

Chaucer Junior School

“Where I feel safe...”

On Tuesday 17th March I spent some time with some children from each year. We started this activity discussing what “feeling safe” meant to them. Responses included:

- *“Not having to worry that someone can pick on me and nobody sees”*
- *“I feel safe when there is a teacher near me”*
- *“Being somewhere that isn’t dark”*
- *“I can trust my teacher. That makes me feel happy and safe that they’ll look after me”*
- *“The school is nice inside and there isn’t anything to trip over”*

The children then took me on a guided tour around the school grounds and buildings. I allowed the children to point out areas that they felt they “didn’t feel safe in” or areas that made them feel “unsafe”. They had no prompting from me.

Once we had completed our tour we sat down and I asked them to draw out what we had discussed on a floor plan of the school. I also asked them what they considered the priorities to be.

Findings and suggested action points are below.

I found that the children, in general, are very happy at school and the areas we discovered are easy to fix. They enjoyed the activity and commented that they do feel very happy and “looked after” during the school day.

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March 2015

Priority 1:

Playground Blind Spots

All children commented that quite often they can be pushed or have seen other children be pushed behind the decorative “target” wall in the main playground area. These children are either teased or made to feel “upset” as stated by the older children in the group. They expressed concerns that quite often there is not a teacher in that area to see this happening.

They also ALL commented that they keep away from the bottom of the playground that runs parallel with the public foot path that leads to the infant school. The boys in the group said that they have been spoken to by adults that walk down it and felt “worried” because they often hear bad language etc.

This also brings up Safeguarding issues in regards to “cared for” or children that may not/should not speak/interact with certain family members.

Action: I feel this is relatively simple to resolve. If it is possible to have 3 members of staff on playground duty that can work in a triangulation system, one at each end of the playground and one stood parallel with the “target” wall. Staff can walk the “triangle” so they can still interact with the children and change positions so these areas are consistently monitored.

Priority 2

Public Foot Path

All children commented that they do not feel safe or comfortable on the field area that runs parallel with the back of the field.

One boy told me that he had seen a needle there before and asked me “would I die if I fell on that needle?” and was genuinely upset by that.

Action: I understand that a plan is in place to try and shut this path off to the public. Up until then, if children are using the field at break time or for other activities they need to be monitored, which I understand, already happens.

Priority 3

Cloakrooms/Toilets

The group informed me that they don't feel safe at the end of the day when they collect their things from the cloakrooms. They described that some children can get locked in the toilets by people either blocking the locks from the outside with tissue or children holding the doors closed with their feet.

All children also gave examples of either name calling or pushing in the cloakrooms and were unable to find a staff member as these areas aren't supervised at the end of the day.

Action: If possible it would be useful to have a staff member monitoring these areas just for the final 10 minutes of the day as the children leave. The children felt just having a staff presence would “put off” potential incidents.

The locks on the toilet's need to be looked at to see if there is a way to stop them being blocked from the outside.