NSW Department of Education

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Master Planning & Landscape

Acknowledgment of country

We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories.

We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.

Artist Credit: *Suzanna, a former student from Boggabilla Central School. The artwork featured throughout our RAP represents the themes of community, school, friendship and family.*

Version Control

Revision Number	Date of Publication	EFSG Version	Description	Updated by	Approved by
2025r0	01.07.2025	EFSG 2025	DRAFT Issue for Consultation	AR,LA,NK	MB

Acronyms & Abbreviations

SINSW	School Infrastructure NSW
AMU	Asset Management Unit
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
NQF	National Quality Framework
BCA	Building Code of Australia
NCC	National Construction Code
EFS	Educational Facilities Standards
PS	Public School
HS	High School
SSP	Schools for Specific Purposes
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
GLS	General Learning Space
COLA	Covered Outdoor Learning Area

Design topics in development

As content continues to be developed, the ‘Master Planning and Landscape’ document is shared for consultation and stakeholder engagement. This allows for more innovative thinking to be tested, prior to being incorporated into Parts A, B C and D as endorsed design standards.

The content within this document has not yet been approved as part of the EFSG and as such should be treated as best practice and guidance. This content is subject to a governance process prior to being formally incorporated into the EFSG.

Who uses the document

This document is intended for all users of our schools, including students, staff, educators, and members of the wider community.

It also supports professionals involved in the planning, design, delivery, and management of school infrastructure; such as landscape architects, architects, engineers, project managers, construction teams, planners, asset managers, arborists and departmental staff responsible for procurement, compliance, and maintenance.

These standards ensure alignment across all stakeholders on performance, safety, and departmental requirements, helping to achieve consistent, high-quality outcomes in every project.

Master Planning & Landscape

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Artistic impression of a welcoming school entry (SINSW)

Introduction

1

1.1 Overview

Master Planning & Landscape in Schools

The design of school sites plays a vital role in shaping the educational experience, supporting wellbeing, and fostering strong connections between students, staff, and the broader community. Master planning and landscape design provide the framework for creating safe, functional, and inspiring environments that reflect educational priorities and community values. This document sets out clear and consistent master planning and landscape design requirements for new schools, while providing the flexibility needed to respond to diverse site conditions, community needs and local culture. It aims to guide designers, planners, and decision-makers in delivering school environments that are adaptable, sustainable, and inclusive — places where learning can thrive both inside and out.

By integrating landscape and site planning considerations early in the design process, schools can optimise the use of land, enhance environmental performance, and create outdoor spaces that support a wide range of learning, recreational, and cultural activities. A well-considered master plan ensures that schools are not only fit for purpose at opening, but also adaptable to future growth and evolving educational needs.

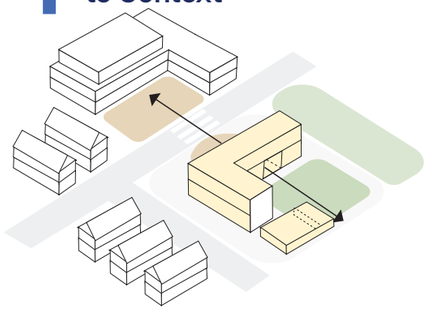
Playful elements and Aboriginal art weaved into the landscape at Riverwood Public School, NSW

1.2 Design Quality Principles

Thoughtfully designed schools have the power to enhance students' physical and emotional well-being by providing safe, inclusive, and engaging environments that support both learning and personal growth.

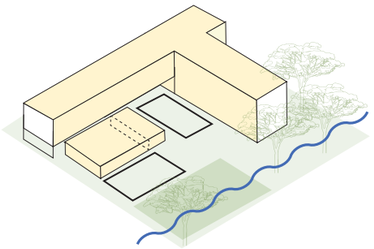
The principles on this page are aligned with the 7 Design Quality Principles outlined in the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP and serve as a foundation for the design of school environments.

1 Responsive to Context



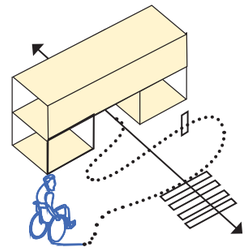
The school should reflect the built context, culture, values, and stories of its community to create a strong sense of place, cultural relevance and contextual integration.

2 Sustainable, Efficient and Resilient



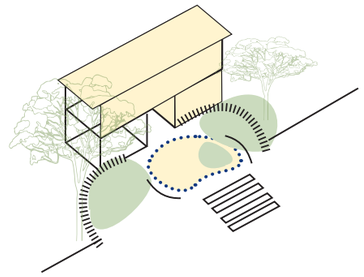
Master plan for sustainable infrastructure while enhancing local biodiversity, tree canopy, natural systems and future adaptability. Allow opportunities for children to engage with and learn from nature.

3 Accessible and Inclusive



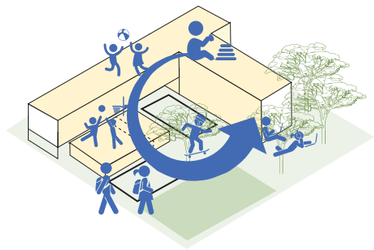
Design the school as a neighbourhood anchor with welcoming entry zones and shared use for the broader community, while ensuring that arrival and movement around the site are clear, legible, and inclusive to all.

4 Healthy and Safe



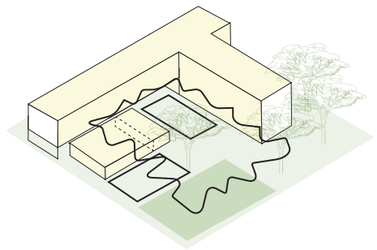
Design healthy and safe schools that maximise natural light, ventilation, access to nature, and playful environments, while supporting student wellbeing. Encourage active travel with safe pedestrian pathways and clear, welcoming entries.

5 Functional and Comfortable



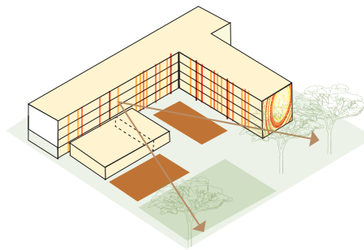
View the entire school site as a vibrant ecosystem for learning and play. Prioritise children's needs by designing for their scale, movement, sensory experience, and well-being.

6 Flexible and Adaptable



School master plans must deliver value for money and be designed efficiently for longevity and adaptability for future change. This includes expansion and change in building use as the school grows.

7 Visually Appealing



Create visually appealing school environments that embrace child-scale design principles, using colours, textures, and proportions that engage children's senses and foster a welcoming, inspiring atmosphere.

Master Planning

2

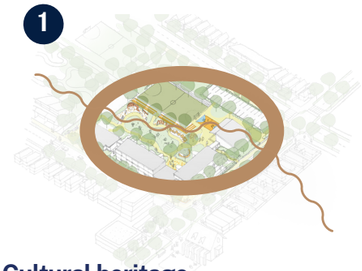
2.1 Site Context Response

Site Analysis & Response

Designing a school master plan requires a deep understanding of context — including the site's physical conditions, community character, climate, and local movement patterns. Thorough site analysis is essential to uncover opportunities and constraints, informing design decisions that respond meaningfully to place.

A responsive approach ensures the school integrates seamlessly with its surroundings, supports safe pedestrian access, and reflects local identity. Incorporating ecologically-responsive design; such as passive solar strategies and water-sensitive landscaping, enhances sustainability and student wellbeing. By aligning with the needs of both learners and the broader community, a context-driven master plan creates a place that is functional, inclusive, and enduring.

1



Cultural heritage

Acknowledge and celebrate the site's Aboriginal and European history through culturally responsive and place-based design.

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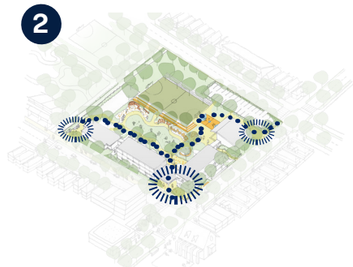

Legibility and wayfinding

Provide welcoming and legible entry points, clear way-finding and universal access to all parts of the site to support inclusive use by all users.

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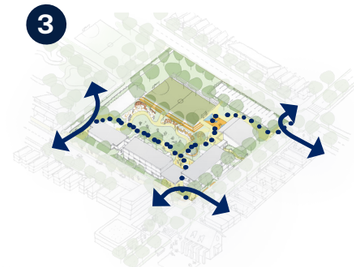
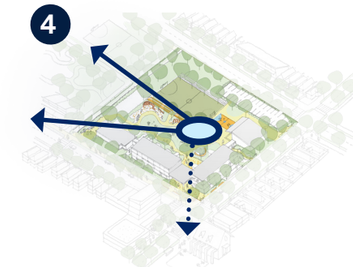


Context

Integrate the school within its wider context to promote connectivity, visibility, and community interaction.

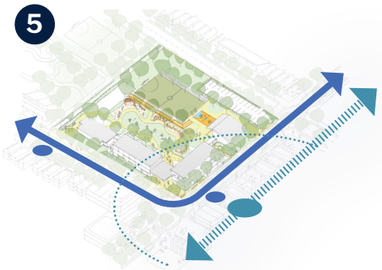
4



Views and vistas

Preserve and frame significant views while enhancing the school's identity and sense of place.

5



Collection and drop-off

Ensure clear and safe pick-up and drop-off zones with seamless access from public transport and school bus services to the school site.

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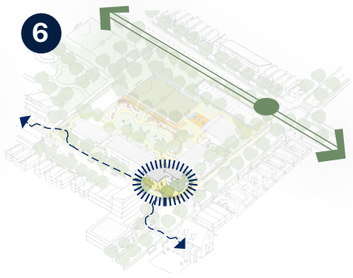

Active Transport

Encourage walking, cycling, and scooting by aligning entries with neighbourhood movement patterns and providing safe, accessible routes and crossings.

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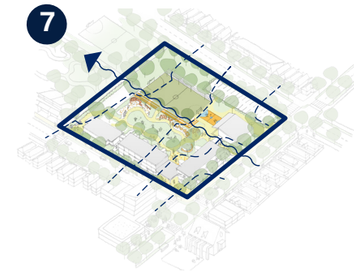
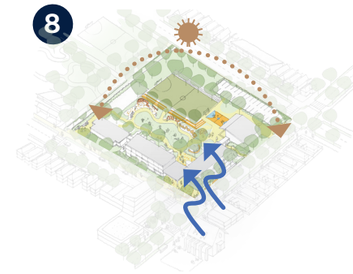


Topography

Design sensitively to the site's natural landform and drainage patterns to minimise disruption and manage stormwater sustainably.

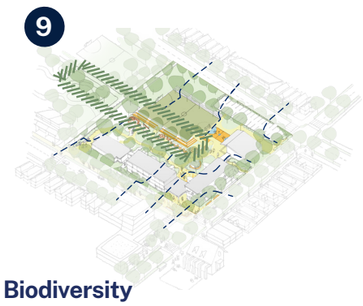
8



Micro-climate

Respond to local climate conditions to optimise solar access, shade, and thermal comfort across the site.

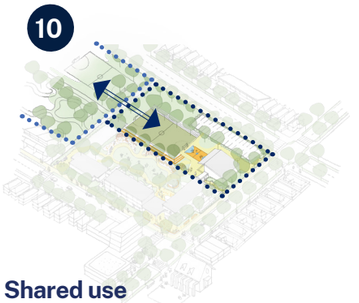
9



Biodiversity

Protect and enhance existing ecology by preserving natural features, green corridors and supporting biodiversity.

10



Shared use

Maximise shared use opportunities with adjacent public facilities to benefit both school and community.

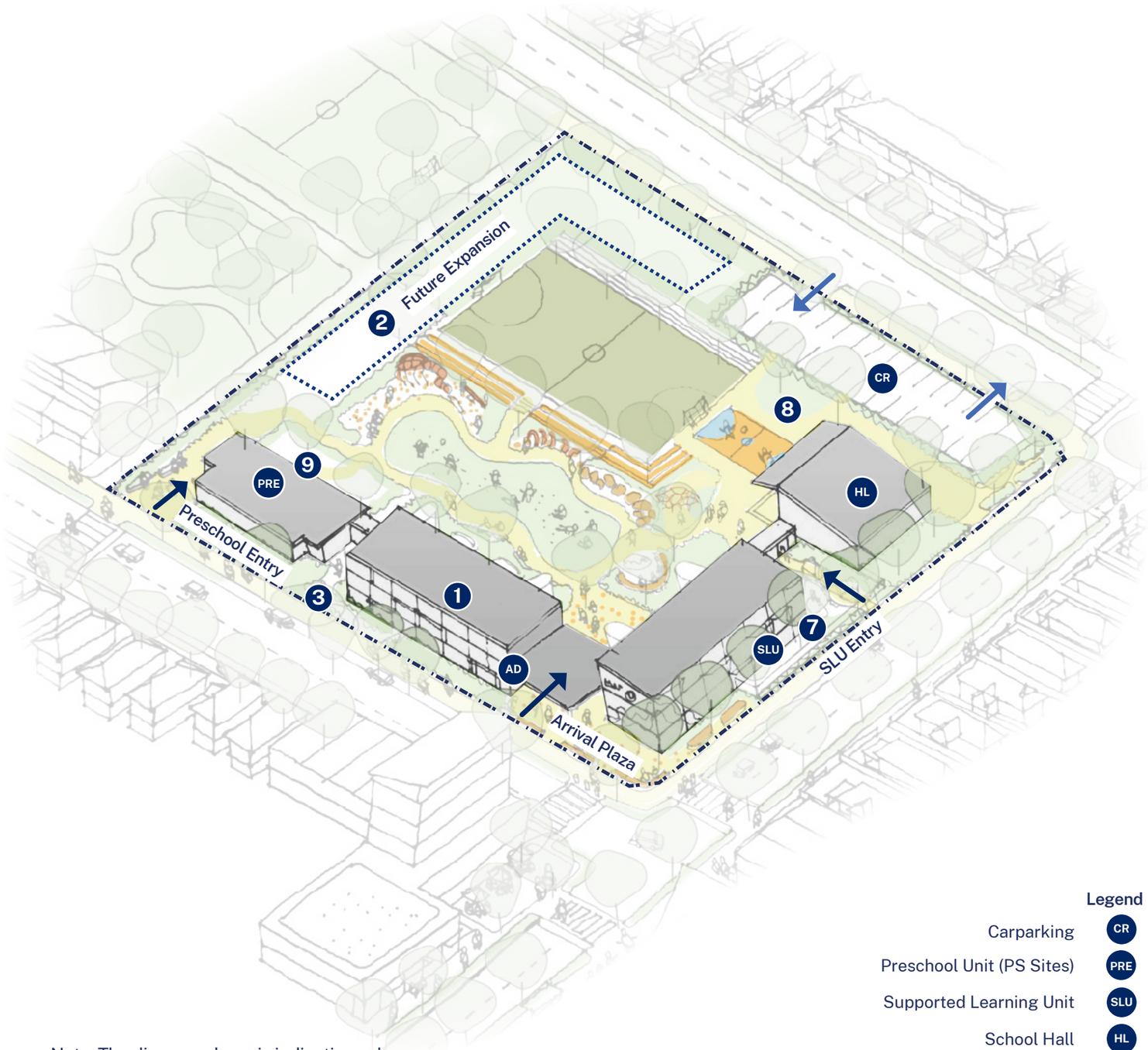
2.2.1 Design Overlays

General Arrangement and Co-locations

School buildings should be arranged to support the smooth and efficient functioning of the school, with well-connected outdoor play areas, clear sight-lines for effective supervision, and the flexibility to accommodate future expansion. Entry points should be welcoming, accessible, and easy to navigate — promoting safe pedestrian movement and strengthening the school's connection with its surrounding community.

