PARKDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Learning to Love . Loving to Learn

IMPROVING PLAY PROVISION – A PLAN FOR ACTION

Improving Lunchtime Play

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our recent survey about improving dinnertime play. We received **91 responses**, giving us a rich and valuable picture of what families and staff feel would help make playtimes more enjoyable, active and inclusive for all pupils.

We are pleased to share that **80% of respondents** strongly supported **increasing children's access to the school field and the Forest School area** during lunchtimes. Families also indicated they would be willing to send children to school with **appropriate footwear and outer clothing**—such as wellies, waterproofs or sturdy trainers—to make this possible in the **spring and autumn terms**, when the ground can be softer underfoot.

Thank You

We are extremely grateful for the positive and constructive feedback from both staff and families. Your input plays a key role in ensuring that our dinnertime environment supports fun, safety, wellbeing and high-quality play for every child.

Our Intent

The school is committed to developing a **richer, more varied and more child-centred play environment**. Our aim is to ensure that children experience high-quality play opportunities that support:

- **Physical activity**
- **Creativity and imagination**
- **Social development and teamwork**
- **Exploration and connection with nature**
- **Emotional wellbeing and resilience**

This work links strongly with **Bob Hughes' Taxonomy of Play**, which describes the wide range of play types—such as physical, imaginative, social, exploratory, creative and deep play—that children need in order to learn, grow and thrive. By planning our spaces and resources around these principles, we can ensure that every child has access to the kind of play that suits their needs and interests.

What We Heard From the Community

Your feedback highlighted several important messages:

From Parents and Carers

- Widespread support for **greater use of the field and Forest School**.
- Strong willingness to provide **suitable clothing and footwear** to enable more outdoor play across the year.
- Encouragement for the school to bring in **more natural materials and upcycled resources** to support creative, imaginative and nature-based play.
- Appreciation for staff efforts and a desire to see lunchtimes continue to become more engaging and inclusive.

From Staff

- Enthusiasm for improving the quality and variety of play.
- Recognition that expanding access to certain areas (e.g., field and Forest School) may increase **demands around managing additional footwear, mud, and movement between spaces**.
- Requests for **practical solutions and clear routines** to make this manageable and safe for all.

We want to reassure staff that these concerns are heard and taken seriously. As part of this development, the school will explore **creative, simple and sustainable approaches**, such as:

- Designated outdoor footwear storage solutions.
- Rotational access to certain areas.
- Clearly set-up play zones to support supervision.
- Trial periods to test new routines before permanent changes are made.

Next Steps

Over the coming weeks we will:

1. **Create a detailed action plan** outlining the development of zones, resources and routines.
2. **Expand loose-parts and natural play materials**, using both purchased items and community donations.

3. **Pilot increased access** to the field and/or Forest School area with selected year groups, with clear guidance on clothing.
4. **Provide staff training** to support confidence in supervising a full range of play types.
5. **Share regular updates** with families and staff as new approaches are tested and refined.

Improving Dinnertime Play Provision: Action Plan

Introduction and Context

The school is fortunate to have a wide range of outdoor spaces and facilities, including an extensive field with sports pitches, a trim trail, an outdoor gym, a MUGA-type surface, a concrete playground, an outdoor classroom, a climbing wall, outdoor table tennis tables and an amphitheatre. Current play equipment is limited, but the school has the capacity to expand both the quantity and variety of play resources through strategic purchases and community donations.

Dinnertimes are supervised by a committed team of **midday supervisors and play leaders**, and the school is keen to enrich and diversify play experiences so that children are more active, creative, socially engaged and emotionally supported during the lunchtime period. The school also has a **Forest School area**, which is not currently open during dinner times but could be considered as part of the school's ambition to enhance natural, loose-parts and upcycled play opportunities.

The overarching aim is to ensure that dinnertime provision better reflects **Bob Hughes' Taxonomy of Play**, enabling all children to access a broader, richer range of play types that support development, wellbeing and enjoyment.

Bob Hughes' Taxonomy of Play

Bob Hughes, a leading play theorist, identified **16 distinct Play Types** that describe the full breadth of how children play. They are designed to help adults understand, protect and plan for a rich play environment. In summary, the play types include:

- **Physical Play:** Running, climbing, ball games, rough-and-tumble.
- **Locomotor Play:** Movement without equipment, such as skipping, chasing and jumping.
- **Mastery Play:** Overcoming challenges—e.g., climbing higher, exploring limits.
- **Object Play:** Using and manipulating objects, including loose parts.
- **Rules-Based Play:** Games with formal or informal rules such as football or tag.
- **Social Play:** Interaction, negotiation, teamwork and imaginative social engagement.

