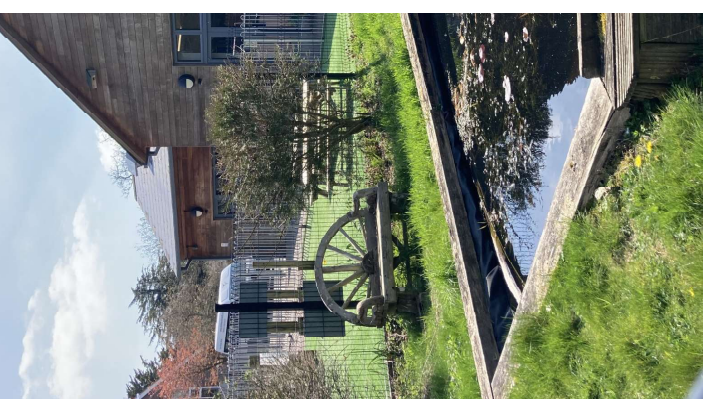
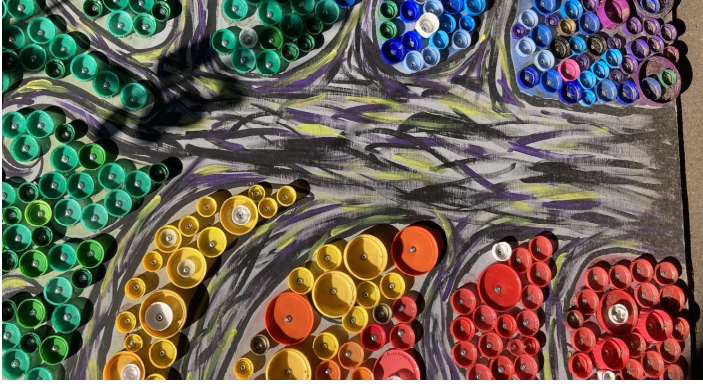
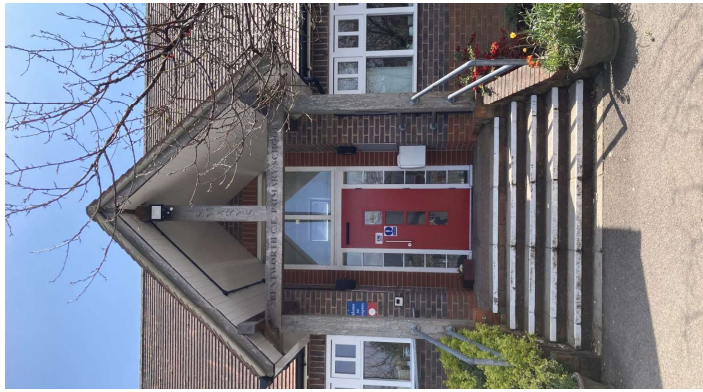




# St Marys Bentworth C of E Primary School School Grounds NOW & FUTURE

Report from the Landscape Strategy Workshops  
September and October 2023



Property Services

## "LOVE, RESPECT, BELONG"

Completed February 2024

## Introduction

Two workshops were planned to support development of a Landscape Strategy for the school grounds at St Marys Bentworth Primary School. This Strategy will help 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 **18th September and 5th October 2023**. 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?”

All school pupils within the school, governors, a number of parents attended Workshop 1 with all teaching staff attending the second session after school. .

- **Rate the Space** ps 3-4
- **Key points** pg 5
  - **Play, Socialising, Breaks and Lunchtimes**
  - **Outdoor Teaching & Learning**
  - **Natural Environment**
  - **Health and Wellbeing**
  - **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.

- **Vision** pg 6
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# Where are we NOW?

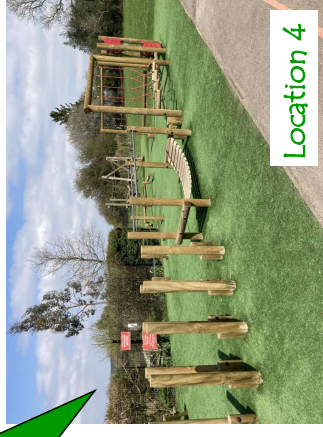
## Rate the Space—

All pupils and staff looked at images of the school grounds (as illustrated below and on the next page), and feedback was then given at the workshop to discuss all aspects of the grounds as they currently are, including the positive and negative aspects of them. The information below is a culmination of all that was discussed by everyone at the workshop.



