

Consultation for Erewash Play Strategy

Stanton Vale Special School

The head and deputy head of Stanton Vale School were interviewed on 30th April 2007 and this report reflects their view.

The School

Stanton Vale is a Regional Centre for MOVE which provides mobility opportunities via education. The school acts as a centre of excellence within the County. Staff make every effort to help the pupils to become mobile and aim to get every child out of a wheelchair if possible when they come into school. Pupils range from ages 2 to 19 and come from all over the County. In addition the school undertakes outreach work with children in their own homes.

Stanton Vale has its own small specially adapted playground for young children with adapted swings, slides and a special roundabout. It also has a sensory garden which contains textual variety, sensual variety, and mirrors.

The Need

Play areas which will offer opportunities for children with disabilities are desperately needed in Erewash because there are no opportunities at the moment.

Destination or local provision?

The priority is for a destination type facility rather than making local playgrounds more accessible for disabled children. This is because children with severe impairments cannot get to facilities on their own

and a visit to a play facility is a major event which requires great expense of effort and time by parents or carers to get ready for such an expedition. It is necessary therefore to provide a facility that would provide enough variety for a visit of a couple of hours in order to be worth the effort to visit.

It is hoped that good practice might then cascade down so that more provision at a local level would follow.

Ideal Location

West Park is considered to be the preferred location in Erewash. This is a level site with plenty of space and access to the Leisure Centre for changing facilities. A café in West Park would also be of great benefit.

Healthy Living Agenda

This is particularly important for children with physical mobility impairments because of the likelihood of obesity resulting from an enforced sedentary lifestyle.

If a suitable play facility were provided in West Park. Stanton Vale school would use it for visits during the school day and this would assist with their goals on healthy living.

Equality of Opportunity

It is important that the general public- children and adults become used to seeing youngsters with disabilities in public places. This is likely to help mitigate against discrimination in general life and in employment etc.

It is important that any play facility caters for both children with disabilities and for non-disabled children. This will facilitate the social aspects of play. There should more than one of each type of equipment for disabled children because non-disabled children can use this equipment as well but this cannot happen the other way round.

Provision of equipment for suitable ages

Children with disabilities may be quite old but only have the ability to use basic equipment which they may feel is too young for them and is not “cool”.. It is important therefore to include equipment which caters for all ages and which can be easily utilised by all. One example mentioned is interactive musical equipment which can be enjoyed by all ages including adults and is felt to be very robust –large xylophones and tubular bells are made from scaffolding, sewage pipes can be used for musical sounds. An example of this type of equipment is at ‘Conkers’ in Swadlingcote.

Another idea is a simplified form of adventure playground which could be designed by teenagers in mainstream school and would be suitable for both disabled and non disabled children.

Surfacing/ entrances etc.

Ancillary features such as suitable surfaces and entrances are crucial.

Surfaces should be absolutely flat with no gravel, grass or bark.

There needs to be plenty of colour and clear markings for the paths.

Some playgrounds are kerbed so that the wheelchair wheels are captured and guided.

It is important to provide seating for carers who will be making a lengthy visit to the playground.

There should be room for at least 6 wheelchairs and plenty of space to move around.

Width of gates and styles of opening are important – gates should be a minimum of 39 inches wide and preferably open by sliding.

Multi Use Games Areas and Basket Ball Squares

When installing this type of provision low basket ball nets should always be provided so that wheelchair users can participate.

There are many youngsters who gained good skills in ball sports and then lost mobility through an accident ; there are very few opportunities for them to continue to play these sports.

Stanton Vale School Playground

It may be possible to open up the playground at the school for use by local groups. However such use would need to be carefully supervised as the equipment is quite fragile. Also there would need to be special insurance cover and a different system of safety checks.

LB 30/05/07