School Grounds Audit

Why audit school grounds?

The purpose of the school grounds audit is to assess the way in which the area surrounding school buildings is used for aesthetic, educational, recreational and environmental purposes.

School grounds have many uses and contribute to the overall benefits of a school in a number ways.

Aesthetic

Students, staff, parents and visitors attend the school on a daily basis. An attractive and welcoming entrance and building surrounds, promotes the atmosphere of the school-learning environment immediately. A welcoming place is established for all.

Gardens have often been established over long periods of time and may have links with the historical development of the school. These links need to be preserved.

Educational

School grounds are an invaluable learning resource for integrating environmental education into KLAs. School grounds can be used as an extension to the classroom for many subjects. Outdoor learning can be linked directly to subjects such as Science and Technology and PDHE through the development of specialist areas such as a natural bushland, a wetland, climbing frame, sports field or fitness track. Other subject areas, such as Maths, English, or Art can use the grounds in which to extend the usual classroom experiences. An outdoor classroom, gardens, open playing fields can support a variety of these lessons.

Spaces large enough to cope with whole school assemblies, special occasions, sports days etc need to be considered and positioned carefully.

Recreational
Students need to be supported by a wide variety of areas in which they can participate in passive or active recreational opportunities. At various times of the year, different activities predominate and may require a variety of spaces. A quiet area under a tree may provide a pleasant shady space in summer, however in winter could be too exposed and cold.

Students who require a quiet position to sit and chat need to be away from the open spaces used for football and noisy active games.

All students need the opportunity to choose the type of space to support their preferences for recreation during recess and lunchtimes.

Environmental
Schools cover a relatively large area of land, often in heavily populated areas. This means that the school grounds become an important link in a suburb's biodiversity. Vegetation, birds, animals and insects can coexist with the activities of students and teachers and enrich the biodiversity of an area. Schools can form part of an important wildlife corridor, linking to neighbouring bushland areas, parks and gardens.

Before **After**

Environmental problems both within the school and in a wider context can be solved at a school level. This is particularly important in the way a school

manages its stormwater. Incorporating erosion controls or water quality improvement measures within the school grounds is not only beneficial to the school, but also to the wider community. The school can become an example of best practice.

Procedure

1. Base Line Investigation

Use a map of the school to investigate the way the school grounds are used at present. Record such things as:

- Visitor entrances
- Areas of historical or cultural significance
- Temperature zones – hot and cold areas
- Play areas – where do students go if they want to play / or have a quiet chat
- Educational opportunities
- General biodiversity – gardens, grassland, bushland, buildings, asphalt, ponds

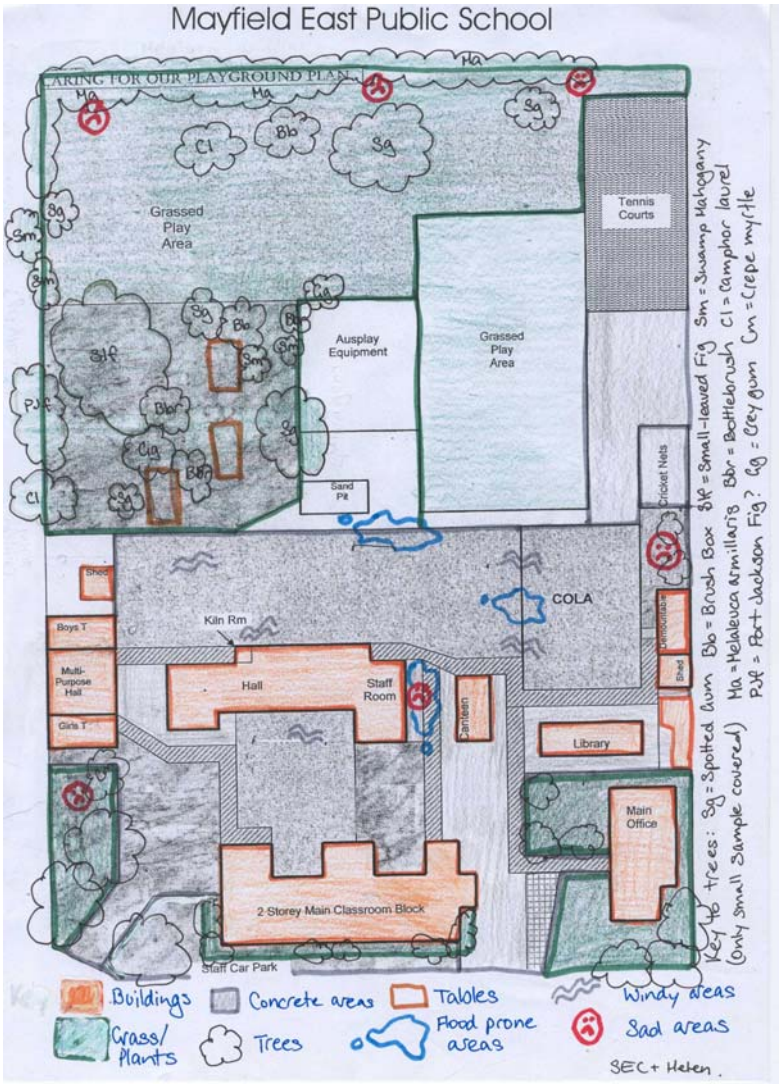
Include a walk around the school to identify these areas.