Location 1

**Location 1 is known as the Main Entrance and the Quiet Area.** It is used by everyone who enters the school during the day, including parents, pupils, teaching staff and visitors. It is also the designated space for calmer activities slightly away from the playground in the winter months when the field can't be used. It was described as feeling "nice, welcoming, a little bit tired, shabby, busy, safe and relaxing". Quality of the space was rated as 6/10, and Use 10/10 as used every day and by many.



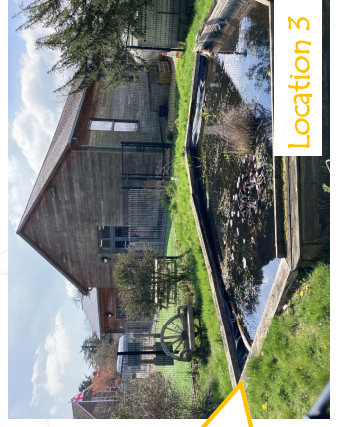
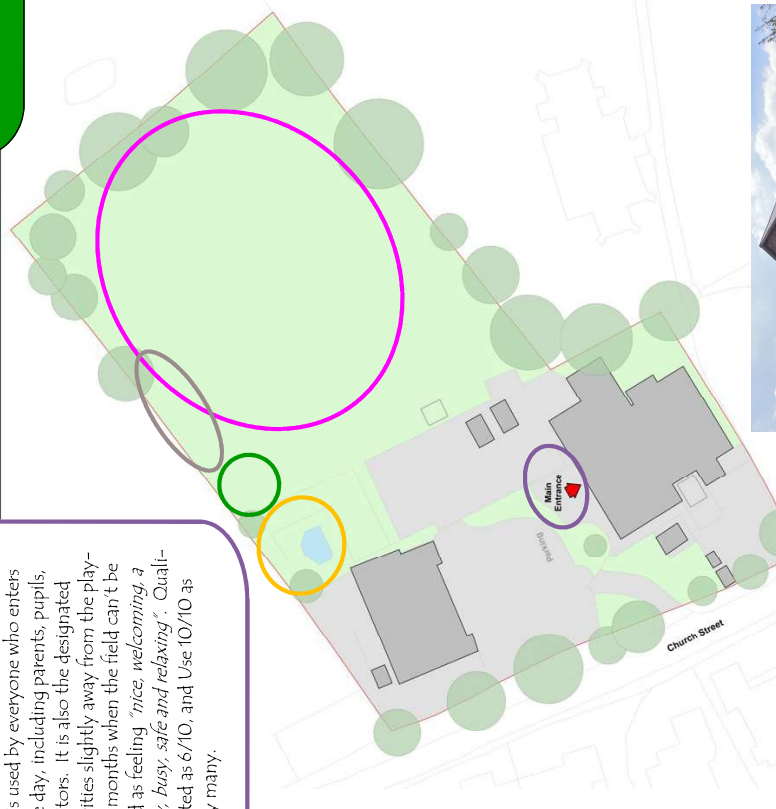
Location 4

**Location 4 is the Trim Trail** which was described as the place for making friends, climbing, playing on and having fun! It is "an exciting space".... Both Quality and Use were rated as 9/10 as its fairly new and well maintained, and is the place you would go to if you were bored.



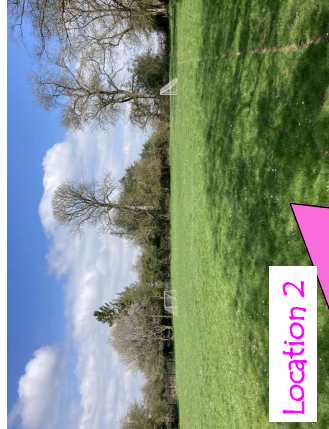
Location 5

**Location 5 is the Willow and is a space known for being nice to sit within in the shade and as a nice calm space to be within.** Quality was rated as 5/10 as it is recognised it takes a lot of maintenance and sometimes it looks like it really needs it. The Use of the area though is dependant on the wasps who are attracted to it and cause a problem.