General Arrangement Considerations:

1. Locate buildings on the site in a way which maximises usable outdoor space and enables easy supervision of play areas.
2. Allocate sufficient areas for future expansion of the school, with consideration for construction staging. All sites are to be master planned for the maximum capacity of Public School student enrolment numbers for that location.
3. Provide setbacks that respond to local context, whilst maximising usable open space.
4. Orient buildings to balance solar access and thermal comfort; minimising overshadowing of outdoor play areas, while avoiding excessive heat gain.
5. Ensure learning areas have access to and views of adjacent outdoor environments to support nature-connected learning.
6. Locate libraries, support spaces, and staff areas away from major movement corridors or active outdoor zones where possible.
7. Provide a designated outdoor play space for the Supported Learning Unit.
8. Locate the school Hall, Games Field, Games Courts and Carparking in close proximity to one another and with external access, to enable after-hour community use.
9. Provide a designated outdoor play space for the Preschool (within a Primary School). The Preschool can be integrated on ground level of a multi-storey building or stand-alone.



Note: The diagram above is indicative only, master plans should be unique to context and needs.

Legend

Carparking	CR
Preschool Unit (PS Sites)	PRE
Supported Learning Unit	SLU
School Hall	HL
School Admin	AD

2.2.2 Design Overlays

Arrival and Movement

Movement around a school site plays a critical role in shaping the daily experiences, health, and safety of students, staff, and visitors. Thoughtfully planned circulation routes support smooth transitions between learning spaces, reduce congestion, and foster a sense of calm and order. Safe, legible, and accessible pathways also encourage active transport, such as; walking, cycling, and scooter use, which contributes to students' physical wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Movement and Access Considerations:

1. Prioritise pedestrian movement and safety within the site by providing clear, legible circulation routes that separate vehicles from pedestrian flows.
2. Provide an Arrival Plaza, co-located with the school Admin zone and Main Entry. Consider sight-lines and passive surveillance in all arrival areas.
3. Ensure safe paths of pedestrian travel from adjacent streets to the school Arrival Plaza.
4. Provide secure bicycle and scooter parking near main entries.
5. Provide a designated Waiting Zone at the main school entry and adjacent to the Kiss n' Drop.
6. Provide a separate entry for the Preschool (within a Primary School), with consideration for how children will be dropped-off and picked-up by their carer inside the facility.
7. Provide a separate entry for the Supported Learning Unit, with consideration for accessible and safe arrival and pick-up of students.
8. Locate carparking, loading and waste collection to the perimeter of the school site, away from the main pedestrian paths within the school site.
9. Provide covered pathways between key buildings and arrival points.

Note: The diagram above is indicative only, master plans should be unique to context and needs.

2.2.3 Design Overlays

Play and Recreational Space

A well-designed school outdoor environment should provide a range of play and recreational opportunities that respond to children's different interests, needs, and abilities. To support students' holistic development and wellbeing, every school site must include four essential types of outdoor settings, including: Gathering, Discovery, Recovery and Active spaces.

GATHERING

Spaces to facilitate social interaction and community.

DISCOVERY

Spaces to support imaginative play and exploration.

RECOVERY

Sensory retreat areas for respite and quiet reflection.

ACTIVE

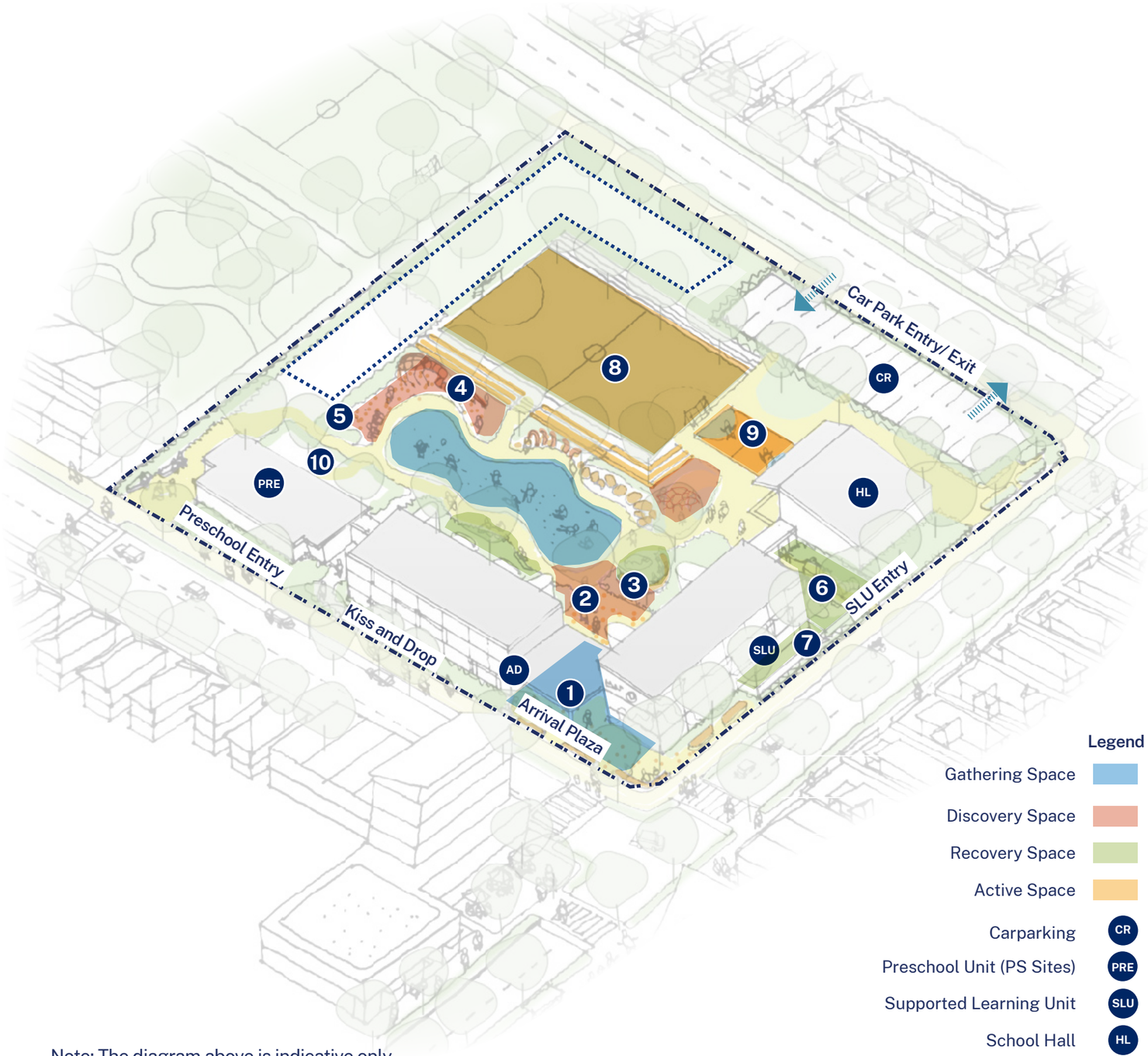
Physical movement areas for formal games, and active play.

Additionally, the 'Play and Recreation Space Settings' outlined below represent the minimum required outdoor spaces for all new school developments. These settings work together to support varied forms of play, social interaction, learning, and physical activity. Further details on area requirements can be found in the Schedule of Landscape Areas.

Play and Recreation Space Settings:

1. Arrival Plaza/ Waiting Zone
2. Quadrangle/ Assembly Court
3. Outdoor Learning Space
4. Nature/ Discovery Play
5. Mini Habitat/ Communal Garden
6. Sensory Garden
7. Support Learning Unit (SLU) Breakout Space
8. Games Field
9. Games Court
10. Preschool Outdoor Space

(Refer to Preschool Design Brief for details)



Note: The diagram above is indicative only, master plans should be unique to context and needs.

2.2.4 Design Overlays

Community Use

An important aspect of a school's design, involves balancing the educational and play requirements of students, while also supporting potential shared-use opportunities with the broader community. To enable this, the site should be master planned into distinct zones which can be easily secured off for certain uses. The following four zones should be carefully master planned into the school design:

School and Community Use Zones:

Publicly accessible zone

- A welcoming Arrival Plaza and Waiting Zone should be located at the main school gate, which will be accessible to the public at all times.

After-hour accessible open space

- The Games Field and carparking must be designed to enable access to the public after-hours.
- Games Courts and general play space should also be considered for after-hour community use.

After-hour accessible building space

- The school Hall must be designed to enable access to the public after-hours.
- The Library, designated General Learning Spaces and Specialist Learning Spaces, should also be considered for after-hour community use.

School only access

- The more private areas of the school, including Administration and Staff Rooms, Support Learning Areas and Preschools will typically not be accessible to the community after school hours.

Note: The diagram above is indicative only, master plans should be unique to context and needs.

2.2.5 Design Overlays

Security & Boundaries

Site security plays a vital role in the ongoing management of school facilities. To safeguard students, while maintaining a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, schools should incorporate a thoughtful combination of fencing types and security measures that balance safety with openness. The general arrangement of Boundary Types outlined below should be followed for new school sites. Further details for each Boundary Type can be found in Chapter 4.2.

School Boundary Types:

TYPE 1

1800mm high boundary fence

Key locations: Around open play spaces/ to neighbouring properties, around Preschools[1] and SLUs[2]

TYPE 2

1200mm high secondary boundary fence

Key locations: In front of buildings, acting as a secondary security point.

TYPE 3

Internal school boundary with integrated planters / shade

Key locations: Separating after-hour play zones from school-only areas. Note: depending on context, the ground level stairs of buildings can be secured with no need for internal fencing.

TYPE 4

Building as the secure-line

Key locations: At school entries (Including Admin & Hall buildings).

TYPE 5

Soft landscape boundary

Key locations: Provides soft separation to external spaces such as the Sensory Garden, SLU Breakout Space or outdoor learning spaces.

Note: The diagram above is indicative only, master plans should be unique to context and needs.

