

## ITEM No ...8.....

**REPORT TO:** POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 23 APRIL 2018  
**REPORT ON:** OPENING OF SCHOOL GROUNDS FOR COMMUNITY USE  
**REPORT BY:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE  
**REPORT NO:** 146-2018

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 On the 31 October 2016, the Policy and Resources Committee approved the testing of opening 15 schools playgrounds for community use (Committee Report Number 351-2016). This report now outlines the progress made to date on the opening of the playgrounds and seeks approval to improve and further extend the pilot to include more schools in the city.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that committee members:

- i note and approve the contents of the report;
- ii agree to improving the operating model and extending the pilot;
- iii instruct the Executive Director to report back on progress in 12 months.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The financial implications of the pilot for the cost of signage and waste bins including installation was approximately £21,000. The costs were met from Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and City Development with an additional £5,000 funded by Play Scotland. The financial implications of the recommendation to extend the pilot would include an estimated £6,000 for the cost of additional signage and waste bins in the three new schools. These costs will be met from Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and City Development.

### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

4.1 The Scottish Government's report 'Building Better Schools, Investing in Scotland's Future' (2009) outlines how schools need to be seen as integral parts of the communities they serve, with both children and their families making best use of school facilities, including playgrounds.

4.2 Dundee's Play Framework, "Discover Play In Dundee" (2016) developed by multiagency partners, promotes a holistic approach towards play and the central role it can play in promoting better outcomes for children, families and communities. The framework focuses on the following priority areas:

- Play at home
- Play at school
- Play in the community
- Leadership and Governance – positive support for play in Dundee

4.3 The opening of school playgrounds corresponds with both the national policy on 'Building Better Schools' and the local Play Framework. The opening extends community access to schools in a way which has been shown to help children, young people and families.

## 5.0 PROGRESS

5.1 All 15 school playgrounds were officially opened for community use in August 2017. During November 2016 to August 2017, time was allocated to the effective planning and engagement with schools, pupils and communities to:

- create “key messages” for the signage design; mapping, consultation and installation of the locations for new signage and bins.
- create communications for Head Teachers, Parent Councils and key partners to help implement the policy within their local community (see attached Fact Sheet – Appendix 1).

5.2 The school playgrounds have been open for community use 7 days a week, including the October Holidays. They closed during the weekday evenings between November 2017 and February 2018 due to the dark winter evening period; however, were opened up at the weekends.

5.3 Information from a variety of sources has been gathered on the impact of the pilot including, Head Teachers, Dundee City Council Officers, Parent Councils and a case study from Blackness Primary (Appendix 2). A financial analysis/comparison on vandalism costs was also carried out. The key findings from the information analysis have been categorised in to “*What’s worked*” and “*What could be improved*”. This shows as follows:

### 5.5 What’s Worked

- In some schools, children and families have stayed longer afterschool to play
- Children and families engage well and stay around for longer at organised “Stay and Play” sessions in the school playground
- Children are using the facilities on their own during the evenings and weekends
- In the Blackness Case Study 53% of the 91 P5-P7 pupils surveyed use the playground after school hours. Parents reported that their child asks to go out and play more often and for longer, gaining independence and increasing confidence.
- In some schools there has been no negative impact on vandalism. However, initial analysis of costs of vandalism for all the schools is inconclusive.

### 5.6 What could be improved?

- Security lighting and CCTV installed. Evidence is suggesting that in the existing primary schools who have security lighting and CCTV, there are less incidents of vandalism and antisocial behaviour.
- Increased number of schools delivering Stay and Play sessions.
- Increased engagement by schools with children and families to increase the usage of the school playgrounds through better communication.
- Increased daily diligence relating to lifting of dog faeces and litter due to increased footfall and number of people walking their dogs in the school grounds.

## 6.0 PROPOSAL

6.1 In agreement with the Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and City Development, it is proposed that the following 14 school grounds should remain open for public use.

- Ballumbie Primary School
- Craigie High School
- Craigiebarns Primary School
- Blackness Primary School
- Balgarthno Campus (Camperdown Primary)
- Balgarthno Campus ( St Clement’s Primary)
- Tayview Primary School
- St Ninian’s Primary School
- Our Lady’s Primary School
- Dens Road Primary School
- St John’s High School

- Kingspark School
- St Mary's Primary School
- SS Peter and Paul Primary School

6.2 Dens Road Primary is planned to be opened for community use again following playground resurfacing and redevelopment during 2018.

6.3 In addition, it is proposed that we explore extending the pilot to include the following 4 schools:

- Rosebank Primary
- Sidlawview Primary
- Ancrum Road Primary
- Mill of Mains Primary

The new Coldside Campus which will include Our Lady's and Rosebank primaries will be open to the community.

6.4 The maintained green space adjacent to Fintry Primary School is already available for community use but it is not within the school grounds. As such the school grounds at Fintry Primary School will no longer be required to be included in the initiative.

6.5 A small scale feasibility study of the cost/benefits of the installation of security lighting and CCTV is proposed to help reduce the vandalism costs over time in specific schools where vandalism is identified as being higher. Tayside Contracts are currently undertaking a survey of requirements including those establishments which already have existing arrangements.

