover, it is often helpful to create a map of the proposals. This can then be submitted to the key stakeholders for consideration and to make amendments. It is also It can be useful for seeking funding to have a visual scale plan and to have thought out in detail what matters to the school community.

A fun way to do this, is through an approach called “Planning for Real, for Real” by Julie Mountain of Play Learning Life <https://www.plloutdoors.org.uk> This involves using loose parts to create the layout of different features outside so you know the size, etc. This includes using ropes or skipping ropes to illustrate the width and shape of paths, etc. This helps children really see what the changes could look like. The ropes, cones and other items can be moved around to get the proportions accurate.



For big structural changes, it may be worth paying for the services of a landscape architect for this purpose. Be sure they have a track record in working with schools and can show you not just examples of plans but how they look and what happened. Be aware that you will still have to find a contractor to

make the changes and will need someone to oversee this. Contractors may not understand the safety standards to which the work must conform.

Also you need to remember:

- Where practical features exist such as drains and covers, establish if there are any underground cables or pipes and so on. These must remain accessible.
- Access – for example, avoid putting sheds or other features near to buildings that enable children or out of hours visitors to access the roof.
- Storage – playground kit needs decent storage
- Arson prevention and reduction. Zurich insurance have guidance. Read it carefully. It's about how stuff is accessed, their location and use. Contrary to popular belief, loose parts such as tyres and stumps are not banned. They just have to be stored safely, away from buildings and ideally in a container that can't be set on fire. Tyres filled with soil or gravel and therefore difficult to move can be left out.
- To check the rights of way and if any exist within your grounds.
- The impact on local wildlife of your plans. As much as possible consider wildlife corridors to link your grounds to natural space in the local area. Seek advice from local wildlife organisations.
- Maintenance – see Section 8

Think about how the outdoor space is zoned

Traditionally school grounds have been zoned by age or stage which is not good for socialising, play or wildlife. Instead, think about matters such as:

- Check the design is inclusive. This does not mean dumbing down an adventurous outdoor space but subtly creating features that allow children with a range of disabilities and neurodivergences to enjoy the school grounds. For example, having a pathway that is a circular route rather than a dead-end. Look at interesting features at different heights and levels, the areas of light, shade, shadow, nooks and crannies and so on.
- Separating the active noisy areas from quieter places. Use the mapping process to determine how children currently use the outdoor space
- Having plants, trees and nature in all areas – use as screening. Make the whole grounds a sensory place to explore rather than a “sensory garden”.
- Be realistic about gardening. Begin small. There is lots of advice in the gardening section of the Creative STAR website and on the RHS schools website. Always plan for one teacher working in a garden with thirty pupils. So provide sufficient space for safe working and consider the manageability of this situation.
- Consider boundaries. Do you need a fence or wall to make the school boundary and if so why? Remember that developments near the perimeter will affect neighbouring properties especially if shelters are erected or trees planted (leaf litter, shade, etc.)
- Nooks and crannies. Children need places that feel private or where they can be out of sight (prune shrubs so you can look through if needed, or place mirrors in sightlines)
- Shelter. Consider the prevailing weather. Alternatively have shelter in places that waiting parents can use. Watch out for fake shelters – ones that provide seating but you will still get rained up and the wind whistles through.
- Linking what happens inside to outside. So put the growing area near the home economics department or have a musical area situated outside the music classrooms or away from classrooms which need no external noise distractions.
- Think about access between inside the school and the grounds. Think about the management of mud and mess from outside and the impact inside. Remember to have sufficient space allocated

for welly boots and outdoor clothing. It is possible to buy commercial driers which are economical and take up little space to dry off wet clothing.

Permaculture

A really useful approach is to consider permaculture principles and embed them into the design. This helps with ensuring that your grounds are holistic and sustainable places. There are many permaculture courses online and practical ones. Watch if you buy a book as many are from Australia and so the north and south aspects are the other way round. The Children in Permaculture project has a free downloadable book: <https://childreninpermaculture.com>

Putting together an action plan

The format for this can vary, so if you wish to use a school improvement action plan then this is fine. What is helpful is to think about who can assist and advise as part of the process. For example, if a school wishes to increase the biodiversity of the grounds in order to attract more wildlife, then approaching local professionals or organisations such as the RSPB can make a difference and help children think about creative and cost effective solutions.

7. Maintaining your grounds

It is important you plan and ensure that any new features are managed and maintained. Set up an annual calendar to ensure this happens outlining who does what, how often and when and the costs involved. Liaise closely with the landscape services if needed to ensure areas of long grass are left uncut, etc. Remember that if you put new features into the grounds, then this may become the school's responsibility to maintain these features. Ongoing fund-raising will be needed to maintain the grounds.