Location 3

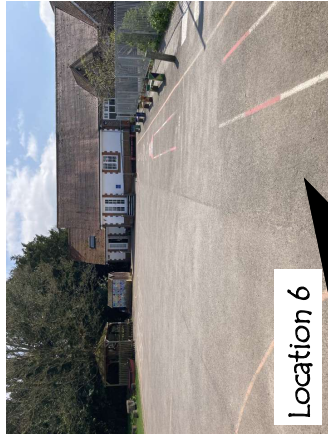
**Location 3 is known as The Pond area and is used for pond dipping, science, and learning about nature.** The area was described as rarely used although feeling calm, peaceful and interesting. Quality was rated as 6/10, but Use only at 3/10 as rarely used by any year group.



Location 2

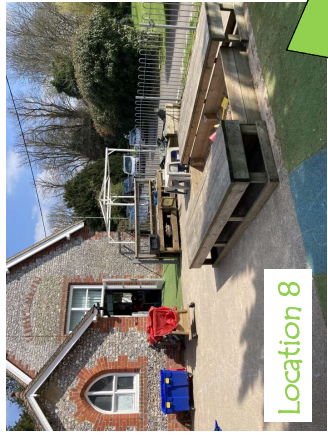
**Location 2 is The Field and is very popular space with everyone in school.** It is a space used for free play, having fun, sport, PE lessons, community events and fundraisers. It is described as feeling "energetic, fun, soggy, exciting, open, shady, overgrown, noisy, bright and tidy". Quality was rated as 9/10 as it is well looked after and always good to play on, but the amount it is used was rated on as 6/10 as it is currently a seasonal space.

# Where are we NOW?...Cont'd



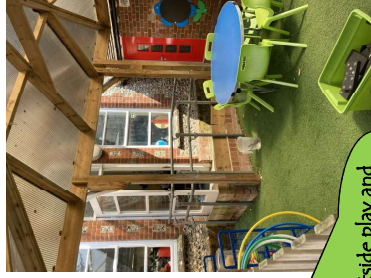
Location 6

Location 6 is known as The Playground and is an all year round place of free play and sports use. The space is described as "hard, strong, useful and practical, but also boring to look at when not being used". It was also described as "a bit worrying when being used as a car park". Quality was rated as 7/10 but Use as 10/10.



Location 8

Location 8 is the Oak Class (Year R) outside play and learning area. This is a much loved area and described as fun and exciting by all the children using it. Quality was rated as 10/10 as well resourced and well maintained and Use 10/10 as used every day and in all weathers by the youngest age group of pupils.



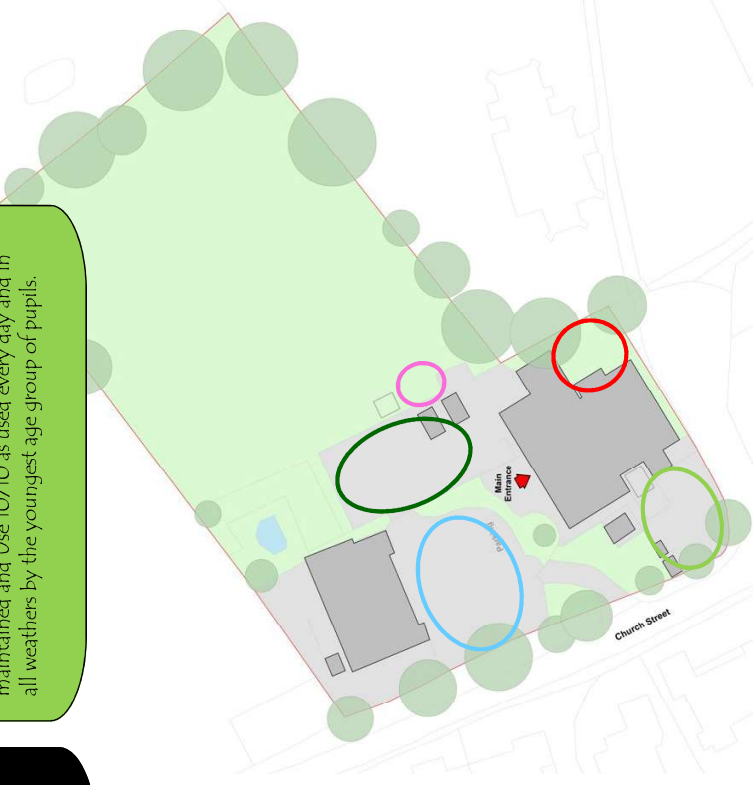
Location 9

Location 9 is known as the Gazebo and a very popular area both for playing in, but also for sitting with friends in the shade. It was described as "a cool place you can meet with your friends, happy, and a place to sit down". Quality was thought of as high with an average score of 8/10 and Use 9/10 as used by a large number of pupils for both play, talking or shelter.