Landscape

3

3.1 General Landscape Provision

A high-quality school environment is strongly shaped by well-designed landscape spaces. These areas should be informed by their functional relationship to the built form, enhance visual appeal, and contribute meaningfully to the overall learning experience. The general landscape areas within a school should include:

10 sqm of Unencumbered Outdoor Space per student

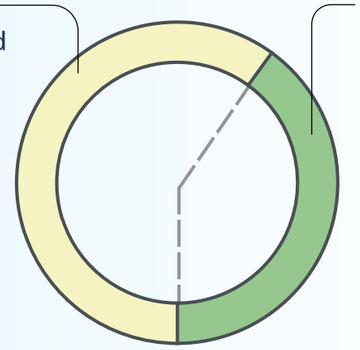
Unencumbered Outdoor Space Calculation =

[Total site area] - [Areas not accessible by students for play and recreation, including: out-of-bounds areas + building footprints + circulation + landscaped setbacks + parking & servicing + area for future expansion]

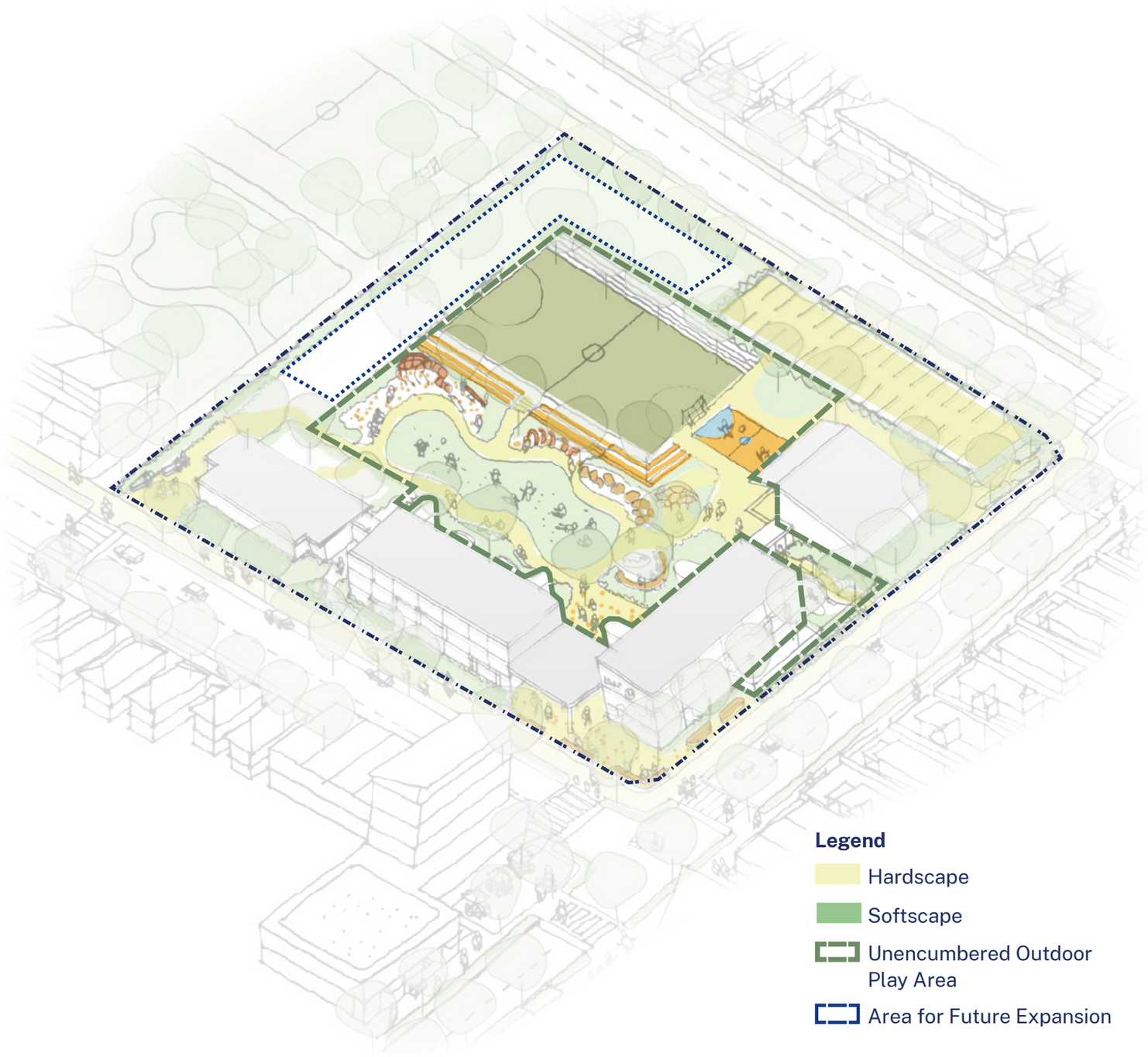
General Landscape Surfaces Breakdown:

The landscape surfaces across a school site should balance softscape and hardscape elements to meet operational and accessibility needs, while also supporting ecology and allowing for water permeability. The following breakdown should be followed:

Maximum 60% Hardscape: Hardstand landscape area including paths, furniture, games courts, space in between buildings and car parking/ service zones



Minimum 40% Softscape: Planting areas[1]



[1] Games Field surface material must be permeable to be considered as part of the 40% softscape.

3.2 Schedule of Landscape Areas

Unencumbered outdoor space refers to designated areas within the boundaries of a school site that are free from buildings or obstructions. A minimum of 10m^2 per student must be provided as mandatory outdoor play space for all students, from Preschool[1] through to High School. This area must be accessible, safe and easily supervisable for students' play and leisure during school hours.

The adjacent table outlines the required minimum provision of various landscape settings within the 10m^2 allowance. It also specifies external areas that must be provided in addition to the required unencumbered play space.

Within the 10sqm per student provision, the following areas must be allowed for:

	UNENCUMBERED OUTDOOR SPACE	10sq/ student including the following minimum provisions:						
	Landscape Setting	**PUBLIC SCHOOL**			**HIGH SCHOOL**			
		PS 250 *(0-230 Students)*	**PS 500** *(230 to 552 students)*	**PS 1000** *(553 to 1000 students)*	**HS 500** *(Up to 660 students)*	**HS 1000** *(661 to 980 students)*	**HS 1500** *(981 to 1,540 students)*	**HS 2000** *(1,541 to 2,020 students)*
GATHER	Quadrangle/ Assembly Court	210 sqm	630 sqm		680 sqm	1020 sqm	1530 sqm	2040 sqm
GATHER	Outdoor Learning	0.3 sqm / student						
GATHER	**Total Provision of "Gather" Space**	**15% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for PS**			**15% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for HS**			
DISCOVER	Nature/ Discovery Play	1 sqm / student			0.1 sqm / student			
DISCOVER	Mini Habitat/ Communal Garden	0.5 sqm / student			0.3 sqm / student			
DISCOVER	**Total Provision of "Discover" Space**	**15% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for PS**			**5% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for HS**			
RECOVER	Sensory Garden	0.5 sqm / student			0.2 sqm / student			
RECOVER	Quiet Zones/ Retreat Areas	0.5 sqm / student			0.3 sqm / student			
RECOVER	**Total Provision of "Recover" Space**	**10% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for PS**			**5% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for HS**			
ACTIVE	Games Field	Size of field to be determined by total site area available. Where space is available, the "Mini Roos" size should be provided.		"Mini Roos" Games Field (70m x 50m)	Size of field to be determined by total site area available. Where space is available, the Full Size Games Field should be provided.			Full Size Games Field (120m x 67m)
ACTIVE	Games Courts	One Court			Two Courts	Four Courts	Six Courts	Eight Courts
ACTIVE	Batting Practice Net	n/a			One Batting Practice Net			
ACTIVE	**Total Provision of "Active" Space**	**Maximum 50% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for PS**			**Maximum 65% of 'Unencumbered Outdoor Space' for HS**			
	Remaining 10% of area to be allocated to site specific response and community needs.							

Additionally to the unencumbered play space allowance, the following areas must be allowed for:

Arrival Plaza/Waiting Zone	0.2sqm / student (minimum size 100 sqm)
Supported Learning Unit (SLU) Breakout	Depending on # of SLUs within the School Single Hub with 3 Supported TS (PS and HS) = 90 sqm minimum Double Hub with 7 Supported TS (PS and HS) = 210 sqm minimum
Preschool Outdoor Space [1]	Preschools located on new Public School sites, must provide 10sqm per child. On existing school sites, where space is constrained, 7 sqm per child is an acceptable minimum. Refer to the Preschool Design Brief for detailed requirements.
Bulk Waste Pad	Site Specific. Bulk Waste Pad size to be determined by Waste Management Consultant.
Bicycle Parking/Enclosure	Site Specific. To be determined by Transport Planner, taking into account locality and available public transport options.
Car parking	
Kiss and Drop Area/s	
Bus Zone/s	

3.3 Outdoor Shade Structures

In school environments, it is essential to provide a variety of covered outdoor areas that support learning, play, and comfort throughout the year. These spaces offer protection from sun and rain, contribute to the usability of outdoor environments during all seasons, and promote flexible, multipurpose use of school grounds.

Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA)

The COLA is a large, open, multipurpose structure designed to provide shade and weather protection. It should be located adjacent to the School Hall, allowing for overflow capacity during events and assemblies. In some cases, the COLA may also provide shelter for adjacent functions such as the canteen.

Additional Fixed Shaded Area

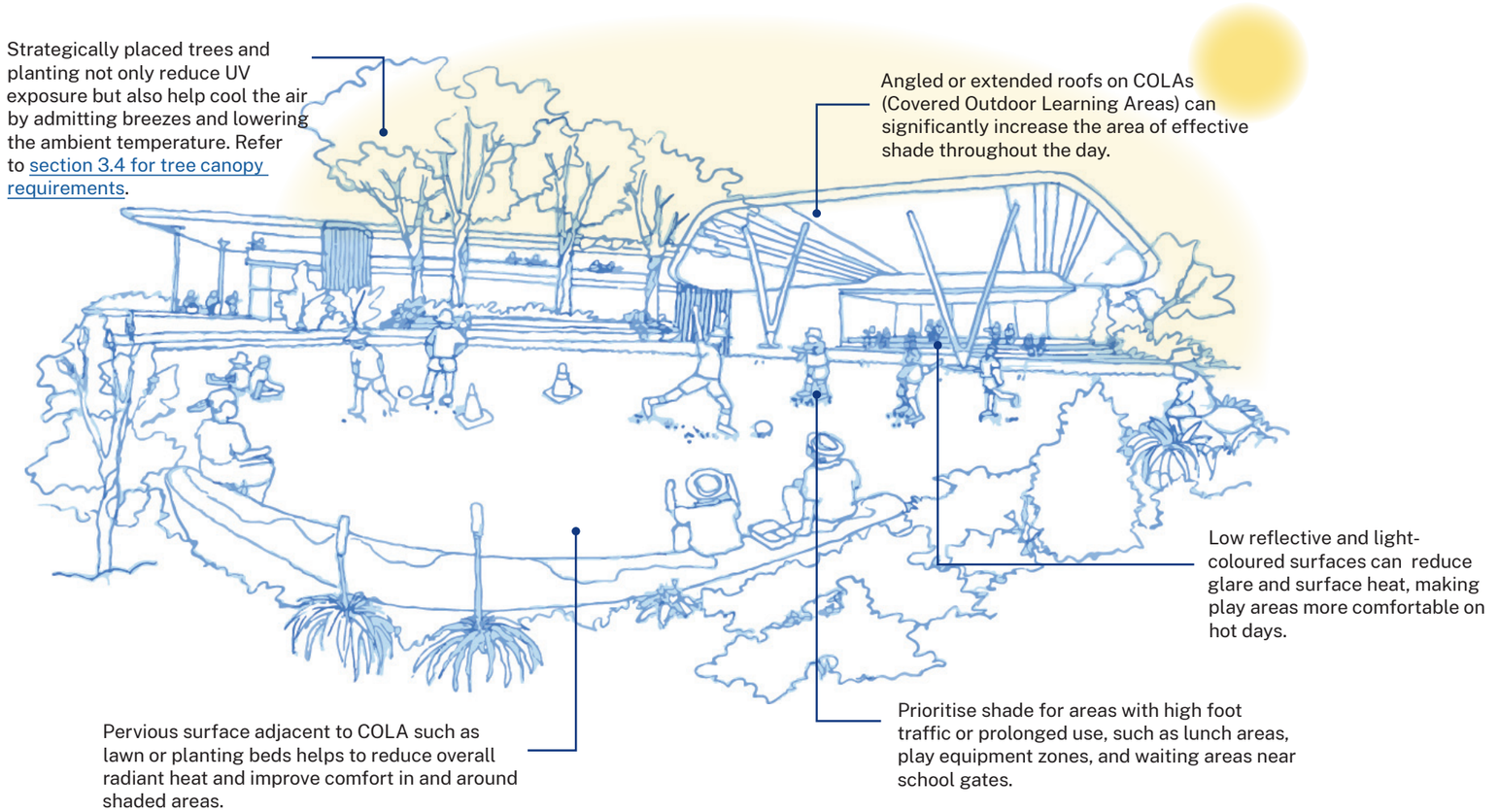
In addition to the formal COLA, the school landscape design must incorporate fixed shaded areas across outdoor play and learning spaces. This could be provided in the form of fixed shade structures, umbrellas, undercover areas between buildings or open pavilions. The additional fixed shading should be provided over key outdoor play and recreation settings to ensure comfort and usability throughout the day.

Image Above: A range of shading solutions provided at Jordan Springs PS, including fixed shade, umbrellas and building undercroft spaces.

OUTDOOR SHADE PROVISION
Note: Tree canopy cover requirements are additional to this provision. For Preschool shade requirements, refer to the Preschool Design Brief.

Landscape Setting	PRIMARY SCHOOL			HIGH SCHOOL			
	Small *(0-230 Students)*	**Medium** *(230 to 552 students)*	**Large** *(553 to 1000 students)*	**Extra Small** *(Up to 660 students)*	**Small** *(661 to 980 students)*	**Medium** *(981 to 1,540 students)*	**Large** *(1,541 to 2,020 students)*
Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA)	103 sqm	236 sqm	365 sqm	125 sqm	203 sqm	258 sqm	300 sqm
Additional Fixed Shaded Area	0.3 sqm / student Area provision can be spread across the site as required with a focus on areas with high foot traffic or prolonged use, such as lunch areas, play equipment zones, and waiting areas near school gates.						
Covered Walkways	Min 2.1m wide covered walkways to be provided linking all buildings within the school site.						

Shade Considerations[1]:



[1] For further guidance on designing an effective COLA and shade structures, refer to '*Guidelines to Shade - A practical guide for shade development in NSW*'.

3.4 Tree Canopy Cover

Tree canopy provides shade, helps mitigate heat and supports general well being of students. All schools must provide a minimum requirement of:

35% tree canopy to total site area at tree maturity[1].

In school sites where a full-sized Games Field is required, a minimum of 30% tree canopy to site area must be provided.

Tree Canopy Category & Sizes[1]:

Tree Size	Stock Size	Canopy Diameter Growth			Clear Trunk Ht (m)	Ht (m)	Caliper (at 300mm)
		Day 1	**5 Yr**	**10 Yr**			
Small	100L	min.1.5m	min.3m	min.6m	0.8–1.3m	2.4	50mm
Medium	200L	min.2m	min.2m	min.8m	1.2-1.7m	3.6	60mm
Large	400L	min.3m	min.6m	min.12m	1.5-2.0m	4.2	95mm

For every 300m2 of site area, at least four small trees, or two medium trees or one large tree is to be provided. Large trees to comprise at least 30% of canopy targets, small trees to comprise no more than 10%.

