

SOVEREIGN
Bringing imagination into play

Case study

Education Installation | St Dominic Savio



“A safe play environment which allows children to explore, develop their motor skills, use their imagination and have fun with friends has been a goal of the school. The equipment has delighted the children and we are thrilled that it is at last a reality. The children now have plenty of options during playtimes and the equipment has opened up endless possibilities for learning outdoors.”

Teresa Jones, Head teacher



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After months of careful planning, St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School in Woodley, Reading, has undergone a major two-week makeover of its outdoor areas.

The issue:

Although the pupils already had access to a large play area, the school felt several features of the outside environment could be improved. This included a lack of outside play equipment to keep the children entertained, and a problem with youngsters getting muddy when running across a grass mound that separates its two playgrounds.

The resolution:

Led by two of the school's Governors, and in consultation with the Head Teacher, School Council and Teaching Staff, a strategic plan was developed for a three-year improvement plan to cover both playgrounds.

After many hours of research using product brochures and the internet, the school created a wish list of equipment and developed the ideas it wanted for the playgrounds.

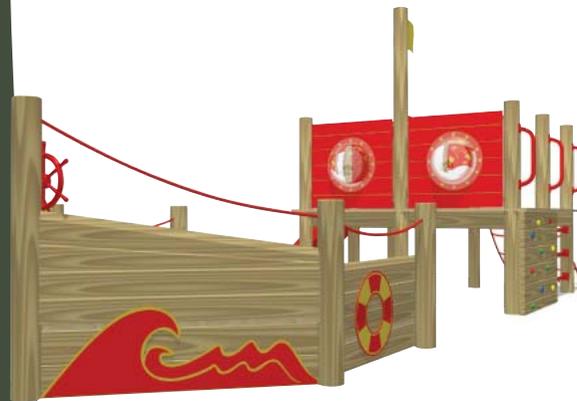
THE PROCESS

The school met with several companies to discuss its requests, following Sovereign's visit, careful plans and designs were conducted to ensure that the chosen equipment, its features and their positioning, met each of the school's requirements, especially its proposed three year plan.

During this process, St Dominic Savio was fortunate to win a competition run by Tropicana. The prize draw, entered by a grandparent of two pupils, offered entrants the chance for their nominated school to win £10,000 to spend on outdoor activity equipment. In order to win, entrants had to submit three independent quotes and designs from playground companies.

Tropicana, impressed with the school's diligent process and planned design, chose St Dominic Savio as the winners. When the school compared and contrasted its three quotes, using the needs of the school, and best value principles as its main criteria, Sovereign stood out from the others.

Representatives of Tropicana presented the winning cheque to the school on the 24 November 2009. The £10,000 would pay for an outside classroom and staging area. By this time, the planning process had been completed and the Sovereign team was on its way to installing the new equipment.



THE INSTALLATION

Area One – Adventure Trail – juniors

A challenging and manageable Footloose Trail was installed to enhance co-ordination skills. The trail, consisting of a Log Transverse, a Scramble Net Climber, a Drop Rope Transverse and Stepping Stones, provide plenty of moving activities to keep children occupied. It enables simple balancing, stretching and twisting exercises, as well as being great for imaginative use in role play. A two-stage design was submitted for the trail equipment so that it could be expanded at a later date. To complement the trail and ensure the children's safety, rubber Wetpour Safety Surfacing was laid onto the existing tarmac.

Area Two – Play Galleon – infants

To encourage active play and to incorporate role play, the 'Play Galleon' was installed. As the newest addition to Sovereign's play equipment range, this was the first installation of the product in the country. Several design locations were offered to the school to ensure the galleon was positioned in an area that maximised its play potential. Prior to installation, an existing bench was removed, and 32 Grassguard tiles were laid as part of the safety surfacing.

Area Three – Gazebo and Stage

As part of the original three-year plan, a Gazebo and Elliptical Stage were due to be installed in phase two of the project. However, the funding from the Tropicana prize draw enabled the school to develop this area at the same time as the activity areas. The Gazebo and the Stage were positioned on the grassy area in between the two tarmac playgrounds. With its wide range of uses, the Elliptical Stage provides many hours of fun for the children to practice their drama and acting skills, as well as helping to promote self confidence and social interaction. The large five metre Gazebo provides idyllic shade and shelter from a variety of weather conditions.

The area can also be used as an outdoor classroom, providing teachers with an alternative teaching environment.

Area Four – Path between Playgrounds

To overcome the issue of children getting muddy when crossing between the two tarmac areas, the area in between was made into a feature. This was done by laying down a winding bonded rubber mulch path to join the two areas creating a 'run through' path that the children can use.

Area Five – Storytelling Area – infants

The creation of a Storytelling Area was completed for infants. Positioned between two large trees, it comprises a central Storytelling Chair that invites children to gather around and listen to stories. The area is surrounded with bonded rubber mulch and is easily accessed by a dedicated pathway. A secondary benching area was also been installed to the left of the Storytelling Area to mirror an existing bench area on the right.

Area Six – Pergola Area

Last but not least, there was an alteration to the existing Pergola Area. To match with the other surfaces and provide a cleaner alternative, the bark chippings that covered the ground were replaced with rubber mulch.

THE BENEFITS

- The school has significantly enhanced the facilities at the school for both infants and juniors
- The teachers can take advantage of the outside teaching areas for non-classroom based learning
- There are more areas for the children to play during break times and to help them develop both social skills and motor based skills
- The new facilities not only provide fun and learning but also areas of shelter and shade

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