

Outdoor Breaks at Pentland Primary School

At Pentland we are fortunate to have extensive outside space in a lovely setting. We have the luxury of having a field on site, wooded areas, tarmac space, an amphitheatre and a trim trail.

Outside play is an essential ingredient to a balanced childhood experience. Fresh air, time to socialise with a wider friendship group, an opportunity to problem solve, play freely and take risks (within a framework) help to prepare children for their life ahead.

The supervision of a few children in a domestic setting is very different from taking care of hundreds of children in a school playground. Activities which children may be allowed to do while at home cannot be tolerated in school e.g. play-fighting, collybucky, bull-dogs.

During break times there are supervisors spread around the grounds and field. They wear high visibility vests so that they are easily spotted by pupils that need support. The role of the supervisors is to encourage safe play and to be available to resolve minor issues that pupils inevitably encounter. They carry yellow and red cards for use on the field to help manage children's behaviour and reinforce safe play at break times. The yellow card is used if children are displaying behaviours which impact negatively on themselves or others. It is the warning, and allows children the opportunity to change the behaviour. A red card is shown when the behaviour has not improved. A red card symbolises immediate dismissal from the field for the rest of the day. In most cases children will be shown a yellow card before a red card is given, however there may be instances where this is not the case. A child will receive an automatic red card if they display dangerous or unacceptable behaviour.

While outside we expect our children to be 'respectful of oneself, others and learning'. Our P1 and P2 pupils play together in the area at the front of the school. Along with adults, they are supported by prefects from the senior school. The prefects act as buddies offering support with games, unwrapping snack, resolving small disagreements, explaining situations etc. These volunteers are good role models for the younger children.

From P3 – P7 the pupils may play in any area of the school grounds including the field. Historically the field was closed for most of the school year because of the wet grass and mud which, if brought into school, made a mess on carpets inside. The pupils requested and offered the solution of changing to indoor shoes after breaks. Access to the field allows those who wish to practise ball skills a great space, on a soft surface, away from windows. Equally those who wish to avoid stray balls have plenty space to do so.

As pupils are not wearing shin-pads, sports clothing and we have no coaches, linesmen or referees during the breaks – we have instructed pupils not to play matches/games. The breaks are an opportunity to have a kick or throw about, enhance the skill of passing, receiving, running, getting into space. From experience ‘heated arguments’ of a competitive nature can be difficult to resolve and can escalate very quickly into something more serious.

If there is a snow fall, the field is the only area where snowballs may be made and thrown. Similar to the ball games, those who wish to avoid snowballs do not need to be involved. The building of snowmen, snow-dogs, igloos etc is encouraged in any area.

We are lucky to have wooded areas and the children love hiding in them, hunting for friends, running through, looking for mini beasts and making dens. There is no climbing of trees, moving of heavy logs or breaking of branches permitted.

There is a ‘no eating’ policy on the field. We encourage and praise our pupils for using the bins situated around the playground.

Basketball Area

There is a small area for individuals to practise dribbling and shooting. In this area, pupils line up to take their shot at dribbling up with the ball and shooting

into the net before dribbling back to the line to pass the ball to the next person. It is not an appropriate space to play games.

Grass within the playground

To help preserve the decorative look of the grass, we restrict when the pupils can play on grass in the playground. There will be a visual prompt to signify when pupils can play, roll and run on it.

Toilets

Pupils access the toilets on the ground floor via the cloakrooms during breaks. Our prefects from the senior school monitor the cloakroom and toilets to encourage everyone to take greater care of these areas.

Outdoor wear

As the pupils become familiar with the rules and routines of school (usually at some point in P3) they are encouraged to take responsibility for getting organised and ready for playing outdoors. Some children prefer not to wear their coat as they feel restricted by it and others just do not seem to feel the cold. I would ask parents to discuss whether you wish the coat you send your child with in the morning, to be worn or not. I would also like your support in reinforcing that coats should not be laid down for goal posts or left lying in the playground.

Indoor Breaks at Pentland Primary School

Pupils will remain in their classrooms during indoor breaks. Pupils from P1 to P5 will be monitored by two prefects from the senior school and an adult is assigned to each area to patrol the classes and to be available should the prefects require assistance.

During playtime, children should sit down at a table to eat their snack. Once finished their snack, they can choose an 'indoor break activity' e.g draw, read, class board games etc.

At lunchtime, **P1 to P3** go to the dining hall for their lunch at their normal time. When they are finished eating, they will return to class and choose from a variety of indoor activities. **P4 to P7** will stay in their classrooms when the lunchtime bell rings and wait for their class bells to ring (e.g. 4 bells for P4) before going to the dining hall to eat their lunch. Once finished their lunch, they will return to class and choose from a variety of indoor activities.