Deep Soil Zone

Trees must be planted within deep soil to ensure effective health and growth of canopy cover. Deep soil zone is described in *Part 3E of NSW Government, SEPP 65.* A minimum of 15 per cent of the school landscape area should have a least 1.5m soil depth which is undisturbed by services and infrastructure on the site.

Tree Replacement Ratios

-Trees of High significance–Retain or demonstrate action (including transplant, replenishment), for approval by the Design Review Panel.

-Tree to be removed with a DBH > 500mm: 400 litre pot size at a ratio of 4:1

-Trees to be removed with a DBH less that 500mm: 200 litre pot size at a ratio of 3:1

How To Calculate Tree Canopy Cover %

$$\frac{\text{Matured Canopy Area}^1}{\text{Total Site Area}} \times 100$$

[1] Tree Canopy Target by Years

Day 1

5 Years

10 Years

Case Study on Tree Canopy Cover 2015 - 2025

The case study (illustrated in the adjacent images) focuses on a public school built in 2015. It highlights several key lessons:

- Trees take time to grow, so early planning is essential.
- A balanced approach to providing shade in play areas is crucial for comfort and usability.
- Retaining mature, existing trees adds significant value; supporting children's wellbeing, enhancing the environment, and enabling learning opportunities through curriculum-aligned activities such as science investigations and observational studies.
- Succession planting can accelerate regeneration in areas with high biodiversity value, supporting long-term ecological health.

[1] All trees specified must comply with AS2303:2018 "Tree Stock for Landscape Use" and "Guide for assessing the quality of and purchasing of landscape trees" by Ross Clark 2003.

3.5 Biodiversity

Achieving Biodiversity in Schools

Public schools span more than 200 locations across New South Wales and represent a significant network of ecological opportunity. As highly visible and community-focused places, schools can become living laboratories and ecological sanctuaries, demonstrating leadership in environmental stewardship and connection to Country.

In alignment with the principles outlined in Biodiversity in Place by the Government Architect NSW (GANSW), schools have a unique role to play in advancing sustainable public infrastructure through biodiversity-led design. The benefits of biodiverse landscapes include supporting ecological health fostering connection to Country, providing a living curriculum and connecting to biodiversity corridors.

Opportunities for Biodiversity Planting

Biodiversity can be embedded throughout the school landscape, with a particular focus on key zones such as:

- Landscaped setbacks and edges
- Outdoor Learning & Mini Habitats
- Nature and Discovery Play areas
- Sensory Gardens

Planting Mix Ratio

A regenerative, biodiverse landscape uses layered planting to create structure, shade, and ecological function. The minimum planting mix ratio of 1:3:6 (upper, mid, and lower storey plants) as outlined in this page, ensures a resilient and habitat-rich planting palette.

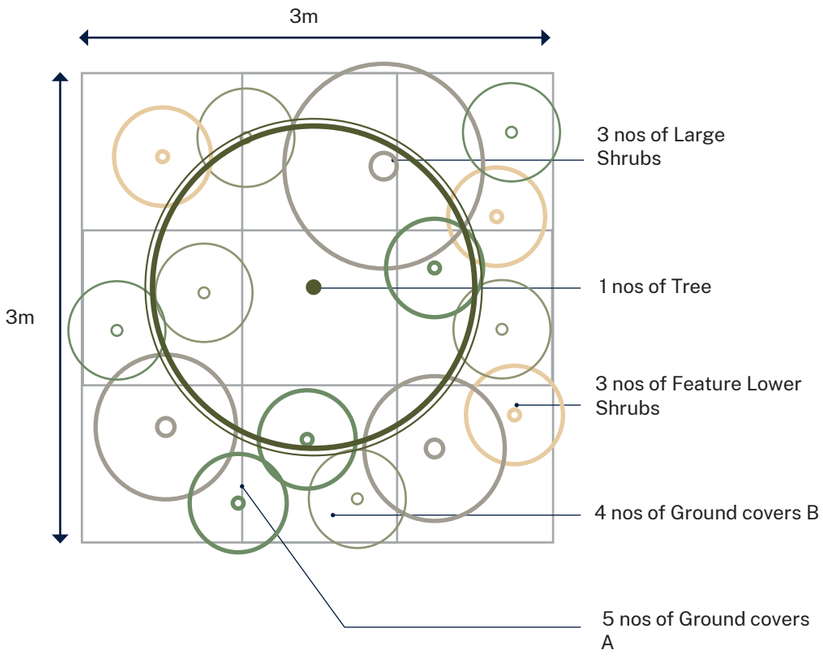
Planting Mix Ratio Requirement:

1 : 3 : 6

UPPER STOREY	MID STOREY	LOWER STOREY
Trees that provide shade, sequester carbon, and offer habitat for birds and other wildlife	*Shrubs, small trees, and tall grasses that create structure and food sources for pollinators and smaller animals*	*Ground-cover plants that prevent erosion, suppress weeds, and maintain soil moisture.*

Example of a Planting Plan

Example of 3m x 3m Biodiverse Planting Mix

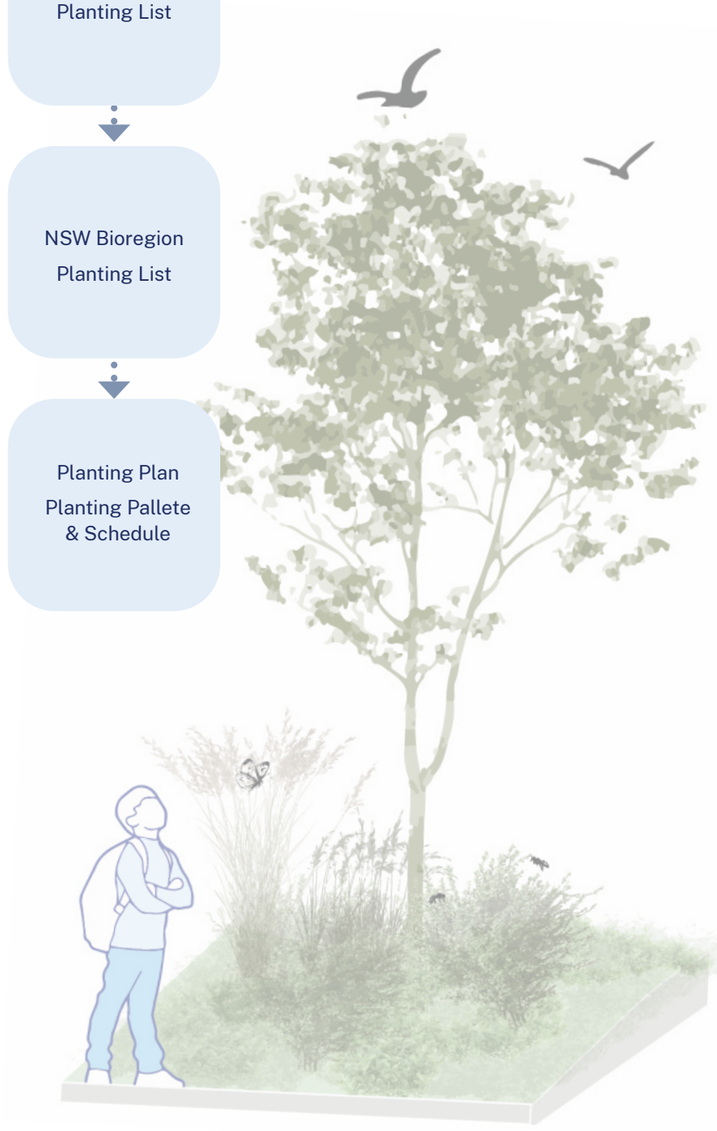


Planting Species Selection Process:

Prohibitive Planting List

NSW Bioregion Planting List

Planting Plan
Planting Pallete & Schedule



Spatial Data Sheets

4

4.1.1 Spatial Data Sheet

Arrival Plaza/ Waiting Zone

The Arrival Plaza is a welcoming and clearly defined entry space where students, staff, and visitors transition into the school environment. It includes gathering areas and landscape features that reflect the school's identity and support safe, accessible movement. The design should promote a calm and orderly arrival experience, accommodating peak-time flows without congestion.

As the first impression of the school, the Arrival Plaza must be designed to create a strong sense of welcome, incorporating clear way-finding elements and signage.

Adjacent to the Arrival Plaza is the Waiting Zone, where students wait for pick-up and drop-off by car or bus.

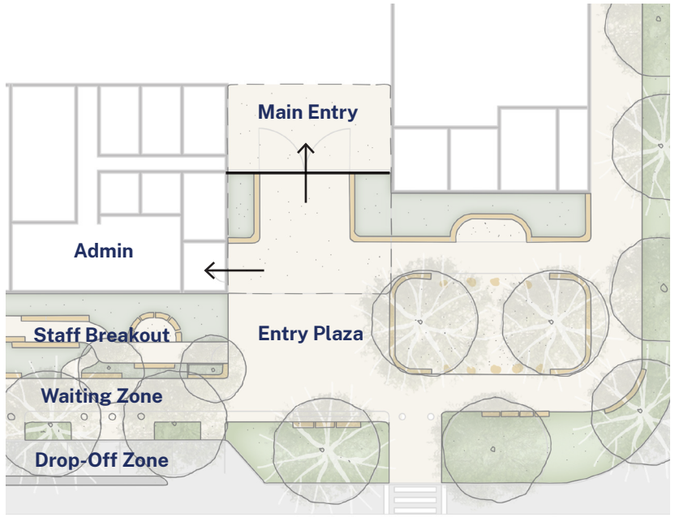
Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE

Illustration above: A welcoming Arrival Plaza, featuring shaded seating, clear signage and way-finding and soft edge boundaries.

Ngarala Public School, NSW



Indicative Arrangement Plan of Arrival Plaza

Materiality

Ground Surface: Ground materiality should be predominantly flat surface to enable easy movement of students and staff, with incorporated landscape elements. Consider reflectivity and touch temperature of materials in various weather conditions, as well as accessibility.

Play & Learning

Seating Elements: Provide comfortable seating (e.g., benches, natural seating like logs or stones).

Culturally Responsive Design: Include elements that reflect the local community and Indigenous heritage.

Signage: Designate areas for school signage and iconography/ murals.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children.

Natural Boundaries: Provide natural barriers (e.g., hedges, trees) or design elements (e.g., planters, bollards, boulders) to create a sense of enclosure and separation between cars and pedestrians.

Shade: Provide weatherproof shade over the entry zone and waiting zone. Provide shade over areas for seating.

Co-location & Services

Co-locations: The Arrival Plaza should be located adjacent to the main administration building. The Waiting Zone should be located adjacent to the main pick-up, drop-off zone. Where possible, this setting should be aligned with pedestrian crossings.

Services: Allow for external lighting to enable evening use.

4.1.2 Spatial Data Sheet

Quadrangle/ Assembly Court

The Quadrangle area within a school is a central open space designed for student gatherings, assemblies, performances, and informal social interaction, typically co-located with the school Hall. It often serves as a symbolic heart of the school, reflecting the identity and values of the school community through its design, landscaping, and use.

When not in use for formal gatherings, the Quadrangle functions as a flexible space for informal play, socialising, and student-led games throughout the school day and as such must be designed with flexibility to facilitate various functions throughout the year.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- **GATHER**
- **DISCOVERY**
- **RECOVERY**
- **ACTIVE**

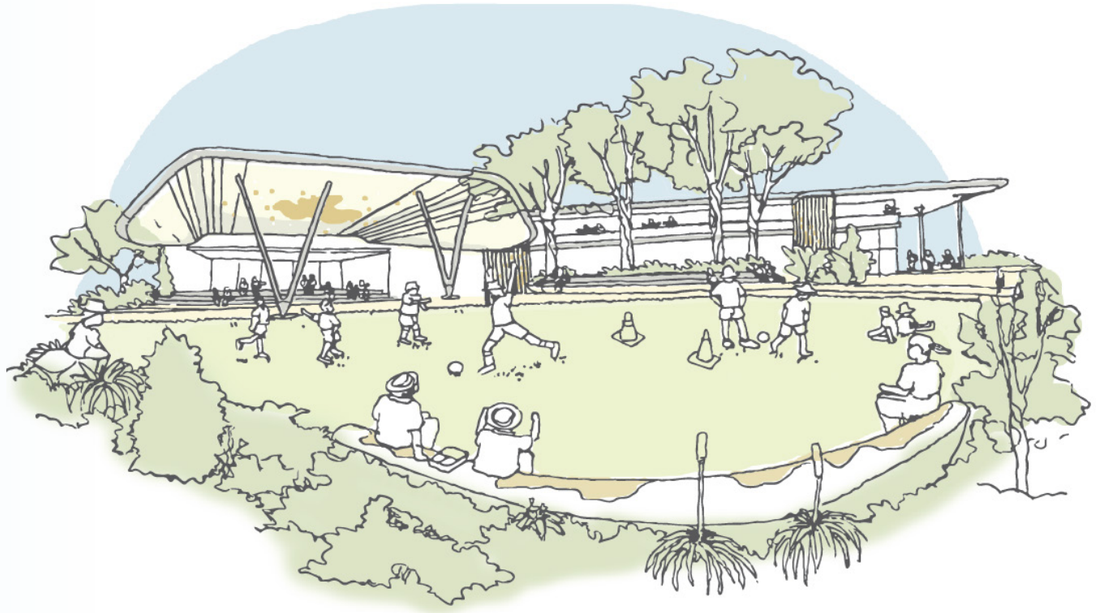


Illustration above: A Quadrangle/ Assembly Area co-located with school Hall & COLA, with ample seating and shade.