6.6 Primary schools will be encouraged to organise and promote "Stay and Play" sessions in their school playground, where appropriate, and to promote the opening of the schools playgrounds to the children and families in their community.

6.7 Due to the success of the pilot to date, all new build schools that are currently in the planning stages will have community access to the grounds and green space built into the design concept so that these grounds will be made available immediately on opening for community use.

6.8 Neighbourhood Services, the Children and Families Service and City Development will continue to work together with partners to look for additional opportunities to open school grounds and create Dual Use School/Community Play Spaces, such as the development of a new dual use play facility in the St Vincent Primary/Rowantree Primary School Site. This will require services working together to create a strategic overview and mapping of Play Spaces in the City to improve the quality and maximise resources, including maintenance and replacement costs.

## **7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 This Report has been screened for any implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environment assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 None.

Paul Clancy, Executive Director of Children and Families Service  
 Elaine Zwirlein, Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services  
 Mike Galloway, Executive Director, City Development

April 2018





# Opening of School Playgrounds

Q&A Factsheet



### 1 Why are the school playgrounds opening out-with school hours?

Many communities in Dundee have reported that there are not sufficient spaces to play in this City. School playgrounds provide additional safe and friendly places to play for our children and families.

Dundee City Council recognise the potential benefits of community engagement and the positive effects on children's health and happiness and therefore has agreed to test the opening of 15 school playgrounds. The rationale behind choosing schools has been on two factors:

- where communities have little existing access to play facilities or green space
- issues in relation to school sites (eg access, high levels of vandalism)

The Children and Families Service value the importance of play and commit to the delivery of the **Dundee Play Framework**, in which we have agreed to maximise the use of our school playgrounds.

### 2 Do I need to open ALL of my playgrounds, nursery facilities and green space?

Not at all. Consider the needs of your children and families living in your community. Involve your Parent and Pupil Councils to find out what areas they want and need to play in after school. It is okay to open all or part of your playground. Due to the significant amount of equipment and loose parts within the Nursery we would recommend only opening nursery facilities for supervised sessions with families.

Just open the spaces that children and families want to play in. Remember to involve children and families and the wider community in the local decision making journey...a concrete playground may be great for children to scoot or cycle around.

- Your School and Family Development Worker can be trained to lead "Stay and Play" sessions to build families' knowledge and skills about playful activities.
- We can support with training for "Play Champions" for P5, P6, P7 pupils.

### 3 When will they be locked and opened?

These decisions are to be made locally under your leadership. The Facilities Management Services Team will open and lock the gates in your playground. Head Teachers can specify which gates are to be left open all night. Head Teachers are to confirm with their Facilities Assistant which gates are to be locked and/or which are to be kept open after school.



**4 Will the playgrounds be open during weekends, school holidays and during the winter months?**

The “designated open areas” will be kept open during weekends and school holidays (except Christmas Holidays).

Since this is a test, we would recommend that the playgrounds are open from 1 March to 31 October 2017. We will ask the Facilities Management Services Team to change their operations during this time. If your school wishes to open the playground all year round, then it is fine to agree this locally with your Facilities Assistant.

**5 Who is responsible for checking the playground daily?**

The Facilities Management Services Team will regularly check the playgrounds for vandalism or any other damage, taking remedial action, ensuring the school is available for use at the beginning of each day. This will continue over the school holidays.

Any incidents will be reported to the Police as required (see 4.1.2 of Tayside Contracts and DCC Facilities Management Services Partnership Agreement).

School staff are to continue to be responsible for the regular checking of loose playground equipment.

**6 Who collects any glass, litter, needles and dog fouling etc?**

The Facilities Management Services Team is responsible to report and safely dispose of all of the above. Therefore, it is key to involve your Facilities Assistant as part of your engagement process. All of the above must be monitored by the Facilities Management Services Team.

Dogs are not allowed into school playgrounds. Dog bins will therefore not be put inside the playgrounds.

**7 What happens if the school has an Afterschool Club?**

If you have clubs or Out of School Care Clubs in your playground/pitches after school, these must take priority over children and families using your playgrounds.

**8 Who pays for any vandalism/repairs?**

Risk management is an important part of managing play spaces. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) promotes a balanced approach to play - *“those providing play opportunities should focus on the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not the paperwork”*.

Some schools have been vandalised with the gates locked. Facilities Management Services Team will monitor and compare the level of vandalism of the gates being open and closed. We will weigh up the benefits of this initiative against wear and tear of equipment/vandalism etc to determine its level of success.

There are no changes to the policy for vandalism arising from this initiative. Any vandalism relating to the school building eg broken windows, spray paint, breakages to rhone pipes, roof damage, boundary walls and railings etc, will continue to be covered by Council Insurance... please continue to report these via your Property Officer.



Please note - Children and Families Service have a SLA with Neighbourhood Services. If you are planning to purchase any new fixed play equipment or landscaping etc, contact Rod Houston, Senior Manager Environment on 4747 who will provide free advice.