As much as possible integrate the maintenance work into the ongoing work of different classes who can adopt different features. This makes the most of the learning opportunities which arise, is inclusive of all children and does not rely on the goodwill of volunteers running an Eco School group or gardening club.
Each class can play a part

Rather than assigning one or two staff to oversee the school grounds, the responsibility can be shared among classes and integrated into the curriculum work.

Every class can choose on small aspect to focus upon. The projects can be small-scale whilst everyone learns what to do. For example, a pond can be created in a bucket or tyre. A meadow can be made in a small raised bed. Here's some other possibilities:

Bird feeding station	Looking after animals: chickens, rabbits, sheep, bees, etc.
Minibeast homes	Tree planting
Wildflower meadows	Bulb planting
Geocaches	Garden area
Subject or project trails	Orchards
Art work	Hedgerow
Pond	Management of loose parts at playtimes
Composting	

Think about gardening over the summer – often parents and children will volunteer in exchange for being able to harvest and take home the produce.

Vandalism

- If you are concerned about vandalism, then consider what could happen and how the school can take restorative measures to fix the damage as soon as possible after it has happened.
- Think about preventative measures that can be taken in the planning stage. This might include more robust designs and materials, specific colours, siting and signing of features, publicity of the features, lighting and restorative work. Discuss this matter with children and see what they suggest.
- Contact the police architectural liaison officer during the planning stage, especially if you have big plans!
- Log every vandalism incident no matter how minor with the police. They will not pay you a visit or follow up on every incident. But, if you have persistent vandalism then there is a record of incidents, their frequency, timing etc. For example it could be that vandalism tends to happen only in the summer holidays, or on Friday nights, or when a new feature is installed. If you have ongoing vandalism then you can ask a crime prevention officer for advice. You will need to follow up on their suggestions and some of these will require investment, e.g. lighting.

8. A sustainable thinking framework for decision- making

Schools and ELC settings need to ensure sustainable principles are at the forefront of any decision taken.

The aim of the process is not debate but to help everyone understand a range of perspectives and become better informed. When action is taken, ensuring that the community remains healthy and sustainable is essential to the final decisions preceding this. It is a process based on consensus and equity rather than the will of the majority. It is a useful decision-making tool around what a school needs to do and why. For example, if a class would like to keep hens, then the matter can be given full consideration. The class is split into four groups:

The *red deer* protect traditions and connections to the land and the impact of our actions on animals, plants and the environment. When thinking about hens, they might consider:

- Whether there is enough space for chickens to live happily and where this could be.
- What might change? For example, hens like to scratch around and this can cause wear and tear. How will this be managed?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages in terms of the impact of keeping hens on the grounds
- Who can we learn from? Who has previous experience of looking after hens that we can ask for advice

The *foxes* are concerned about the daily well-being of the family and workable systems based on human relations. They may consider:

- Who will look after the hens and how this will happen?
- Who can help with this job and how can we all do our bit to keep the hens happy?
- What are the benefits of looking after hens in terms of our own well-being?

The *golden eagles* focus on things necessary for security, sustenance and shelter including practical strategy, logistics and action. They may consider:

- How much money will keeping hens cost? Can we afford this?
- What actions need to be taken to protect the hens and keep them safe from harm?
- How will we maintain the cost of the hens going into the future?

The *otters* are the people with creative energy, who yearn for change that will bring a better future. They are interested in innovative possibilities and carrying these out. They may consider:

- Enterprising ways of fundraising to keep hens
- Ideas for making a class project about hens and how to ensure they help everyone learn

9. Evaluating the impact of your work

Section 5 is all about working out where we are now. It's about collating evidence from your stakeholders. By repeating the activities in 1-3yrs time, you can see the difference both physically – from photos and digital recordings – and from the comments of children. Build this in to your improvement planning.

In terms of impact on attainment and achievement, the real focus and benefit is the sense of empowerment for the whole community. You can also capture at the start from simple surveys. You could do a snapshot survey, such as:

- How many times did your class go outside last week?
- What was the purpose – please tick curriculum area (inc. other as a box too)
- How long did your class spend outside?
- How confident do you feel about making good use of our school grounds for learning (scale from 1-10)?

Do not include breaks and lunch times.

This can also be repeated at various intervals to gauge progress.

Other approaches to gathering data to monitor impact include:

- Use of attainment and engagement scales for individuals
- Use of attendance data for individuals
- Inclusion of reference to outdoor learning and play in pupil surveys

10. Playtime Projects

Developing a whole school approach to playtimes requires a change of culture and routines as well as the physical landscape.

Video clips worth watching include:

- Scrapstore Playpod
- Natural Play in Schools
- The Play Revolution materials by Learning through Landscapes

If you can afford it, the OPAL approach is tried and tested <https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk>

11. Useful Books

See the list and links on this blog post: <https://creativestarning.co.uk/developing-school-grounds-outdoor-spaces/developing-your-school-grounds-useful-books/>

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