Homebush West Public School, NSW

Mosman High School, NSW

Materiality

Ground Surface: Depending on context and adjacencies, the ground surface could include a combination of surfaces including concrete, paving, or grass, with incorporated landscape elements. Consider reflectivity and touch temperature of materials in various weather conditions, as well as accessibility.

Play & Learning

Seating Elements: Provide comfortable seating (e.g., benches, natural seating such as logs or stones).

Playful Graphics: Integrate playful graphics and game markings on hard surfaces, for example: four square, handball or hopscotch.

Culturally Responsive Design: Include elements that reflect the local community and Indigenous heritage.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate, with minimal risk of falling branches. Use garden beds to demarcate areas between hard-surface.

Shade: Provide shade under areas for seating.

Co-location & Services

Co-locations: The quadrangle/ assembly area should be located adjacent to the school Hall/ COLA, to facilitate overspill during assemblies and gatherings within the Hall.

Services: Electricity & internet connection in the vicinity should be provided, as well as sound system. Allow for external lighting to enable evening use.

4.1.3 Spatial Data Sheet

Outdoor Learning Space/ Tiered Seating

An Outdoor Learning Space is a open-air learning space that supports structured and unstructured educational activities, using natural elements and the outdoor environment to enhance engagement, well-being, and hands-on learning.

Preschool / Public School: Provide a flexible learning space that supports hands-on, sensory-rich, and imaginative group learning.

High School: Provide more structured, multi-use areas with seating, work surfaces, and access to technology or tools for project-based learning and discussion.

SSP: Incorporate accessible paths, quiet zones, and varied sensory elements in a clear, predictable layout to support comfort, focus, and inclusion.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- **GATHER**
- **DISCOVERY**
- **RECOVERY**
- **ACTIVE**

Illustration above: An Outdoor Learning Space setting showing a defined tiered-seating arrangement, with biodiverse planting and shade.

Scotch Oakburn College, TAS

Karoo Public School, VIC

Materiality

Ground Surface: Ground materiality should be predominantly flat surface to enable flexible use with potential for integrated tiered seating. Provide variety of surfaces in shape, colour & texture, which are durable and easy to maintain. Consider reflectivity and touch temperature of materials in various weather conditions.

Play & Learning

Seating Elements: Provide comfortable seating (e.g., built-in tired seating, natural seating such as logs/ stones or movable furniture) to enable group learning activities.

Learning/ Teaching Tools: Provide elements that allow for individual or group learning, for example; chalkboards display walls, drawing surfaces or playful graphics.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children.

Natural Boundaries: Integrate natural boundaries (e.g., hedges, trees) or design elements (e.g., screens, low-height walls) to create a sense of enclosure.

Shade: Ensure that the setting is shaded appropriately to enable use through all weather conditions.

Co-location & Services

Co-locations: The Outdoor Learning should be located in close proximity to the indoor learning spaces, to facilitate easy movement from indoors to outdoors.

Services: Electricity & internet connection in the vicinity should be provided, as well as access to water for learning activities.

4.1.4 Spatial Data Sheet

Nature/ Discovery Play

Nature/ Discovery Play is a form of play that takes place in natural environments and uses natural materials, encouraging children to explore, create, and learn through unstructured, outdoor experiences. The setting should be reflective of local context through its materiality, planting and design.

Preschool / Public School:
Design with sensory-rich features to support fine-motor skills, imaginative, social and pretend play.

High School:
Focus on elements which encourage socialising, physical challenge, curriculum links (such as science and biology) and connection to place.

SSP: Ensure inclusive, accessible spaces with varied sensory experiences, quiet zones and clear sight lines.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE

Illustration above: A Nature Play setting showing a diversity of play opportunities including climbing, constructing and exploring using natural materials and within a natural setting.

Carlton Public School, NSW

Alberton Public School, VIC

Materiality

Ground Surface: Ground materiality should be predominantly permeable, natural materials such as grass, bark chips, timber, stone, natural earth, sand & planted ground covers. Provide variety of surfaces in shape, colour & texture, which are durable and easy to maintain.

Movement & Play

Play Elements: Incorporate a range of nature-base play elements including:

- **Fixed Play Structures:** climbing structures/ frames, rope bridges, balance beams, logs, boulders, swings or hammocks.
- **Water Play Elements:** hand pumps, shallow channels, mud/ sand pits, natural ponds (with safety design).
- **Construction Play:** open-ended spaces for digging, stacking, and building.
- **Shelter / Retreats:** teepees, cubby houses and shaded nooks under vegetation.
- **Loose-parts play:** covered storage space for natural loose materials such as sticks, rocks, seed pods, bark or leaves.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Locate the Nature Play setting under existing or newly planted trees. Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children. Select plants which encourage sensory exploration (smell, touch, colour).

Topography: Provide gentle mounds, slopes, rock formations, dry creek beds to provide varied terrain.

Shade: Provide shade in the form of natural tree canopy.

4.1.5 Spatial Data Sheet

Mini Habitat/ Communal Garden

The Mini Habitat is an immersive environment designed to represent aspects of a natural habitat or ecosystem. These spaces are used as hands-on learning environments, encouraging inquiry, observation, and interaction with nature, often as part of STEM, sustainability, or HSIE.

Preschool / Public School: Provide sensory-rich, and playful space with garden beds, tactile paths, and engaging habitats to support exploration.

High School: Provide a curriculum-focused space featuring data collection tools, and areas for independent research.

SSP: Provide accessible, sensory zones, and retreat areas designed to support regulation and engagement.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE

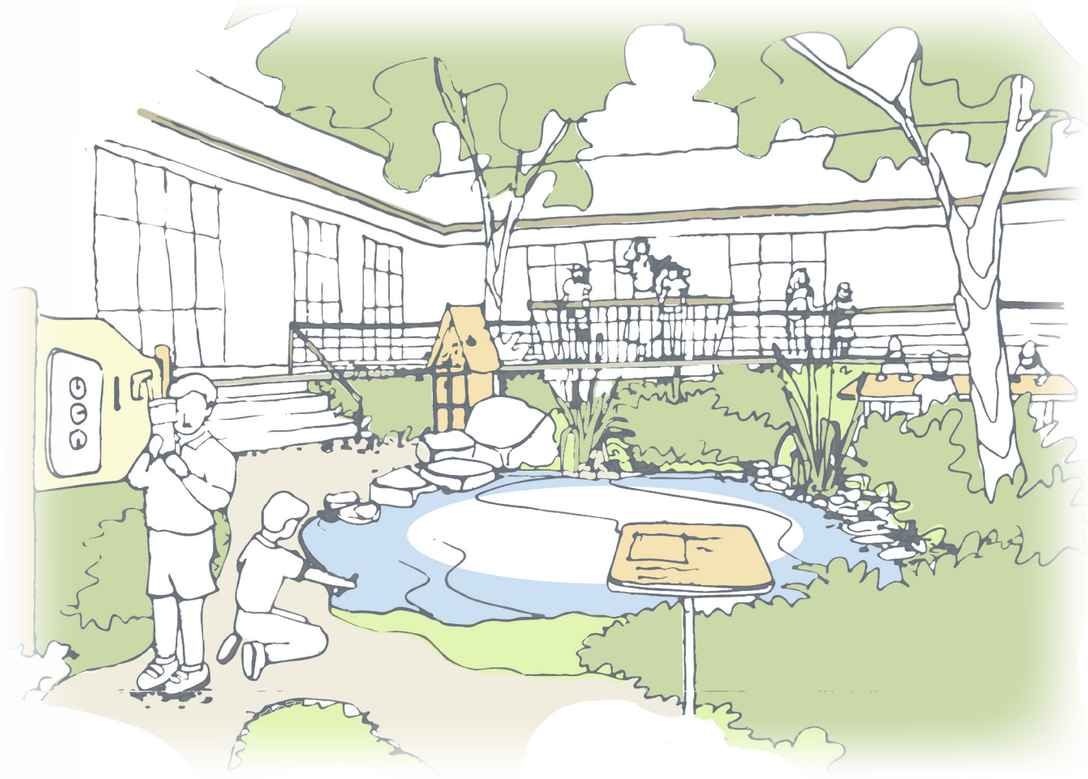


Illustration above: A Mini Habitat/ Communal Garden space featuring environmental learning elements such as an insect hotel, environmental signage and tools.

JJ Cahill High School, NSW

Coledale Public School, NSW

Materiality

Ground Surface: Ground materiality should be predominantly permeable, natural materials such as grass, bark chips, stone, natural earth, sand & planted ground covers with an accessible pathway.

Play & Learning

Seating Elements: Provide comfortable seating (e.g., natural seating such as logs/ stones or movable furniture) to enable learning activities.

Learning/ Teaching Tools: Provide elements that allow for environmentally focused learning or observation, for example; weather stations, nature observation stations, insect hotels, worm farms, compost bins, bird feeders, mini water ponds or water trays (with safety considerations) or chalk boards. Where appropriate, provide raised planter beds for planting vegetables, herbs or wild flowers as part of learning activities.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Locate this setting under existing or newly planted trees. Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children. Choose species which attract local wildlife and demonstrate biodiversity.

Natural Boundaries: Integrate natural boundaries (e.g., hedges, trees) or design elements (e.g., screens, low-height walls) to create a sense of enclosure.

Co-location & Services

Co-locations: This setting could be located in proximity to the Outdoor Learning Space and/ or the Nature/ Discovery Play settings. Where appropriate, the setting should enable access by the community after school hours.

4.1.6 Spatial Data Sheet

Sensory Garden

The Sensory Garden is a space that engages the five senses to support students' learning, well-being, and development. It features a variety of plants, textures, sounds (like wind chimes or water features), and interactive elements.

Preschool / Public School: Focus on creating a playful and interactive environment with colours and tactile materials that stimulate curiosity and support early sensory development.

High School: Design a calming, nature-based space that encourages relaxation, mindfulness, and quiet social interaction.

SSP: Prioritise accessibility, safety, and a rich variety of sensory experiences tailored to diverse needs, including gentle sound features, soothing textures, and predictable spatial layouts.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE

Illustration above: A Sensory Garden with a range of sensory play elements such as textured ground surfaces, calming retreat zones and gentle boundaries.

Marnebek Special School, VIC

Bella Vista Public School, NSW

Materiality

Ground Surface: Ground materiality should be predominantly natural materials such as grass, bark chips, stone, natural earth, sand & planted ground covers with an accessible pathway.

Movement & Play

Sensory Play Elements: Incorporate a range of sensory-base elements including:

- **'Sight' Features:** brightly coloured elements, light filtering patterns, mirrors or reflective surfaces.
- **'Smell' Features:** fragrant flowers and aromatic plants.
- **'Sound' Features:** wind chimes, natural sound instruments, bird feeders.
- **'Touch' Features:** tactile play, sensory walls, sand/ mud, water play, and textured planting.
- **'Taste' Features:** child-safe edible plants or herbs, fruit trees.

Retreat Spaces: Incorporate spaces for quiet reflection and retreat.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children. Select plants which encourage sensory exploration (smell, touch, colour).

Natural Boundaries: Integrate natural boundaries (e.g., hedges, trees) or design elements (e.g., screens, low-height walls) to create a sense of enclosure.

Shade: Provide shade in the form of natural tree canopy.

Co-locations: This setting must be co-located with the SLU Breakout Space.

4.1.7 Spatial Data Sheet

Supported Learning Unit (SLU) Breakout Space

The SLU Breakout Space is located adjacent to the Supported Learning Unit, with direct access. This space is crucial for allowing student emotional regulation through physical activity. This allows students with disability or those who have difficulty processing sensory information a place to recover from, for example, overwhelming experiences or busy spaces.

The design of this space prioritises flexibility, calming features, and opportunities for movement, enabling students to regain focus and re-engage with learning at their own pace.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE

