

# Grounds Advisory Newsletter

## *Toftwood Infant – new early years area*

Every school has one; a small unloved corner that appears to have no real positive purpose. Children can't play in it, cars can't park on it and the groundsmen complain about access. Toftwood Infant School had one such area. The need for additional space for early years' pupils first inspired Jo Pedlow, Head Teacher, and her staff to review a patch of grass between the car park and one wing of the school building. The area was dissected by a six foot tall chain link fence, making it even more challenging to visualise the potential.



Jo and her staff had some excellent concepts for inclusion in the new area but needed assistance pulling all these together. The school called Peter Chambers, Grounds Advisor, to assist.

Peter explains : *“Our starting point was to increase the available space by carrying out fencing work. Due to my contacts in the trade, I was able to gain a competitive quote and press on with this while we worked up plans for the new garden. This saved valuable time in the overall process.*

*We called on the expertise of David Yates, a Landscape Architect from NCC, who kindly assisted in producing a plan to encompass all the ideas we had discussed. This included a pergola, a story telling area, sensory planting, entrance arches,*

*gravel paths, tree seats and a grass mound. We also decided that in order to create a more exciting area for the children there would be changes to the ground level.*

*Additional soil would be needed to create ‘Teletubbies’ style undulations. A slide-topped sand pit was also included, sourced from a local company. All other work was carried out by Norse Projects. The site team was led by foreman Ian Howell who did a fantastic job managing the work and sorting out minor snags speedily and efficiently.*

*Whilst on site, five cultivation beds were also installed in another area of the school grounds and these will form a key part of the next phase of grounds development which will be undertaken over the next few months.*

*Working on this project has been a real pleasure and I'm sure that the children will get a great deal of enjoyment and benefit from their new garden.”*

It seems only right that the last word on this project should go to Head Teacher, Jo: *‘The new garden has transformed a previously redundant eyesore into a beautiful and very useful space for the children. The area is now used on a daily basis and provides a peaceful area for reflection and learning and has added another dimension to our provision. It has exceeded our expectations. Many thanks to Peter Chambers for managing this project for us’*



*Above and right: Toftwood Infants new early years' area*

## Growing areas

With more pressure on healthy eating, coupled with the reality that today's children have little idea of where food comes from, schools are increasingly taking on the responsibility of knowledge about food production.

Most schools have space for simple raised beds to grow crops in. Soil is contained within chunky, long-lasting landscape sleepers and, if required, a separate bed can be provided for each year group. Crops can be grown, harvested and eaten by the children. A small orchard can also be planted to provide fruit.



## Forest schools



Make use of your awkward spaces to create a woodland area suitable for Forest Schools activities. You can adapt an existing woodland or tree belt or plant up from new. Whatever you have at school, you can make an immediate start and begin to enjoy the benefits.

Children carry out tasks and activities in a woodland environment and, by having fun, they learn new skills and the value of team work. They learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. Children use full-sized tools, cook food on open fires, create dens and structures and begin to appreciate the value of the outside world. With wet weather clothing, they can use the area all year round and begin to understand the characteristics of each season.

## The sun is out but where's the shade?

The sun is out, the children want to go outside and there is not a shady tree in sight. Visions of lobster-coloured children and anxious parents at the school gate come to mind. Shade sails are the answer! Available in a range of colours and sizes, they provide an instant solution to shade provision. They can be installed in a variety of locations and offer immediate cover.



## Green is the colour — or rather it used to be!

The children are desperate to get out, but all you can think of is muddy shoes and dirty clothes. Can you keep them off the bare patch that use to be a lawn? Don't worry – we can help.

Synthetic 'No Mow grass' is ideal to replace worn out areas. A realistic appearance, good drainage and long lasting properties— a fantastic product for guaranteeing year round use.



## Tree management

Over the last 2-3 years, many schools have put in place tree policies both to meet the requirements of Norfolk County Council [*please see schools website and follow path - premises, planning & buildings, tree information and click on link tree safety management policy*] and to ensure the school's trees are managed in a safe manner. With some of these policies now due for renewal, the Grounds Advisors will be contacting those schools with recommendations and quotations.