Schools must consider the additional resources required to pay for the design, purchase and maintenance of play equipment.

For a maintenance fee, the Neighbourhood Resources' Play Ground Team can ensure:

- a certified inspection is carried out each year by a R.O.S.PA qualified specialist and a permanent record maintained, as recommended by the manufacturer.
- general maintenance to all play equipment. A maintenance inspection sheet will be used to record inspection visits. The Playgrounds Team will carry out recorded inspections to each playground on six occasions throughout the year.

We are liaising with Neighbourhood Services to further develop this partnership for playgrounds.

### 9 What happens if there is an incident and someone is injured?

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to look after their children out of school hours. The playgrounds are a place for unsupervised activity, so a claim against the Council's Public Liability Insurance would be unlikely to succeed unless there was a fault in the structure or fabric of the building or playground.

### 10 How does this link with Local Community Planning processes?

Community access to schools outwith normal hours has been raised as a priority as part of ongoing consultation with local communities. It is recommended that since Local Learning Partnerships are now officially recognised as working groups of the LCPP, they are an appropriate Forum to raise, discuss and deal with issues relating to Community Access to Schools.

Communities Officers will liaise with Community Learning and Development staff, Community Safety Wardens, Community Organisations, Elected Members and members of the public to inform feedback to Local Learning Partnerships.

Should there be any requirement to undertake additional community engagement activities, Communities Officers based in each of the eight multi member Wards are in a great position to provide advice and assistance.

#### TOP TIP

HGIOS – 2.3 Learning Teaching and Assessment – Challenge Question:

*“How well do we use our community and spaces to deliver high quality Outdoor Learning?”*

- Read the **Play out of Hours!** A toolkit for opening the school playgrounds out with teaching hours <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00493571.pdf>
- Involve Parent and Pupil Councils.
- Use this as an opportunity to explore the outdoors as a context for learning – if your Primary School is interested in taking a whole school approach to Outdoor Learning and Play, please contact **Audrey White** for support
- HSE advice – take a Risk Benefit approach to play

For further information on any of the above, please contact Audrey White:

**audrey.white@dundee.gov.uk or 01382 436921**



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## Dundee Play Framework



### OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS: AUGUST 2017

#### Case Study: Blackness Primary School Summary Report

*Prepared by Lauren Nicol, Family Engagement, Dundee City Council*

#### Introduction

In August 2017, Dundee City Council opened the playgrounds of 15 schools to the public for use outwith school hours. As part of a wider evaluation process, a case study of Blackness Primary School was undertaken in November and December 2017 to provide deeper insight on the impact of this action. The case study included an online survey distributed to Primary 4-7 classes in their ICT time, two focus groups with Primary 6 pupils, a paper survey distributed to parents of pupils participating in the focus groups, and a phone interview with the school's Head Teacher. The online survey received 91 responses, 18 children took part in the focus groups, and 17 parents were surveyed. The purpose was to gain feedback from a range of stakeholders to gauge the impact opening the school playground has had on the school and community.

#### Highlighted Findings

##### General results

- 53% of P4-7 pupils surveyed are using the playground outwith school hours.
- Most popular time to use the playground is after school.
- Pupils mostly go to the school playground with their friends, although some identified that they go with siblings.
- 30% of pupils who do not use the school playground indicated that they play at another park or playground instead.
- 28% of pupils not using the school playground said it was because there is a lack of equipment, and 23% indicated that they live too far away from the school.

## Positives

- Parents who indicated that their child uses the playground outwith school hours also indicated that their child has asked to go out and play more since the school playground has opened.
- Children use the playground outwith school hours because “it’s fun,” and they like “the Astro turf,” “playing with friends there,” “playing football,” and “playing hide and seek/tig.”
- Parents identified that their children are “gaining independence,” “playing with friends,” and “playing longer and more often.”
- 53% of 17 parents surveyed indicated that they felt the school playground is a safe place for their child to play. Only 12% identified that they felt it was unsafe.

## Issues/Concerns

- Teenagers using the playground – pupils feel “uncomfortable having them there.”
- Cigarette butts
- Broken glass
- Dog mess
- Fire, suspected due to homeless

## Recommendations

Issues raised need to be addressed. It is recommended that:

- CCTV and security lighting is considered, as concerns such as the vandalism, fires, broken glass and dog fouling could be deterred if the offending persons could be seen. Lighting was something that was also suggested by children in one of the focus groups.
- the playground is checked and monitored every day prior to the beginning of the school day to ensure that any litter, mess, or potential hazards for the children are found and removed before the children get to school.
- it be made clear that the opening of the school playgrounds is an extension of community space, and that security and supervision are not provided at other community play spaces such as parks. It is not feasible for schools to provide supervision at the playground 24hrs a day.

The majority of responses from the children, parents and Head Teacher who participated in this case study have indicated that the impact of opening the school playground has been very positive. 48 children surveyed at Blackness Primary School have used the school playground outwith school hours, providing them with a safe space to play with their friends. Given the positive impact that opening the school playground has had on at least these 48 children, it is recommended that the school playgrounds remain open.