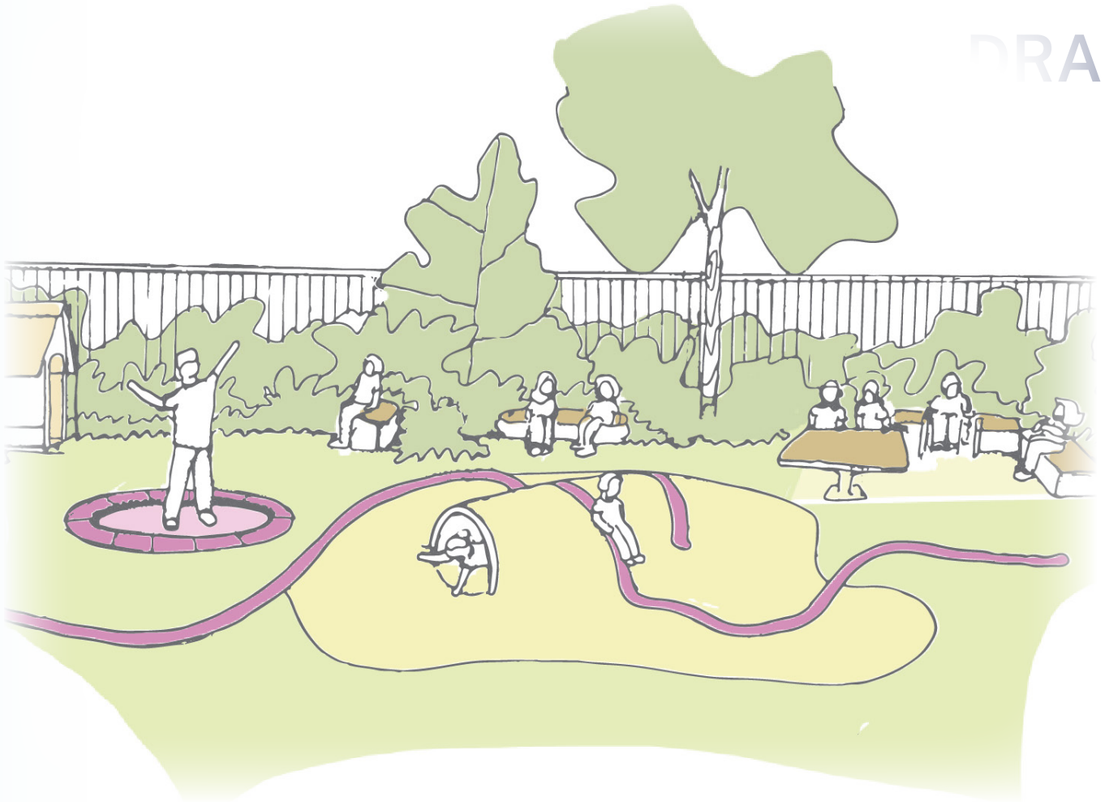
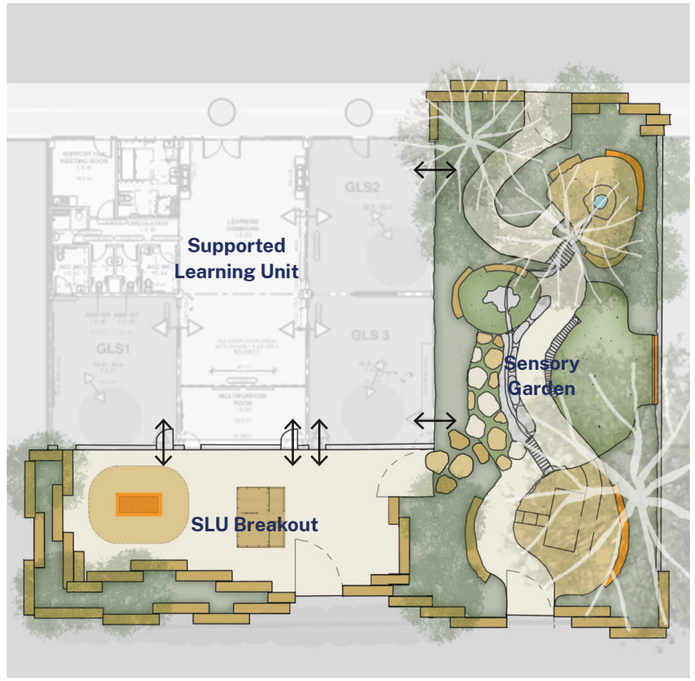


Illustration above: A Supported Learning Unit Breakout space showing diverse play elements such as a trampoline, cubby house, varied topography and seating areas.

St Lucy School, NSW

Tirriwirri SSP, NSW



Indicative Landscape Plan for SLU Breakout with Sensory Garden

Materiality

Ground Surface: Ground materiality should be predominantly flat surface to enable flexible use with integrated soft landscaping. Consider reflectivity and touch temperature of materials in various weather conditions.

Play & Learning

Seating Elements: Provide comfortable seating (e.g., built-in seating, natural seating such as logs/ stones or movable furniture) to enable group learning activities.

Play Elements: A range of play elements must be provided within the space to support self-regulatory activities. Elements may include: an in-ground trampoline, bike path, swing chair, fixed play equipment, cubby house, graphic floor marking, water play, hammocks, ping-pong table and/ or outdoor gym equipment.

The space must have a minimum 4m in depth to enable a variety of activities to occur.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children.

Natural Boundaries: Integrate natural boundaries (e.g., hedges, trees) or design elements (e.g., screens, low-height walls) to create a sense of enclosure, eliminating the need to surround the space with a 2.1m palisade perimeter fence.

Shade: Ensure that the setting is shaded appropriately to enable use through all weather conditions.

Co-location

Co-locations: The SLU Breakout Space must have direct access from the Supported Learning Unit Learning Spaces and be co-located with the Sensory Garden with direct access via closable gate.

4.1.8 Spatial Data Sheet

Games Field

A Games Field in a school provides a versatile open space for physical education, organised sports, and informal play, supporting students' physical development, teamwork, and wellbeing.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

Orientation & Subdivision

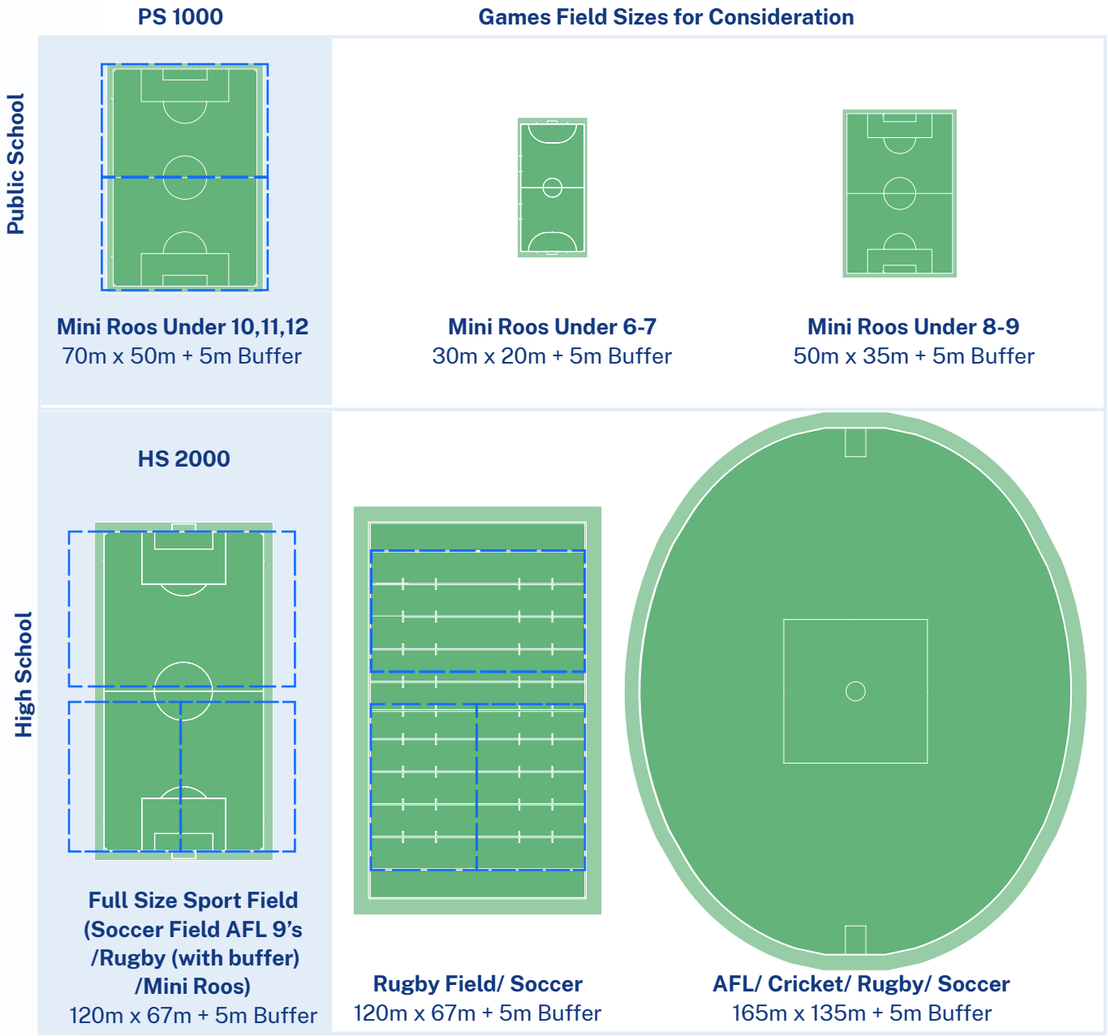
- **Public School**: Consider a north-south orientation after the field is subdivided to accommodate multiple PDHPE classes.
- **High School**: North-south is the preferred orientation.

Shared Use Opportunities

Refer to *'Community Use Design Overlays'* for shared use opportunities.

Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE




Alexandria Community School, NSW


Snowy Mts Grammar School, NSW

Materiality

Ground Surface: Surface must be permeable. Prioritise natural grass surface. Where natural grass is not possible, follow the 'Synthetic Turf for Sports Field' Guidelines (NSW Planning). A rubberized surface is required for an athletics track where provided.

Grading & Drainage: Maximum slope allowable shall not exceed an even gradient of vertical to horizontal 1: 41 in any direction. Drainage outlet must be provided at the lowest points.

Movement & Play

Seating Elements: Allow for edge/ tiered seating at the periphery of the field for spectators.

Hardstand Areas: Allow for hard-paved areas where congregation can occur.

Landscape & Shade

Trees & Vegetation: Use biodiverse, native and hardy species adapted to local climate and safe for children.

Natural Boundaries: Integrate natural boundaries (e.g. hedges, tree lines).
Shade: Provide shade in the form of natural tree canopy to the edges.

Co-location & Services

Access to Sports Storage & WC: Allow for a clear uninterrupted pathway to access sports equipment storage and toilets.

Parking & After Hours Access: Co-locate parking near the playfield where possible. Provide a clear uninterrupted pathway to access the after-hours-use gate.

Water Bubblers: Allow for a minimum of 2 water bubblers adjacent to the Games Field & Games Court.

Lighting & Digital Security: Provide floodlights and CCTV to areas identified as after-hours community use.

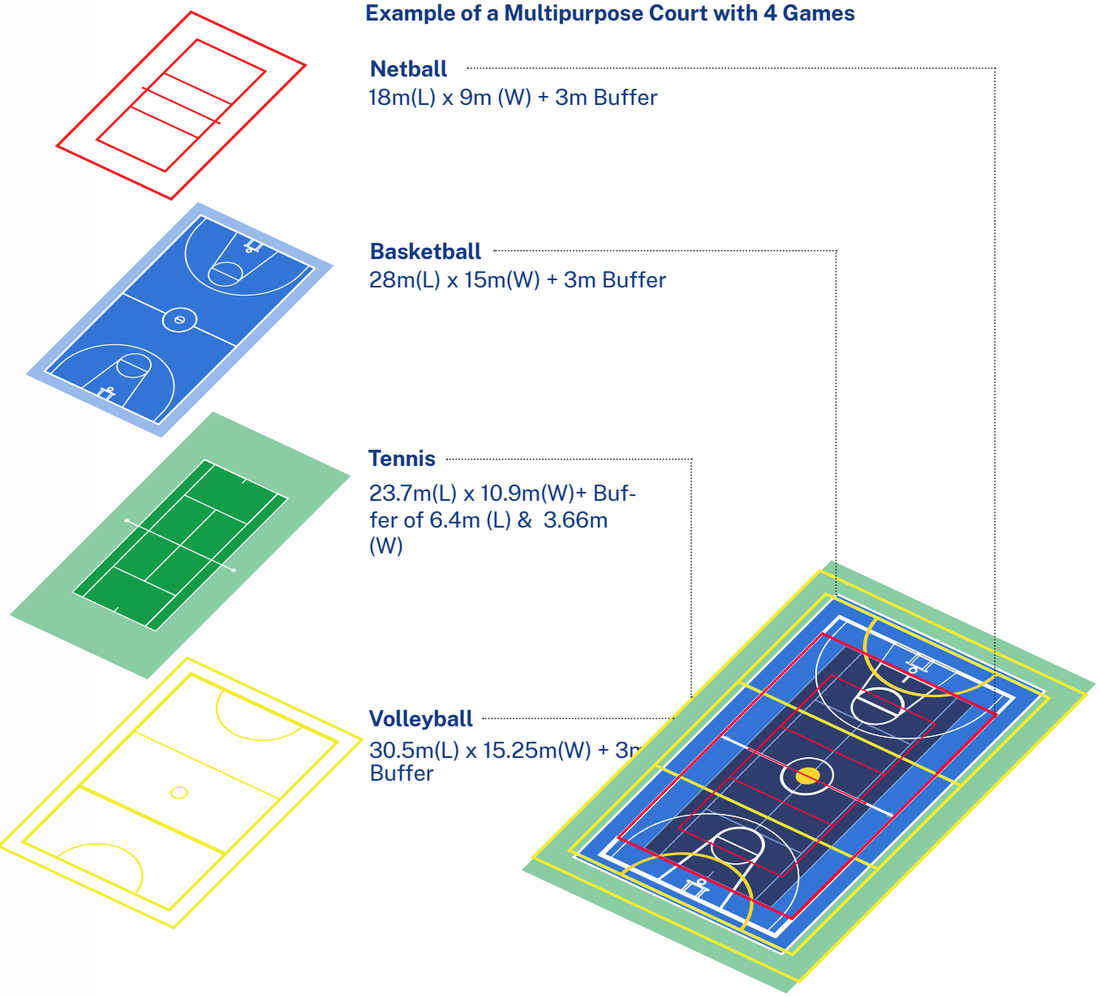
4.1.9 Spatial Data Sheet

Games Court

A Games Court in a school offers a hard-surfaced, multi-use area for structured sports such as basketball, netball, or tennis, as well as informal recreation during breaks.

Refer to the Schedule of Landscape Areas for area provision requirements.

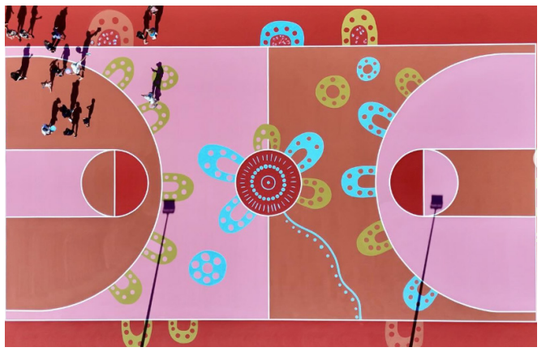
Example of a Multipurpose Court with 4 Games



Key Play & Recreation Type:

- GATHER
- DISCOVERY
- RECOVERY
- ACTIVE

Officer Specialist School, VIC



Griffith Green, NSW

Materiality

Ground Surface: Materiality and colour contrast must be considered carefully to ensure visibility while playing various games. The ideal surface is a rubberized paint finish on asphalt. Potential to integrate artwork where appropriate.

