

Firm Foundations for Outdoor Play

Holy Cross Under 5's Group

working with

Quality and Access for All Young Children

Site Audit and Recommendations

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Setting's vision for outdoor play

To provide the children with freeflow access to an outdoor space that supports learning in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage, in a friendly, fun and challenging environment.

Project aims / focus (from self audit)

To create a dedicated, safe and secure outdoor space that is useable in all weathers and extend resources to support children's learning.

1.0 Brief description of the setting

Holy Cross Under 5's is a sessional playgroup which meets in the hall of Holy Cross Church in the Greenford area of the London Borough of Ealing. The playgroup provides care for children aged between 2 ¼ and 5 years and is registered for 22 children. The playgroup is run by a committee and has good relationships with the church. Holy Cross Under 5's Group aim to provide quality care and education in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage and to prepare children for starting school at 5 years with the basic skills and knowledge required for learning.

2.0 Brief description of the outdoor space

At present, Holy Cross Under 5's Group do not have a dedicated outdoor space for the children to use. They currently have an arrangement with the church rector to use his garden for outdoor play and are limited to use at convenient times. As the garden is grassed, it is not always useable in wet weather. The church have recently agreed to allow the playgroup to develop a tarmac area at the rear of the building for their sole use as an outdoor area, following recommendations from Ofsted regarding outdoor play. This area is not currently secure and has drainage problems, causing large puddles to accumulate. It is accessed by a door at the side of the building, with a muddy path leading around the building. The church is looking into planning issues to create a new doorway that will lead directly from the hall into the outdoor area, but as the building is Grade II listed they are not sure if this is possible at present. There is a Scout Hut to the rear of this space and the roadway leading to the front of the building needs to remain accessible for emergency access.

To the side of this space is an area where grass and trees are growing. The playgroup has a small shed here and planting boxes where the children have been growing vegetables.

3.0 Key issues from the self audit

- The playgroup do not have a dedicated outdoor area
- The proposed area is not secure
- There is no shade or shelter
- There is no seating
- There are limited resources and not all areas of the curriculum are supported
- Children and staff do not have suitable outdoor clothing

4.0 Brief Summary of recommendations

Learning through Landscapes recommends that Holy Cross Under 5's Group applies for capital funds to cover the costs of:

- ▯ A landscaper architects' fees to design and develop the proposed space to make it secure and useable
- ▯ Shade and shelter
- ▯ Seating
- ▯ Outdoor resources
- ▯ Outdoor clothing
- ▯ Enabling freeflow

5.0 Key issues discussed during the visit

A nursery or Pre-school garden is effectively a 'public' play space, it is not a private garden and as such it is generally not appropriate to purchase items of garden furniture designed for home gardens and available at garden centres. These will be fine in a private garden but will not stand up the demands made of them by daily use by many small children, and the adults with them. It is also reasonable to assume that the space and its fixtures will be 'abused' – or at the very least the space must be able to cope with being heavily and regularly used. It is essential that any contractors or suppliers used are aware of the context in which their work / materials / equipment will be used and provide appropriate purchasing advice. The proposed area has problems with drainage and large puddles regularly accumulate in the area. If this area is to be used by the playgroup as a dedicated space, this issue will need to be investigated and solved before resurfacing and further development can take place. The pathways leading to the area are muddy and unsuitable for use in wet weather and tarmac paths would need to be laid to ensure suitable access.

Holy Cross Church is a Grade II* listed building and any changes to the buildings or grounds would need permission from Ealing Council and the church authorities. The playgroup and church have agreed that ideally, they would like to put a doorway into the rear wall of the hall that would provide children with freeflow access to the outdoor area.

If a doorway at the rear of the hall is not possible, the side door can be used if the pathway is secure to prevent children walking out onto the road at the front of the church. This could be done at with temporary fencing or a large gate that can be left open when the playgroup is closed allowing easy access for other users. As emergency access is required for the Scout Hut at the rear of the church, the plans for a dedicated space for the playgroup must allow for easy access. It is recommended that large gates are put across the pathway into the area and at the front of the Scout Hut that can be secured when the playgroup is using the space that can also be left open when the Scout Hut is in use.

6.0 Detailed description of recommendations

6.1 Landscaper work

6.1.1 Resurface the entire area with tarmac, investigating drainage problems and solving issues at the same time. The tarmac should extend along the building to create a path to the side door

6.1.2 Erect picket fencing around the entire area, incorporating large gates to the path along the side of the building and in front of the Scout Hut for access

6.1.3 Erect a wide gate across the end of the path by the side door to secure the pathway

6.1.4 Build raised planters on the grass area near the shed for growing herbs, fruits and vegetables

6.2 Shade and Shelter

6.2.1 If permission allows, erect a wooden canopy to cover part of the tarmac area (if this is not possible, a temporary gazebo or large umbrellas can be used)

