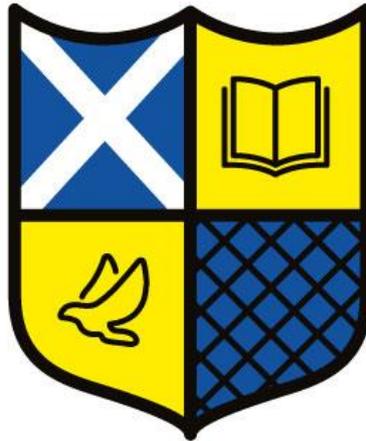


Q & A – improving the school field at St Andrew's

April 2019



1. Why are we considering installing an all-weather surface on the school field at St Andrew's ?
 - We're really lucky to have this amazing outdoor space. However, we are not able to use it nearly as much as we would like because in the winter months it becomes very waterlogged and muddy, and in the summer it can be dangerously hard because of the old foundations on the site. This presents a health and safety risk. The photo below shows what the field was like last summer – which was exceptionally bad because of the heatwave.
 - With the school expanding, our large hall is in almost constant use for meals, assemblies, collective worship, PE and rehearsals. This means that we are in even greater need of usable space for the children to enjoy, but also to meet our commitments and statutory requirements for PE provision.
 - The tarmac playground area is also increasingly crowded when the field is out of bounds.
 - Ultimately, installing an all-weather surface will give the children more opportunities for outdoor play, whether at play times, as part of PE provision, or in before and after school clubs.



St Andrew's, summer 2018

2. What activities can be played on a 3G surface ? Will this mainly be a football pitch?

- Our plan is to install a 3G (3rd Generation) all-weather surface. All the same activities that can be played on grass, including all general and imaginative play, running, skipping, jumping, athletics, rounders, football etc. can be played on this surface.
- The draft plans shown on our website and at the consultations showed markings for a football pitch on the site. This illustrated one way of using the all-weather pitch. We agree with the many parents and carers who don't want this to be a "football only" space. Our intention is to have a space that can be used for a wide range of sports and physical activities, including but not limited to ball sports. Because the space will be used for sports (among other things) we aim to have multiple markings on the surface.
- As is the case at present the school intends to manage use of the space, especially during playtimes, so that it is not dominated by any one activity.
- Children will not require special footwear to play on the surface. The only footwear that won't be usable is running spikes, and some screw-in and moulded studs as they would damage the surface. Normal shoes, plimsolls or trainers are fine.

3. What is the composition of the all-weather surface being proposed? Is it safe?

- Yes, it is a safer surface than the grass we currently have. 3G is soft and non-abrasive and the children will not hurt themselves if they fall on it.
- 3G uses a rubber crumb in-fill which helps with cushioning and supports artificial blades of grass. It has a much more attractive appearance than astroturf as it looks more like real grass and also is much softer and therefore safer. The reason 3G was recommended for the

school was because the softer surface would be more suitable for general play and running. The sample we have looked at is shown in the image below.



4. What are the alternatives to installing a 3G pitch?

- Quotes have been obtained to re-turf the field with grass. The estimated cost for this is around £50,000. In their quote, the contractor said the entire field would not be able to be used at all for 12 months and the grass would only last approximately 5 years before needing to be re-turfed. Furthermore, re-turfing would not address the issue of the field not being usable for sports for large parts of the year. It is also very unlikely that we would be able to find this level of funding for a re-turfing project and it would not be appropriate or affordable to use school funds to pay for this.
- The other alternative is to simply keep what we have. However, the quality of our grass is deteriorating every year meaning that it is likely to be used less and less in coming years.