Movement & Play

Line-marking: The four compulsory line-markings are: netball, basketball, tennis and volleyball. Line-marking contrast must be clear for each game.

Other games can also include:

- **Badminton** - 13.4m(L) x 5.18m (W) + 3m Buffer
- **Pickle ball** - 13.41m(L) x 5.28m (W) + 3m Buffer

Seating Elements: Allow for edge seating at the periphery of the court for spectators.

Landscape & Shade

Trees: Locate court adjacent to native and hardy tree species adapted to local climate and safe for children.

Shade: Provide shade in the form of natural tree canopy or fixed shade structure.

Co-location & Services

Access to Sports Storage & WC: Allow for clear access to sports equipment storage and toilets.

Parking & After Hours Access: Co-locate sport court near Car Parking & Games Field where possible. Provide a clear uninterrupted pathway to access the after-hours-use gate.

Water Bubblers: Allow for a minimum of 2 water bubblers adjacent to the Games Field & Games Court.

Lighting & Digital Security: Provide external lighting (including floodlights) and CCTV to areas identified as after-hours community use.

4.2 Boundary Types

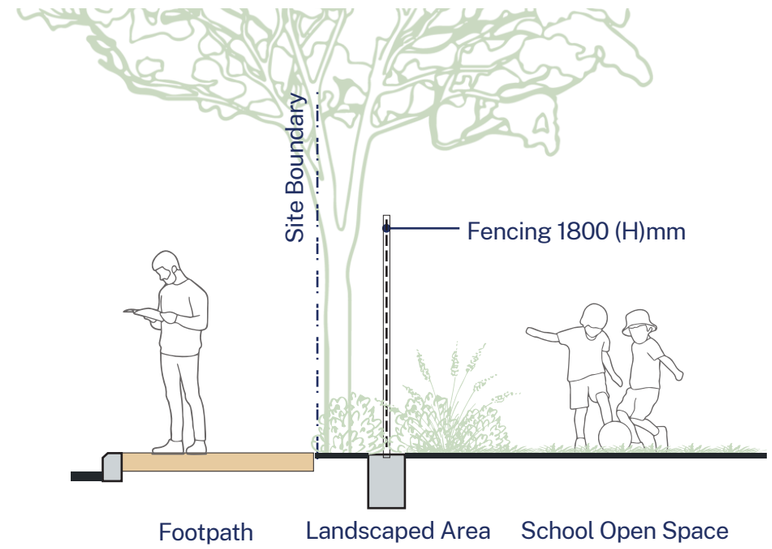
Five types of boundaries are identified for Schools in NSW as outlined in the 'Security and Boundaries' Design Overlay. The details of each of the five boundary types are outlined within this chapter.

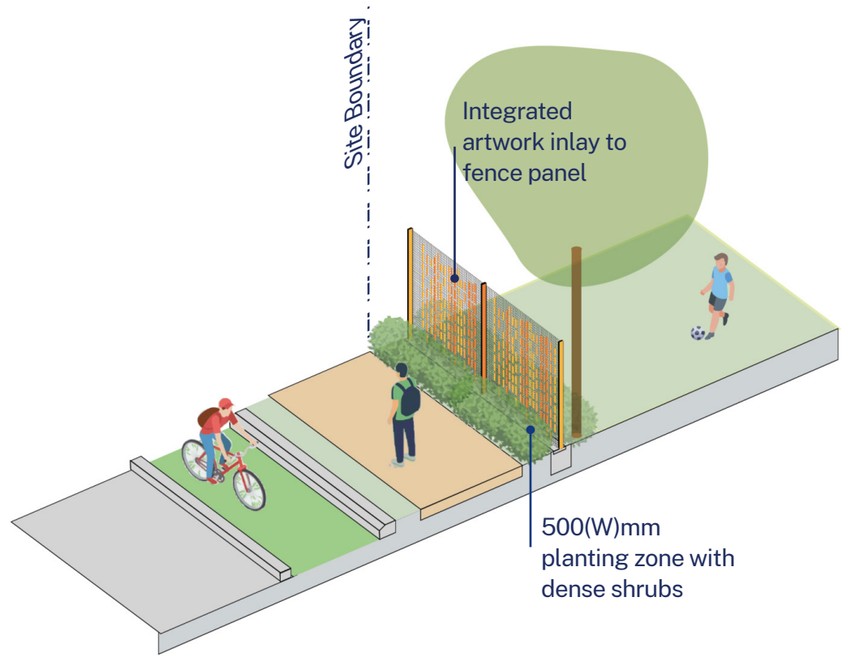
TYPE 1	
Height	1800mm High Fence.
Description	Coro-mesh or aluminum tubular fencing (with flat or loop ends).
Requirements	• Every 20m an artwork/ colourful element must be applied to the fence. • Must include native vegetation along the fence line. • A minimum setback to parking and main streets to be 1m to allow for a planting zone to both sides of the fence.

TYPE 1	
Height	1200mm High Fence.
Description	Coro-mesh, picket fencing or aluminium tubular fencing (with flat or loop ends).
Requirements	• Every 20m an artwork/ colourful element must be applied to the fence. • Must include native vegetation along the fence line. • A minimum setback to parking and main streets to be 1m to allow for a planting zone to both sides of the fence.

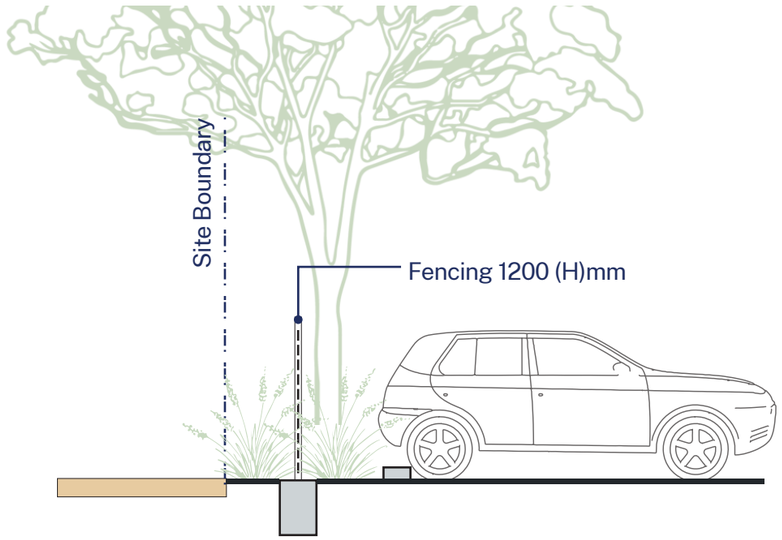
For location details refer to:
'Security and Boundaries' Design Overlay

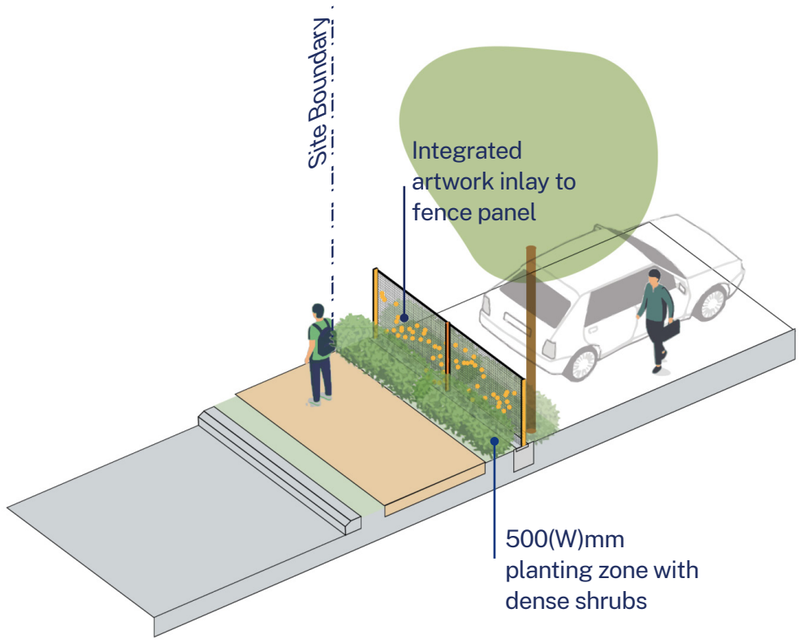
Boundary Type 1: 1800mm High Fence





Boundary Type 2: 1200mm High Fence





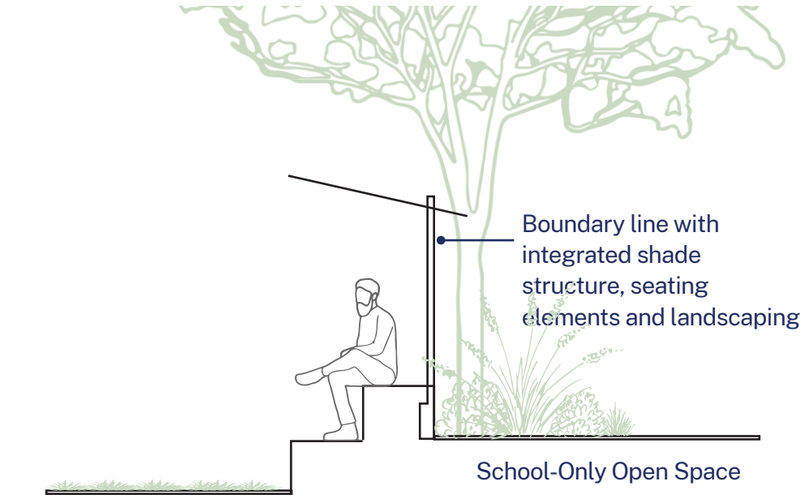
4.2 Boundary Types

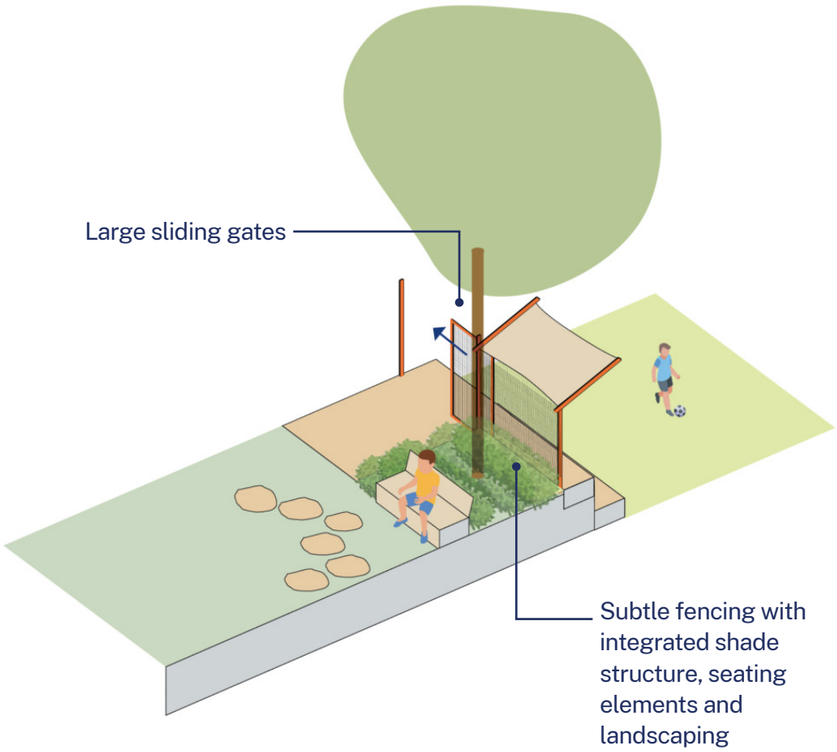
TYPE 3	
Height	Minimal height, context dependent.
Description	Internal school boundary with integrated landscape/ shade structure. Note: depending on context, the ground level stairs of buildings can be secured with no need for internal boundary.
Requirements	• If a boundary is required, a minimum of 40% should be 'openable' with large sliding or hinge gates which allow for seamless movement between open spaces. • Shade structures, seating elements and landscaping must be integrated within the boundary line in order to soften the edge.

TYPE 4	
Height	n/a
Description	The edge of the building is the secure line, with no fencing in front.
Requirements	• Security film should be applied to windows (or glass doors) below 2100mm height on external facade. • Anti-Graffiti treatment shall be used to protect to external walls facing public domain. • Additional CCTV coverage on interface of the building and public domain. • Additional external lighting on interface of the building and public domain. • A minimum 1m setback with landscaping should be applied to the edge of the building.