- **Symbolic, Role and Fantasy Play:** Pretend play, acting out scenarios, character play.
- **Communication Play:** Rhymes, jokes, hand signals, chants.
- **Imaginative Play:** Inventing worlds, stories or scenarios.
- **Deep Play:** Engaging with manageable risk to build resilience.
- **Exploratory Play:** Investigating materials, nature or environments.
- **Creative Play:** Building, constructing, designing and expressing ideas.
- **Dramatic and Socio-Dramatic Play:** Acting out situations and real-life roles.
- **Recapitulative Play:** Incorporating themes related to human history or cultural identity.

The goal is not to force all types of play to happen at all times, but to **design an environment** where as many as possible can naturally occur, allowing children to choose freely and play in ways that match their interests and needs.

Dinnertime Play Improvement Action Plan

Aim

To develop a lunchtime play environment that is inclusive, engaging and aligned with **Bob Hughes' Taxonomy of Play**, ensuring opportunities for physical, creative, imaginative, social and natural play are accessible to all children.

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1. Audit and Zoning of Existing Spaces

Actions

- Conduct a full **audit of current use** of each outdoor space.
- Identify any underused areas and potential enhancements.
- Introduce **zoning** that supports different play types, for example:
    - **Physical and Locomotor Play Zone:** MUGA, sports field, climbing wall.
    - **Quiet Social/Creative Zone:** Amphitheatre, outdoor classroom.
    - **Loose-Parts / Natural Play Zone:** Near trees, edges of field, or within a controlled Forest School area (if opened).
    - **Games Zone:** Table tennis tables, playground markings.

Success Criteria

- Clear, purposeful spaces that encourage a variety of play types.
- Increased participation across diverse zones.

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2. Expanding Play Resources and Equipment

Actions

- Gradually expand the range of **sports equipment** (balls, skipping ropes, hoops).
- Introduce **loose-parts resources** such as crates, tyres, den-building materials, fabric, pipes, planks, cardboard reels.
- Source **natural and upcycled materials** through family/community donations.
- Create a secure, organised storage system managed by play leaders.

Play Types Supported

- Object Play, Creative Play, Exploratory Play, Social Play, Fantasy Play, Mastery Play.

Success Criteria

- A wider range of self-directed play behaviours.
- Equipment used safely and frequently.

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3. Enhancing Natural Play Opportunities

Actions

- Decide whether to safely open the **Forest School area** for supervised dinnertime sessions (e.g., rotational access).
- If closed, create a **mini nature zone** on the field with logs, branches, stones, and natural loose parts.
- Train staff on supervising **risky play** and allowing healthy challenge.

Play Types Supported

- Deep Play, Exploratory Play, Symbolic Play, Mastery Play, Creative Play.

Success Criteria

- Greater engagement with nature and constructive risk-taking.
- Children demonstrating improved problem-solving and resilience.

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4. Developing Staff Expertise in Playwork

Actions

- Provide training in:
  - Bob Hughes' Play Types.
  - Playwork principles.
  - Positive behaviour support during play.
  - Managing loose-parts play safely.
- Introduce a **"Play Champion"** within the midday supervisor team.

Success Criteria

- Staff confidence increases.
- Positive adult involvement that supports—not directs—play.

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5. Introducing Structured Opportunities Without Over-Formalising Play

Actions

- Offer optional, child-led activities such as:
  - Small-sided sports games.
  - Dance zones.
  - Rotating themed play boxes (e.g., construction, role play, small world fantasy).
- Maintain **choice** as central to the play experience.

Play Types Supported

- Rules-Based, Social, Dramatic, Imaginative, Physical.

Success Criteria

- More children actively engaged at lunchtime.
- Improved behaviour and social interaction.

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6. Involving Children in Decision-Making

Actions

- Establish a **Play Council** from KS1 and KS2 pupils.
- Conduct regular surveys or "play patrol" observations with children.
- Allow pupils to co-design loose-parts areas and create new play rules.

Success Criteria

- Children feel ownership of the playground environment.
- Play provision evolves based on pupil needs and interests.

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7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Actions

- Track participation levels, behaviour incidents and use of zones.
- Gather staff and pupil feedback each half term.
- Adjust equipment, supervision patterns and zoning accordingly.

Success Criteria

- Sustained improvement in engagement, inclusivity and wellbeing.
- Clear evidence of diverse play behaviours linked to Bob Hughes' taxonomy.

Conclusion

By intentionally designing lunchtime provision around **Bob Hughes' Taxonomy of Play**, the school can create richer, more varied and more meaningful play experiences. This approach celebrates physical activity, creativity, social development, nature connection and child-led exploration, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive during playtime.