Location 7

Location 7 is a space that used a thoroughfare to the church, and also by pupils arriving by bus into school, but rarely as a space in itself. Descriptions of the space were mostly "plain, boring and bland" as nothing happens there. Use of the area scored highly as 10/10 as a very necessary space for access and quality too as it looks neat and tidy, but it wasn't thought of as a purposeful space currently.



Location 10 is the car park and is used during the school day for parking for staff, the minibus and visitors if space. It is a functional space yet described as "plain, boring and scary" by pupils. It was mentioned that the lack of pavement at the front of the school here is a real point of concern and a worry for many. Quality and use of the area both scored highly, but a redesign of the whole of this frontage area to take into account both pedestrian and vehicle movement would be much appreciated by the school and its community.



Location 10

# 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

- The frontage of the school was one issue that was mentioned by many, and is understood to need addressing as a project with HCC Property Managers further. The current layout is seen as a managed but confused mixture of pedestrian and vehicle movement that is needed to accommodate both school and community use with little available space to park around the school.
- Children arriving on the school minibus access the grounds from the church side to enable a safe route on to the playground and many parents park there too to enable drop off. Pick up at the end of the day though requires the school grounds to be opened up to enable car access onto the playground which is well managed by staff but is understood to be congested.
- Many thought the frontage could be made more attractive and welcoming

## Health and Well Being

- The teaching staff all recognized that although there is a large amount of open space for pupils to enjoy being physically active within throughout the year, quieter spaces are limited and often in areas that are out of bounds for large parts of the year.
- The Gazebo, Willow areas and the front of school are currently considered the places suitable for that but neither have appropriate seating as spaces to sit and talk with friends and are not designated as such and so are still places some pupils will run through.
- It was also discussed that there is a need for the staff to have an allocated place to sit outside with friends and colleagues when on breaks, away from the children, and in order to have time in the sunshine and fresh air during the school day.

## The Natural Environment

- All at the school are aware of the beautiful natural surroundings that the school is set within and the natural environment plays an important role in school life.
- The grounds are used for activities such as pond dipping, plant identification, habitat studies, gardening and watching fruit and vegetables grow.
- They are also very aware of the varied wildlife that visit the grounds including moles, rabbits, hedgehogs and many birds as well as those less popular such as the wasps that are attracted to the willow.
- Tree identification recognizes the oak, ash, lime and elder that are all within the grounds, and wooden objects around the periphery are known as a brilliant places to find micro habitats beneath.
- The natural environment is perfect for Treasure and Easter Egg hunts.

## Play, Breaktimes and Socialising

- A wide range of activities take place at play and breaktimes including: football, running, hide and seek, active play on the trim trail, board games, reading and colouring. Role play also happens in the willow area, the gazebo and the boat.
- Use of all the areas is limited sadly due to the numbers available and supervision needed.
- It was mentioned that a lack of seating around the grounds limits those who would like to just sit with friends, and talk.
- Storage sheds in their current locations limit clear sight lines and so sadly some areas are "out of bounds" due to not being able to see behind them.

## Outdoor Learning and Early Years

- Although the school grounds are used throughout the year for some subjects eg—sport, this is often restricted to the hard playground areas and rarely extends further. The pond area is sometimes used for science but infrequently and the field area is considered too muddy in the winter months to access for anything.
- Oak class all have wellies and access the whole site throughout the year for winter walks, English hooks, maths and shape hunts but as you progress through the school access for teaching and learning becomes less frequent.
- The Trim Trail area is often used for pupils requiring brain breaks but this is due to it being readily accessible from hard surfaced pathways and having all weather surfacing for year round use.