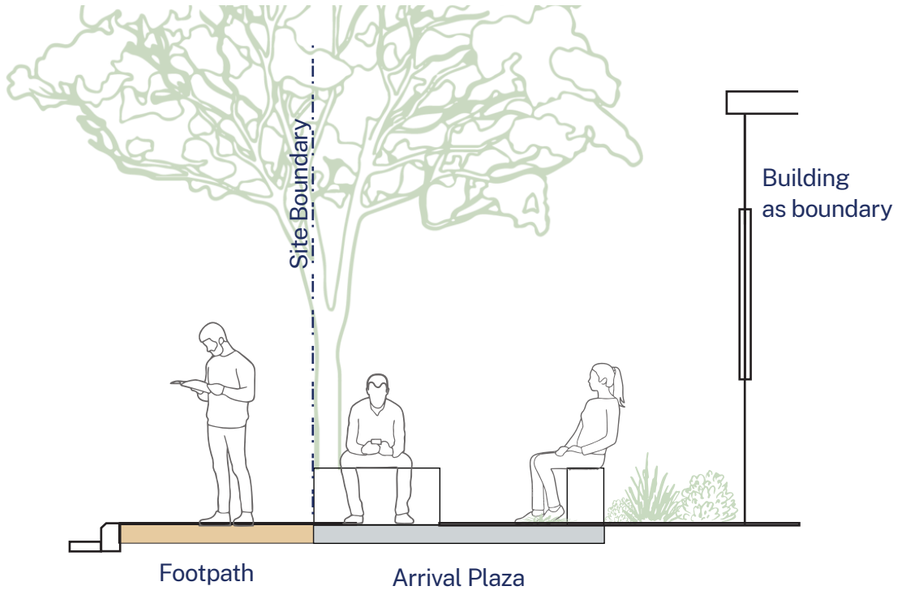
For location details refer to:
'Security and Boundaries' Design Overlay

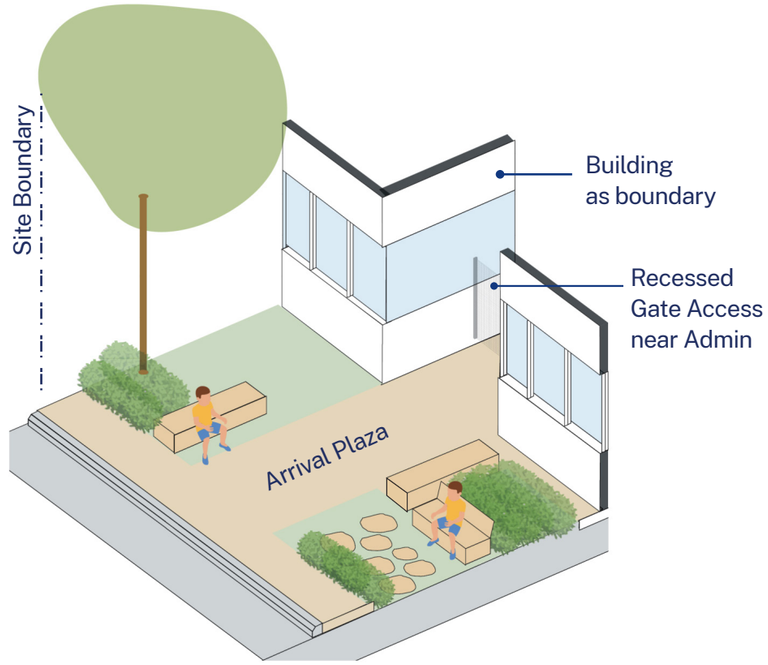
Boundary Type 3: Landscape/ Shade Structure





Boundary Type 4: Building as Secure Line

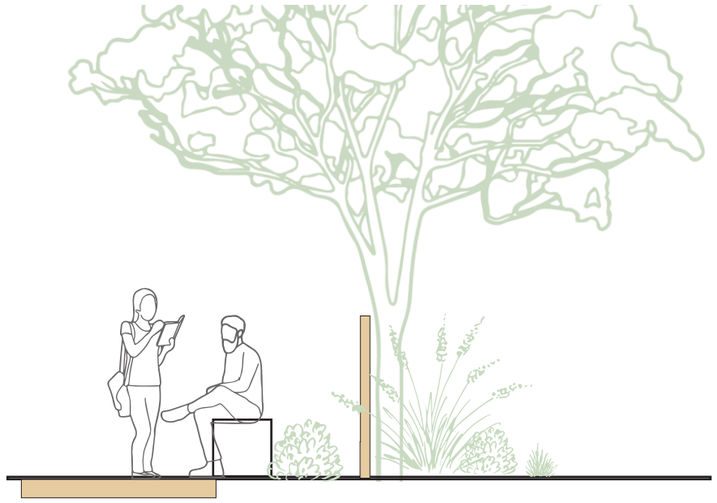




4.2 Boundary Types

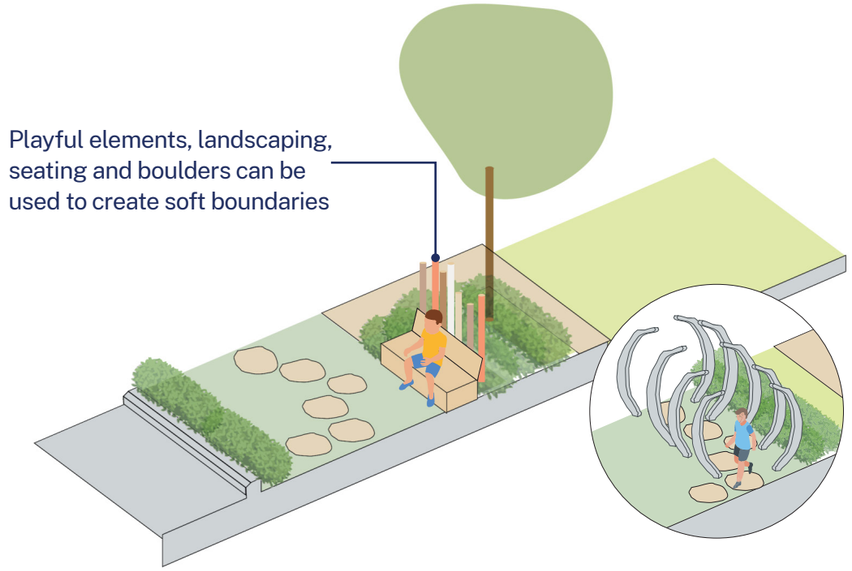
TYPE 5	
Height	n/a
Description	Soft Landscape Boundary.
Requirements	• Playful elements, landscaping, seating and/ or boulders can be used to create soft boundaries. • Create a sense of enclosure, while still allowing for supervision of the space at all times.

Boundary Type 5: Soft Landscape Boundary



Sensory Garden/ Nature Play

Open Area



Example Images

The example images show the design intent of school fences; balancing the security needs of the school, while creating welcoming and joyful school boundaries.

Example of colour integrated within a boundary fence.

Example of artwork integrated within a boundary fence.

Example of a 1200mm high fence with a landscape buffer.

Example of “Building as a secure line” for Parramatta PS.

For location details refer to:
‘Security and Boundaries’ Design Overlay

4.3 Ancillary Furniture & External Elements

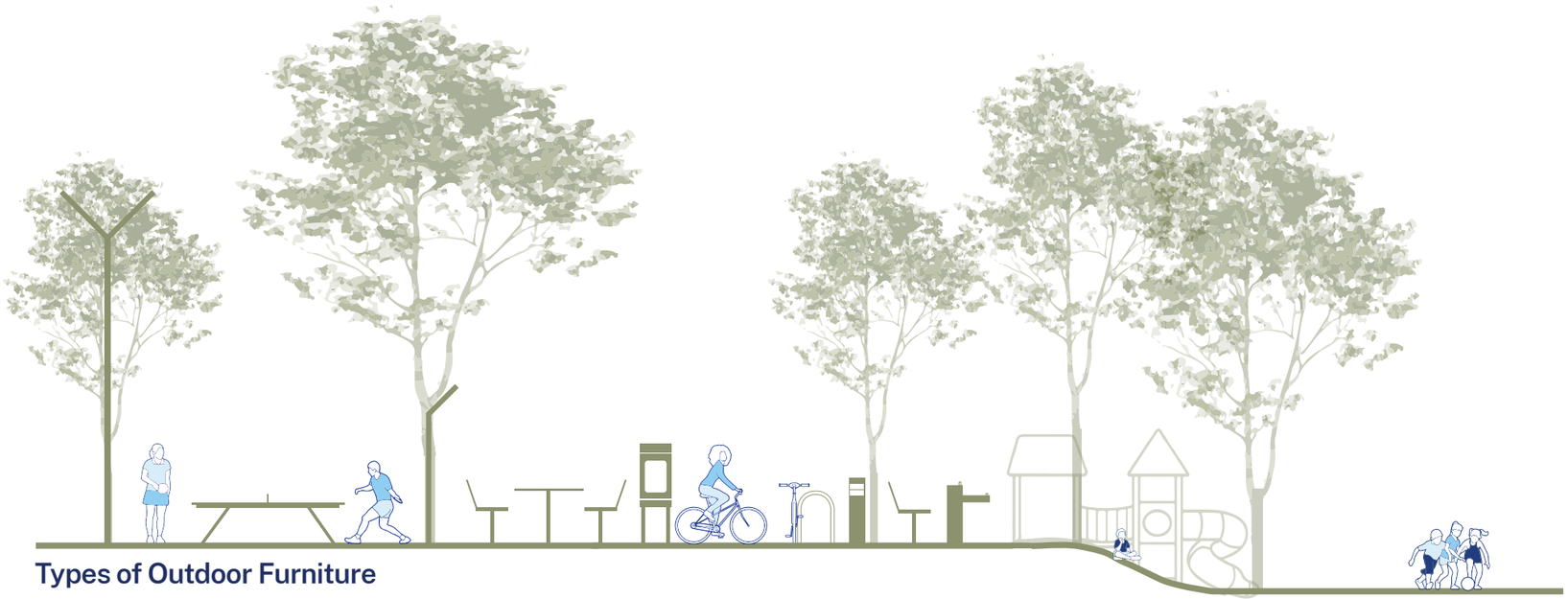
Categories of Outdoor Furniture & Play Elements

The arrangement of outdoor furniture and play elements significantly influences how school play spaces are used. Thoughtful placement — particularly the co-location of furniture and elements in relation to student activity patterns — is essential to support effective use of the space.

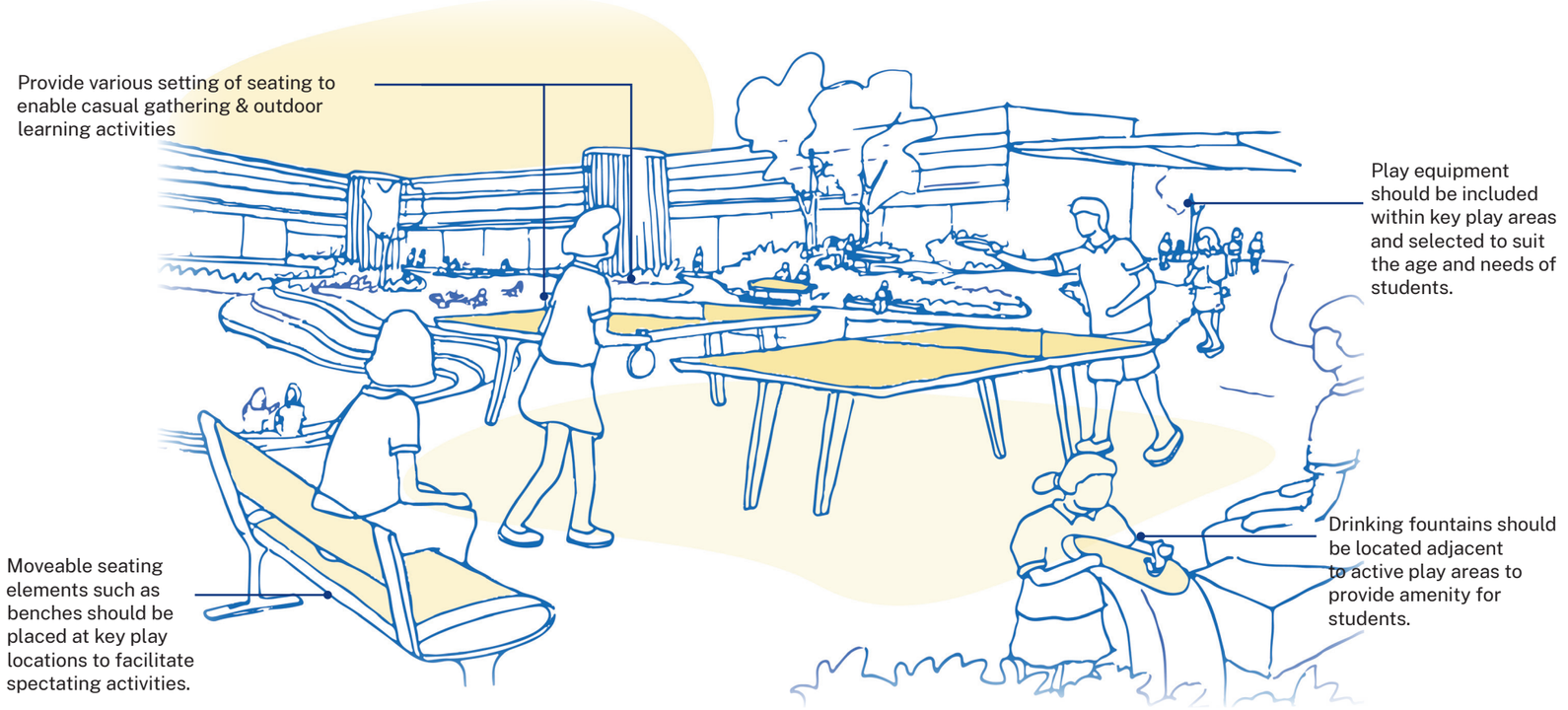
Further consultation will be required to develop a standard list of outdoor furniture appropriate for school environments.

All schools must provide the following categories of external furniture and elements:

- **Play Elements:** Play elements should cater to a variety of age groups and play types, encouraging creativity, physical activity, and social interaction
- **Signage and Wayfinding:** Clear, child-friendly signage helps students navigate the school grounds independently and supports inclusivity and safety
- **Fixed Furniture and Landscape Elements:** Seating, tables, and shaded rest areas should be integrated into high-traffic and gathering zones to support passive and social uses of outdoor space.
- **Lighting:** Appropriate outdoor lighting enhances visibility and safety, particularly in shared-use areas and during after-hours community access.



Types of Outdoor Furniture



NSW GOVERNMENT