

Looking for inspiration?

If you need inspiration for your school grounds changes, why not visit another school that has already improved its grounds?

If you don't have a suitable school near you other sources of inspiration include public gardens, parks, and other spaces.

During your visit

What do you like?

On your visit, take photos of things you like – this might include designs, colours, textures, materials, plants or equipment. Don't worry if you can't yet see how it could be included in your grounds – you're just collecting inspiration.

What don't you like?

Make sure you also take pictures of all the things you definitely don't like.

After your visit

The Bad Board

- Make a collage of the photos of things you didn't like.
- Label the pictures with words that explain your feelings, e.g.
Too young;
Boring;
Looks cold.
- Create a table like this:

What we don't like	Opposites
Too young Boring Looks cold	Grown up Exciting Looks warm

- Copy the labels from your pictures into the left-hand column
- In the right-hand column write the opposites, e.g.
Grown-up;
Exciting;
Looks warm.
- Does the right-hand column describe how you would like your grounds to be?

The Mood Board

- Use the photos of the things you liked to create a mood board – you can also add pictures from other sources like magazines.
- Add words to explain why you like the pictures, and how the features you like could be used in your school grounds.

Describing your Vision

- Use all the ideas you have gathered to write a statement of your vision for the school grounds.
You could start:

Our new school grounds will be . . .

School grounds focus:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How can we get there?
- Making the changes
- Using your grounds

Curriculum focus:

- English and literacy
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- PSE/Citizenship
- Key skills: communication, ICT, working with others

Purpose of this activity:

- To visit another school, or other public outdoor space, to seek inspiration for your school grounds project.
- For pupils to work together to explore their opinions about how they would like the grounds to be.

Equipment / materials needed:

- Digital cameras are ideal, as pupils can then use ICT to produce their work, but if not available, they could use disposable cameras.
- Other sources of visual inspiration like the Internet, suppliers' catalogues or magazines.

Preparation:

- Pupils should have started surveying their own school grounds and identifying what the school's needs are.
- Pupils could be involved in planning the trip, for example contacting the other school, investigating transport options.
- Ensure you have followed your school's policies on off-site visits, e.g. risk assessments, letters to parents.

What to do:

- Before and during the visit, emphasise to pupils that they do not need to just look for ideas that could be directly transferred. For example, pupils might like the materials used for playground equipment which could be used for seating or shelter.
- When pupils express likes and dislikes, help them to explore the reasons. For example, pupils who visited a wildlife garden in the winter were adamant they did not want their grounds to have plants. It turned out that it was the untidy nature of the dormant plants they did not like, which led them to the fact that they wanted something that would look tidy and colourful all year round.
- If you are looking at improving several parts of your grounds, pupils could create different mood boards for the different areas – e.g. a social area and an outdoor classroom.

Extension:

- Pupils could use the photos collected to survey opinions from other pupils. For example, creating voting posters for pupils to show which pictures they like with sticky dots, or to add their own comments.
- The mood board and vision statement will be valuable ways of communicating with any professional designer you might use to help with your project.

© This resource was originally created as part of the Schoolgrounds-UK membership scheme from the national school grounds charity

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