## Context and Community

- The school plays a vital hub within the heart of the village, hosting several community events within its standalone hall facility throughout the year.
- The car park is used by the church community every Sunday, for Parish Council meetings, and as a Poling Station at times of elections. It is also used for birthday parties, yoga, movie club and for a range of private functions arranged privately.
- The grounds are also used as a space for annual community celebrations such as the Bentworth Fete, and on site there is a clothes recycling bin for people to access freely throughout the week.
- The school PTA

# Where do we want to be?....



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*"Our Vision" – Participants worked individually to complete the sentence, "We would like our school grounds to be a place where....."*

## Responses from pupils in Oak and Ash classes....

- Relax
- Respect
- We belong
- Happy
- We can play with balls
- We can challenge ourselves
- There is a climbing frame
- We can play cops and robbers everyday
- We can have exciting things
- More hiding trees
- There are more sand pits
- We can play hide and seek
- Something lives!
- It is safe
- We can run around
- We can have different sections to be active and different sections to be calm

## Responses from pupils in Lime and Elder classes....

- We could paint the gazebo
- we can grow things, flowers or vegetables
- There is an outdoor library
- We can create an outdoor well-being area with fragrant flowers
- Calm
- We have more things to do in the winter
- Outside gym
- We can be close to nature
- Exercise is available
- Fun and excitement flows around us instead of sadness
- Lots of smiles
- More spaces so less injuries
- Visibility for the monitoring staff but a feeling of independence for the children
- We can be safe and be happy
- All areas are accessible all year round
- We can learn, play, and meet people
- There are separate spaces for the older and younger children when playing
- We can learn about plants and animals
- There is still a space to use when it is wet or is in winter
- People can be more active, e.g. a trampoline
- Make friends and have a slide
- There are more supplies to make dens
- There is a place to chill out so the children can build things
- Everyone can play a game they wish to
- There is plenty of shade
- There is annual learning
- We can do more art
- Have a pool and some monkey bars
- There is an athletics track
- We can eat lunch in shade or sun
- There are more places to hide and explore
- We have better equipment
- We have different spaces like a football pitch, relaxing area, and the busy area.
- Extend trim trail

## Responses from teaching and support staff....

- We can teach the next generation a more sustainable future
- Children have the space to de-escalate themselves if needed
- Children have freedom
- All people of the grounds can be used to their full potential
- We can grow
- Children can get messy
- There are quiet spaces for all to use
- Children enjoy physical activity and be at one with nature
- Things happen
- Children can play independently, alone and in all weathers and at any time of year
- Nature is valued everywhere
- Children can imagine
- We can fall in love with nature
- Relax
- We can learn about our local wildlife
- Children can have a choice about where they wish to play and what with
- Children and staff and happy
- Learning is beyond the classroom
- There is lots to do
- Calm places available
- All spaces have a purpose
- Children can explore the natural environment through their inquisitiveness
- Children can take calculated risks without saying no due to worry of safety
- Everyone of differing skills and abilities can have choice and are able to be themselves
- We can explore
- Learning outside happens as much as play

# Where do we want to be?...

## Future spaces

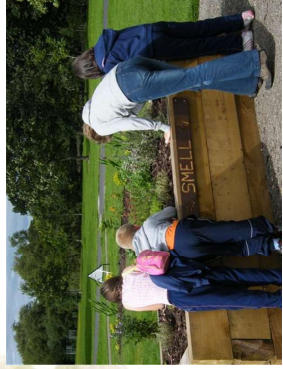
Pupils looked at a wide range of photos to inspire them and then made a record of the types of spaces they would like to include in the grounds. Areas of purposeful spaces, and how they felt they could be used were discussed and are show below....



# Zoning Plan 1 from Workshop 2

## Zoning Plan 1

Teaching staff worked in groups, looking at photos to inspire them and then using maps to 'Zone' the school grounds and further refine the ambition for the future. Each group presented how they would like to see the grounds develop over time. Copies of each groups work is included here and has been used to draft the **Emerging Key Principles** and the **Emerging Strategy Plan**.



- Ideas from Group 1 included:**
- Gardening Area — including herb garden
  - Outdoor Classroom with a fire pit and seating
  - Natural Play area with fallen trees and a natural walkway that links with the,
  - Den Building Area
  - Amphitheatre for working together in groups and performances
  - Reading Shed
  - Good storage for PE equipment
  - Outdoor Library and,
  - Natural seating throughout