6.2.2 Purchase a large umbrella for creating shade in various areas of the area when required

6.3 Seating

6.3.1 Incorporate bench seating in between the supports for the canopy

6.3.2 Purchase waterproof cushions for use in various areas for informal seating

6.3.3 Source log stumps for seating use on the grass area

6.4 Outdoor resources

6.4.1 Purchase a large water tray for outdoor use

- 6.4.2 Purchase 2 builders trays for sand and digging activities
- 6.4.3 Purchase a selection of wheeled toys and bikes (approx.10)
- 6.4.4 Create resource boxes for den building, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, music and movement, art and mark making and natural materials (See Groundnotes Good Resources for Outdoor Play for further details)
- 6.4.5 Hang large safety mirrors and boards on the fences for large scale mark making
- 6.4.6 Source resources for physical play, such as tyres, planks, crates, cones etc.
- 6.4.7 Paint road markings etc. on the tarmac for wheeled toys, role play and number play etc.
- 6.5 Outdoor clothing
 - 6.5.1 Purchase 15 child waterproof rubber trousers in various sizes
 - 6.5.2 Purchase 15 child waterproof rubber jackets in various sizes
 - 6.5.3 Purchase 4 adult waterproof jackets in various sizes
- 6.6 Enabling freeflow
 - 6.6.1 If permission allows, open a doorway in the rear wall of the hall that opens directly onto the outdoor space (if permission cannot be sought, use the side door and ensure a secure gate prevents children from going around the front of the church)
 - 6.6.2 Purchase PVC door curtains to hang over the doorway to maintain the temperature within the hall

7.0 Outline budget

Learning through Landscapes suggests that the setting should be allocated up to £50,000 to implement their changes, depending on the receipt of quotes for the key capital works such as the hire of a landscaper to create a dedicated outdoor space that is useable in all weathers and extend resources to support all areas of the curriculum.

8.0 Who can help?

Where to go next to help push the project forwards:

- 6.1 Landscaper work – landscape designer (Yellow Pages/Yell.com etc.)
Fencing – landscaper/fencing specialist (Yellow Pages/Yell.com etc.)
- 6.2 Canopy – local builder/carpenter (Yellow Pages/Yell.com etc.)
Large umbrella – garden centre/B&Q/Homebase/specialist supplier e.g. www.parasolar.com
- 6.3 Bench seating – local builder/carpenter, Waterproof cushions – suppliers (rucomfy.co.uk/TTS)
Log stumps – contact Local Authority Tree Officer/forestry department
- 6.4 Resource boxes – Ikea, haberdashery, educational suppliers (TTS, GLS etc.) hardware stores, donations from parents/staff/community etc. Mark making boards – local builder/handyman (Yellow Pages/Yell.com etc.)
Builders tray – Book – 50 Ways to Use a Builders Tray – Helen Bromley (Amazon.co.uk)
Trays – suppliers (TTS, GLS etc.)
Water tray – suppliers (TTS, NES Arnold, Community Playthings etc.)
Playground markings - There are specialist suppliers who will paint the markings for you such as: www.magicalmarking.co.uk/ www.colas.co.uk
www.fleetlinemarkers.co.uk/ There are others who supply do-it-yourself kits such as: www.rocol.com
- 6.5 Outdoor clothing – suppliers (muddypuddles.com / waterproofworld.co.uk / raindrops.co.uk)
- 6.6 Doorway – local builder (Yellow Pages/Yell.com etc.)
Door curtains – suppliers (e.g. www.freeflowcurtain.com offer a 10% discount to LTL members)

9.0 How will the setting measure success?

At the site visit, we agreed that the setting would know that the project had been successful if in a year's time:

- ☐ The children have a dedicated outdoor space that enables freeflow
- ☐ The children are happy, healthy and engaged in active learning
- ☐ Children are able to make their own choices

In addition, I suggest the following indicators of success:

- ☐ The capital works were undertaken on time and within budget
- ☐ You continue to receive positive feedback from the local schools
- ☐ The outdoor space is useable in all weathers

8.0 Conclusion

Holy Cross Under 5's Group have a fantastic opportunity to develop a dedicated outdoor play space for children attending the playgroup and provide the outdoor learning that they are keen to ensure. I hope that the changes are possible within the planning regulations and that freeflow from the hall will be possible, but if not, having new pathways to make access from the side door will still be a great solution and allow children to get outside on a daily basis.

The recommendations aim to provide children with opportunities to develop in all areas of learning and to explore nature and socialise with their friends. The main concerns are the security of the space, drainage issues and the unsuitable surfacing. Dealing with these issues will create a useable space that can then be resourced with a variety of equipment for children to select and investigate. I hope everyone at Holy Cross Under 5's Group enjoy their project and are able to implement these changes. I wish you all lots of luck and look forward to hearing about your progress.

As seen in this photograph, the proposed area for development has problems with drainage and the surface is in a bad state of repair. The area is not secure and would need fencing to ensure children's safety. Once this area has been resurfaced and the drainage problem solved, markings can be painted on the ground, creating roadways, grids and shapes for a variety of games and role play.



This is the wall where it is proposed a doorway should be created to provide freeflow access to the outdoor space. A canopy built over this area will provide a transition area for children to dress for outdoor play or to shelter on windy and rainy days. The supports for the canopy can incorporate bench seating, allowing children to sit in small groups, look at books or take part in quiet activity. Planting in large tyres will create an interest and sensory experiences. Other resources such as wind chimes, wind socks or musical instruments could also be attached to the supports to create areas of interest for children to explore

The area under the trees will make a nice spot for children to grow a variety of herbs, fruits and vegetables in raised planters. Resources for gardening can be hung from the fences or shed and can be stored overnight in a sturdy plastic box in the shed. Shelves can also be attached to the exterior of shed for displaying other resources for children to self select and resources boxes can easily be bought out from the shed on a daily basis for

use around the outdoors This is the path that currently leads to the side door and is an emergency exit from the site. A new path is necessary and fencing with a wide gate needs erecting just beyond the door to secure the area. This area will also be a great place for role play and den building, with opportunities for 'making camp' and bird watching.

This report is published in Magna to inform everyone of the nature and purpose of the current proposal to construct a garden at the rear of the new Church. There will shortly be consultation with all interested parties.