For schools yet to put a policy in place, we are pleased to provide a survey and management plan for £470 ex vat. This includes the inspection of up to 30 trees. For more than 30 trees, an individual quotation will be provided.

### Grounds Advisory Service

Many schools have again decided to purchase the Grounds Advisory Service this year. Those that have decided not to sign up—we would like to remind you of some of the areas we can help you with.

We can provide designs, quotations and project management for:

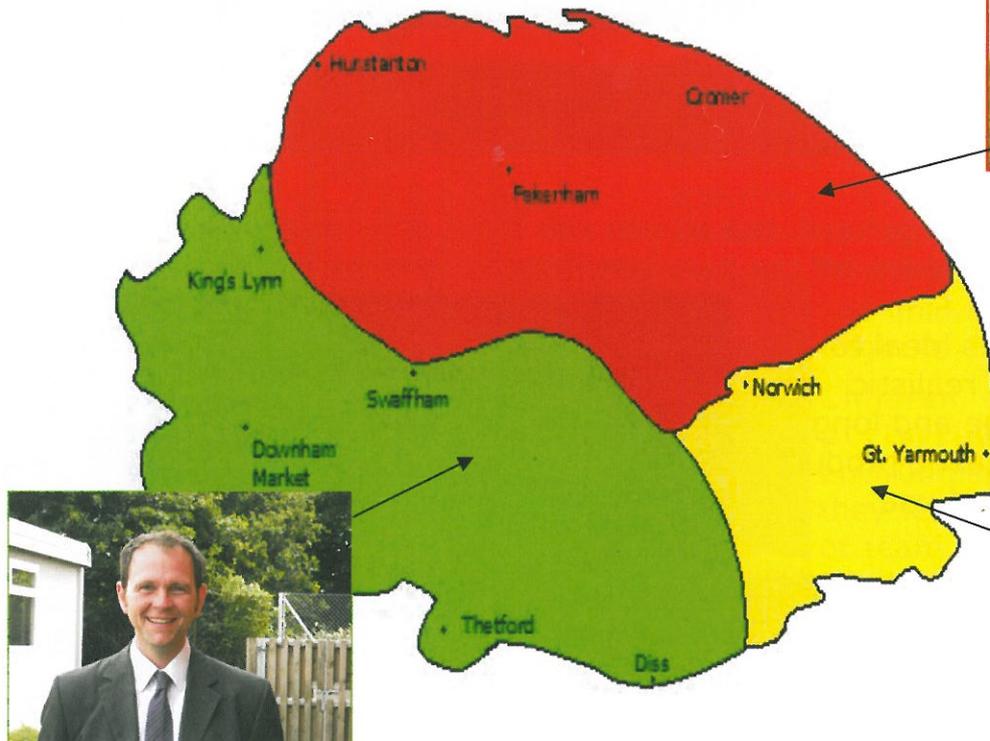
✦ General landscaping, paths, paving, lawns and turf ✦ Environmental areas ✦ Sensory gardens ✦ Food Growing ✦ Shade areas ✦ Forest schools ✦ Fencing ✦ Hard play areas ✦ Tree management ✦ Boundary/neighbour issues ✦ Selection, purchase and installation of play equipment ✦ Synthetic grass surfaces ✦

It is not too late to sign up! Contact us for a quote for the remainder of the year.



Above: *Dangerous trees need inspection before it's too late!*

## Areas covered by the Grounds Advisory Team



Nicola Richardson  
07850 609034  
North & N. West Norfolk  
nicola.richardson@ncsgrp.co.uk



Steve Coombe  
07798 668070  
Norwich & East Norfolk  
steven.coombe@ncsgrp.co.uk



Peter Chambers  
07798 668069  
South & South West Norfolk  
peter.chambers@ncsgrp.co.uk