- ❖ Mapping and measurement can be integrated into the Maths syllabus.

2. Wish List

Survey the whole school community to develop a list of things that could be incorporated into the school grounds.
Prioritise these into short term / long term / unfeasible at this time.

- ❖ Various writing forms, such as surveys and listing, can be integrated into the English syllabus.



3. Biodiversity

Investigate the biodiversity of the school grounds. Include the biodiversity of:

- Habitats
- Birds
- Animals
- Invertebrates

It may be beneficial to repeat these at various times of the day and the year to build up an accurate picture.

- ❖ Identification of species, classification and counting can be integrated into Science and Maths.

4. Environmental Issues

Walk around the school and identify areas of environmental concern and potential. Look for such things as:

- Erosion caused by rain or overuse.
- Stormwater management
- Paths in inappropriate places

- Suitable places to support special initiatives eg bird attracting area; rainforest; frog pond; outdoor learning area; fitness track etc
- Areas needing more shade / cover in summer
    - ❖ Environmental surveys can be integrated into Science and HSIE.


5. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Gather all of the data collected and record on a sheet.

- Assess results
- Identify actions
- Prioritise actions.
- Record in SEMP
    - ❖ Involve the School Environment Committee in decision-making.
    - ❖ Involve P&C or other parent groups in planning.
    - ❖ Involve the whole school community in implementation.

Biodiversity Survey: Habitats

Survey up to six areas of the school grounds.
Tick each positive feature observed and cross each negative feature observed ie those with *.
Estimate a rating based on the number of ticks and crosses you record in each area.
(The higher the number of ticks, the greater the biodiversity).

Carried out by: **On:**

Biodiversity Survey: Animals

SITE	PLANTS				HABITAT	RATING
	Layers	Natives	*Weeds	Size		
	Herbs Shrubs Trees	*None Few Most	*Most *None *Some	*Small Medium Large	Nest/ Hollow Mulch Logs Rocks Water *Rubbish Leaf Litter Foliage	Poor Fair Good
Bushland A						
B						
Grassland A						
B						
Garden Bed A						
B						

Record animals sighted and evidence of animals. (Scratch marks, droppings, fur, feathers, digging, nests etc)

Carried out by: **On:**

MAMMALS	**EVIDENCE** Direct sighting, scratch marks, droppings, fur, feathers, digging, nests etc	**TALLY**	**STATUS** N=Native I=Introduced	**BEHAVIOUR / HABITAT NOTES** Eg sleeping, calling, hiding, hunting, perching, aggressive, mating etc
REPTILES		**TALLY**	**STATUS**	**BEHAVIOUR / HABITAT NOTES**
FROGS		**TALLY**	**STATUS**	**BEHAVIOUR / HABITAT NOTES**

Biodiversity Survey: Birds

Repeat this survey at various times of the day and in different seasons to develop a true picture of the types of birds that visit the school.

Carried out by: **On:**

BIRD SPECIES	**TALLY**	**DIRECT SIGHTING / EVIDENCE** **Eg droppings, feathers, nests etc**	**STATUS** N=Native I=Introduced	**BEHAVIOUR / HABITAT NOTES** Eg sleeping, calling, perching, hunting, nesting, flying etc
Australian Magpie				
Noisy Miner				
Indian Mynah				
Crimson rosella				
Sparrow				
Currawong				
AustralianRaven				

Biodiversity Survey: Invertebrates

Use a stick to gently remove mulch or soil, turn stones and small logs. Do not disturb large logs, use a stick to poke around the edges.

Look for evidence of insects on leaves, and bark. Eg chewed leaves, holes, frass, webs, cocoons, trails, cases.

Tally results of animals sighted or evidence.

Invertebrate Group	Ants	Centipedes	Millipede	Beetle	Spider	Springtail	Amphipod / Ground Hopper	Flies	Snails	Slugs	Slaters	Larvae	Termites	Cicada	Mosquito	Tick	Cricket	Other
Grassland Sighted / Evidence																		
Bushland Sighted / Evidence																		
Garden Sighted / Evidence																		