5. Will the area be fenced off? How high will the fencing be? How high will the floodlights be?

- We will need to provide some fencing around the pitch to help protect the remaining grass and tree area surrounding the East, South and West sides, and also to protect the surface.
- Fencing will also help protect children from being hit by stray balls when the area is used for ball sports – this is a concern at present.
- To the north – the school side – we plan to have “staggered” fencing so that it fulfils the needs above without being fully closed or gated. However we are also looking into whether there are other safe and practical options.
- We have not taken a firm decision on the height of the fencing but like most children, parents and carers we would not want to surround the space with a high fence. We would certainly not want fencing any higher than 3ft on the north (school) side which along with staggered fencing would help keep the open feel.

6. What about the loss of the natural space?

- Many prospective St Andrew's parents are excited by the school field when they first visit – and indeed we are privileged to have something that very few schools have.
- We are committed to our children being able to learn about and enjoy the natural environment. In planning this project we have been mindful of the need to balance the need to provide safe playing and sports space with the need to keep natural areas. The image shown on the plans so far shows the area of grass and trees that will remain, but we want to do much more than that – our Reception children have been enjoying “Forest School” which we would like to expand to other years in the future. We are looking for ideas on how to make the tree area usable for quiet time and reading, and we hope to improve the planting and set up a gardening club, as well as developing or using the pond. While we need to make sure our sports field serves us well for our PE and sports curriculum, we agree that it is vital that children can use the outdoor space in all sorts of ways and we will organise it accordingly.
- We have not calculated the exact proportion of the whole area that will be covered by the new surface but we estimate that round 30% of the existing area will remain as grass and trees.

7. Will the space be used at breaktime for play?

- Yes the space will still be usable at playtime – in fact it will be used more often as it is an all-weather surface.

8. How will the after-school clubs that currently use the playing field be affected? What about the summer fair and sports days?

- The field would continue to be available for the after school clubs – both the sports clubs and other clubs with outdoor activities, as it is at present when safe to use.
- In recent years we have had to curtail some of the sports day events because of the poor condition of the field – so for instance it has been a few years since we have been able to use it for a 200m running track. With the new surface a 200m circular track would not be possible but the space would be used for sports days. The new surface will mean that sports day will only have to be cancelled if the weather is really dreadful.
- The summer fair would continue to take place on the playground, with games in the field, as it has in the past.

9. What are the plans with the outdoor classroom and fort - are they staying, going or being relocated?

- This question is still up for discussion. The fort is somewhat seldom used and at present we feel that removing it would allow for a better flow between the current tarmac play area and the all-weather surface. We don't intend to remove the trim-trail, and we are currently discussing what to do with the covered outdoor classroom with the staff and children.

10. How will this project be funded? What will it cost?

- This is a large capital project. Depending on the exact specifications, we anticipate that it could cost in the region of £150,000-£200,000. Clearly this is well beyond the means of a school, and we could not consider trying to fund this out of school funds.
- No funding has yet been obtained or committed for this project. From our initial investigations, we cannot realistically apply for funding until we have secured planning permission, which is why a planning application is the next step.
- In our initial exploration of possible sources, we have identified that a promising avenue would be to apply for funding from organisations interested in developing grassroots sports. Many parents have asked us if this is funded by the FA – it isn't, but we would certainly look into it. We know that there is a dearth of all-weather facilities in our part of the city. However, this type of funder would also be very likely to expect that any facility it helped to develop would be made available for community use outside of school hours. We expand on this question below under the question on conditions.
- The likelihood of being asked by a funder to make the facility available for community use has some implications for the design – most importantly, the installation of floodlights since these would not be needed in school hours.
- Depending on what external funding we can secure we may need to provide some matched funding. The local authority has indicated in the past that it may be able to make a contribution. We can also potentially draw on the school governor fund, which are not the same as school funding from the local authority. Indeed the initial design and planning application costs would need to come from the governor fund.

11. What are the conditions attached to funding?

- Until we have an offer of funding we won't know what these conditions are, but we agree that it is important to go into any arrangement with a proper understanding of any conditions that are attached. As noted above, the only reason for considering this project is that it will be in the best interests of the children and this would inform the conditions under which we accept funding. In all circumstances this would remain our school field and in school and after school club time would be for the exclusive use of St Andrew's children.
- As noted under the question on funding above, funders are likely to expect that as well as benefiting the school this project would benefit the wider community – for instance by making it available for rental outside of school use hours.

