

Supergrounds Project Guide Chapter 9

How to use this activity:

An ideal activity to carry out at the start of your Supergrounds planning. It will show you how the children feel about different areas of your school grounds. By asking why they ignored or under-represented some places and exaggerated others you will locate the good areas to start improving. It can also be a very interesting exercise to repeat with staff!

Aimed at:

- Pupils
- Teachers and school grounds professionals

Curriculum focus:

- Geography – expressing views about places and environments; fieldwork skills; using and drawing maps and plans at a range of scales; appreciating people's values and attitudes; decision-making skills
- Environmental Studies – developing the mental map; how land is used around the school
- Citizenship – group discussion; negotiation; considering other people's views; active participation

Purpose of the activity:

- Pupils will need to think carefully about their site, improving their observation and memory skills
- Pupils will improve their understanding of how plans relate to the actual site, and how maps show a selection of information about the real world
- Pupils will draw important parts of the grounds larger, and will minimise or omit the parts they don't care about, so looking at their plans can uncover attitudes

Equipment and preparation:

- You will need: large sheets of paper and pens; a large plan of the school grounds to show the 'correct' version

What to do:

- Start with a tour of the grounds. Older pupils could be asked to memorise the site, younger pupils could be provided with an outline plan to which they have to add details
- Pupils can work individually or in twos or small groups (to facilitate discussion). Ask them to draw how they think the grounds are set out. The detail required in this will depend on the ability of the children. Younger children might be asked to draw only part of the grounds

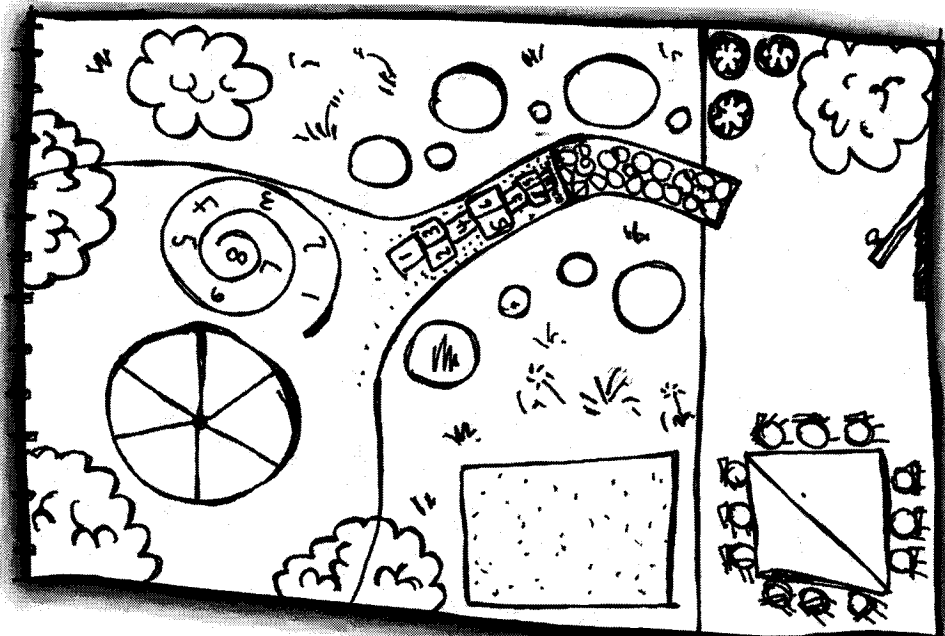
- Children should include their comments about different parts of the grounds – this could be in the form of a key, or colour coding to show what different areas are like. This should help them to put their sketches into context
- Pair up pupils or groups to compare their plans and discuss the differences. Based on this they could attempt an agreed version
- To check the accuracy, pupils should then compare their plans either to a printed plan, or go out into the site
- Pupils should continue to work in their small groups to discuss any interesting differences between their memories and the real world

Follow up:

- Collate the main points made about the grounds on a large plan of the site. Pay particular attention to areas which children ignored or under-represented – why was this? What does it tell you about their attitudes? Does it imply that these areas are being under-used and wasted? How could the school be making better use of them? When starting your Supergrounds project you may want to avoid targeting areas of which children have little awareness. Also, areas which children exaggerated are probably particularly important to them – is this for positive or negative reasons? Would these be good areas to start improving, as children are more likely to notice, and benefit from, changes? Children are also likely to have stronger opinions about how these areas should be developed
- By repeating this exercise with staff you will see how staff and pupils perceive the outdoor environment differently. It may also demonstrate how children have a more detailed knowledge of the school grounds
- Pupils could try drawing maps from memory of increasingly larger areas to gradually extend their observation and mapping skills

This exercise is based on a more detailed activity in *More Thinking Through Geography* (ISBN: 1 899857 43 5), price £25, which can be obtained from: Chris Kington Publishing, tel: 01223 412260, www.chriskingtonpublishing.co.uk

MAPS FROM MEMORY



Explore how you view the school grounds – think about which areas are important to you, and which areas you like or don't like. You'll end up with information that can be used to decide how to improve the grounds.

By yourself, draw a map of your school grounds. Try to include:

- The outside boundary
- The shape and position of the school buildings
- All the different parts within the school grounds

Now add labels to your map to show what each part is like, what it is used for, and who goes there during breaktimes. You could use colour-coding to show which parts are nice and which are nasty.

- Compare your map to other people's. What have you drawn differently?
- Now compare your map to the real thing. Are there parts of the school grounds you missed out? Are there parts which are drawn too small or too large? Why do you think you drew them like that?

Finally, get a large copy of the site plan, and label it clearly with the main points made by your group about the school grounds.