12. Will it be rented out? How will the upkeep be paid for?

- As noted above, most funders would expect that their grant would help build a facility that would be available for wider community use. However, regardless of what any funders require, if we had such a facility we would look to rent it out outside of school hours. The rental income we receive from renting out the halls after school, at weekends and in the holidays is in keeping with our wish to be an "outward-facing" school, and provides very important additional funds that we spend on improving the school. It also helps ensure we meet our obligation to contribute 10% of the costs of any government-funded capital expenditure in the school.

- We would charge the going rate for community lettings of this type of facility. We estimate that the income will more than help pay for maintenance of the surface and any surplus would be used towards funding capital projects for the school.
- If the space is rented out for football, the size of the area is suitable for 7-a-side children's games; our intention would be to rent it out to junior rather than adult teams.

13. How long will the build take? When will it happen?

- It should take about 6 weeks. We would plan to build this project during summer holidays to reduce the impact on the school.
- This means it is very unlikely it would happen in 2019 since finalising the design, planning permission, and securing funding all take time.

14. Will the rental generate more traffic and parking problems?

- Any planning permission request will need to include a transport statement addressing these issues. Any traffic associated with rentals will be limited to times after the school is closed so will not impact on the school and pupils directly. However, we appreciate that residents will have concerns, especially given the current difficulties we have in the area with parents parking at drop off and pick up times.
- If the space is developed and made available for rentals we would also make available our staff car park (adjacent to the path towards Tesco) in order to eliminate any impact on residents' parking. We would also plan to add an access gate directly from the car park to the field in order to avoid users walking through the street and main gates.

15. How have the views of parents been taken into account?

- The Governors decided to look seriously at how to improve the field towards the end of 2017. At the March 2018 Parent's evening, the school conducted a survey with parents and carers during which we asked for comments on the statement "I think the development of a 3G surface for play and for sport is a good idea in principle". Of the 137 who completed the survey, 56% strongly agreed, 27% agreed, 4% disagreed, 4% disagreed and 8% said they did not know.
- In addition the following comments were written in by those not in favour:
 - It will take too long to construct
 - I don't like it
 - It's not good value for money
 - I'd like more information
- Those in favour said:
 - Please keep a green area/nature area around it (6 made a comment along these lines)
 - Please hurry up!
 - Have we thought about half and half?
 - We could rent it out
 - Can we have more parent socials?
 - Can we have a chicken house too?

- These comments informed our thinking on the plans, and we hope we have been able to respond to some of the concerns of those not in favour (related to value for money, time for construction and the need for more information).
- In March we held two discussions. The public consultation was aimed primarily at neighbours who may be impacted by the project, and we posted invitations to 160 households and businesses around the school. Some parents and prospective parents attended this meeting. In addition the subject came up at Mrs Thomas's first "parent think tank", where a number of the concerns discussed in this document were shared.
- A further meeting for the school community is planned for 8th May 2019, from 6-7pm. Local residents who have contacted us have been contacted separately to arrange a discussion.

16. How have the views of children been taken into account?

- There was a formal discussion with children in 2016 about the state of the field. When asked what they did not like about the field at the time, representatives from each year group said that it is very bumpy and muddy and that it often cannot be used. 13 out of the 17 children in the committee said they liked the idea of having an all-weather surface as it would mean they could play outdoors much more. What was most important was being able to play in the whole outside area, regardless of the surface.
- The formal discussion was some time ago. Children still frequently tell us they want to use the whole outdoor area! As part of the process for developing planning and funding applications we will be consulting with the school council (1 child from each class) during the summer term, and asking them not only about the all-weather surface but about ideas for the outside area as a whole.