

## Fencing Final Plan – Kirkburton Middle School

The school is installing a 2 metre fence around the perimeter of its boundary in order to enable access for the children in the school to go on to the fields safely and as often as the weather allows so they can run, play and exercise. This is not just for the 512 pupils who currently attend the school, but for the generations of children in Kirkburton and the surrounding villages who will attend the school in years to come and the generations of children who access the site as part of local clubs and groups.

Currently, insecure boundaries around the fields mean that children are unable to have free access to the playing fields and are generally kept behind the inner fencing around the building. The school currently pays £17k every year from its budget to maintain its playing fields. We want the children to benefit from this expenditure to access the full grounds safely alongside the enormous benefits this brings to them socially, emotionally and physically.

When we spoke to the pupils about this project there were some common themes in their answers, predominately around safety and space. The pupils' responses below provide a flavour of this:

*'Without a fence people stroll onto the field, we don't know who these people are which makes us feel unsafe. We hope to change this.'*

*'It will be a huge advantage to us as it will add privacy and feel safe that way.'*

*'It will definitely give us more freedom and space to play without clashing with other games going on.'*

*'The fence will make the school much safer so strangers won't come on the field while we are playing. Sometimes teenagers invade our space and this makes us feel unsafe.'*

*'Sometimes there is dog muck and broken glass on the field which somebody could get hurt on'*

The school has already informally consulted with local residents and some users of the school site and has made adjustments in light of feedback.

Following initial consultations with local residents, the school has made the following adjustments to the proposed fencing:

- Reduced the height of the fence from 2.4 metre to 2 metre
- Moved the fencing 2m away from the residential boundaries to allow residents to maintain their own boundary.
- Moved the fencing line down from the top part of the North side of the proposal where residents' views would be most affected.
- Created a section at the top of the North side for development of a wildlife/active gardening area.
- Added an additional gate to allow managed access for the annual Kirkburton Beer Festival

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It should be noted that there is no public right of way across the school's land so it is well within its rights to secure the boundary. Schools are private property. People do not have an automatic right to enter: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises> The school does not need to apply for planning permission for the fencing, but has engaged with its local residents and neighbours out of respect and consideration.

### Rationale for the fencing overall

School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 clearly enforces Health, Safety & Welfare in all schools and states: 'The school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein must be maintained to a standard such that, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured'.

A high number of health & safety issues have been identified relating to the site playing fields that require attention. The majority of these are attributed to the frequency and methods in which trespassers enter the grounds, which raises serious concerns for staff and pupil safety and wellbeing when using the fields. There are also significant health and safety issues related to the perimeter boundary including barbed wire, unstable grounds, litter, dog excrement, residents' gardens encroaching onto the school playing field and unrestricted access due to insecure boundaries directly from local pathways, roads and residents' properties.

Currently, the school building is enclosed, but this provides little space for the children to play freely. The proposed fencing around the perimeter of the school playing fields will allow the school to open the space and provide access to the playing fields at social times and during PE lessons so the children can run, play and exercise freely without significant risk of harm. The fields are part of the school grounds, but currently the children of Kirkburton cannot have free access to them without high levels of supervision due to the specified risks. These increased staffing levels have an impact on the operation of the school in other areas as if staff are having to supervise on the field, they are taken away from the other support services the school offers during social times e.g. lunchtime clubs and activities, wellbeing support sessions, mentoring etc.

Following the last twelve months during the pandemic where childrens' opportunity to play, run and exercise have been significantly restricted, urgent measures are required at Kirkburton Middle School for the following reasons:

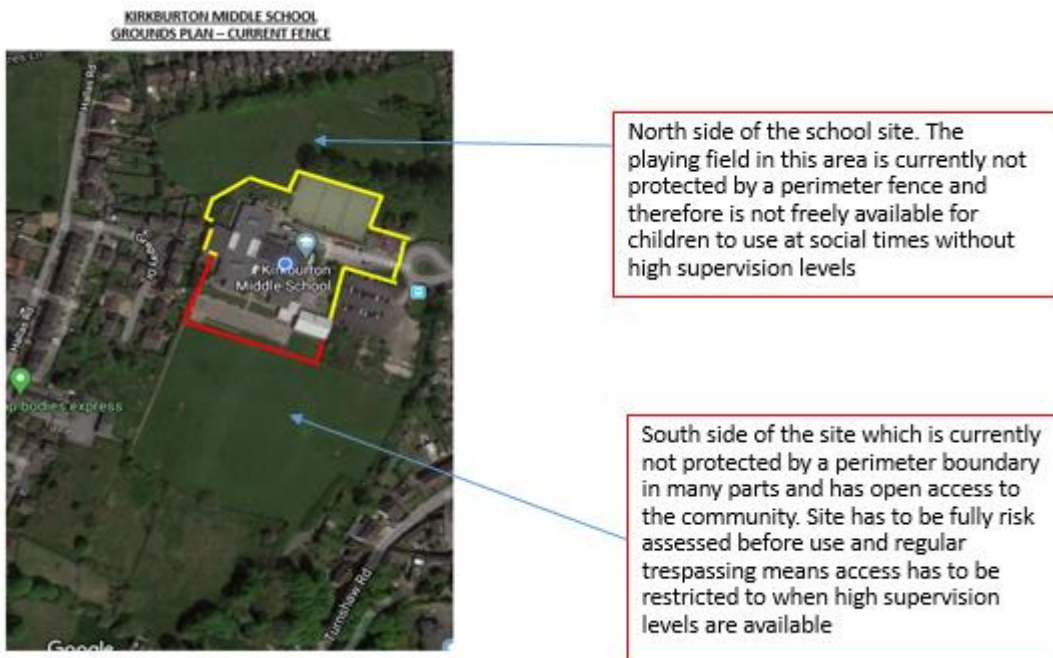
- To address the current health & safety issues to create an effective and secure school site
- To restrict access and mitigate the risk of members of the public walking through the school grounds and coming into contact with vulnerable children
- To reduce the risk of trespass
- To enable staff to effectively manage and control visitors to the school and access to the school grounds
- To mitigate the risk of incidents of intrusion to the school playing fields
- To restrict unauthorised vehicular access to school grounds
- To reduce disruption to the curriculum such as PE lessons
- To provide a safe, secure environment where pupils can learn, and staff can teach
- To reduce anti-social behaviour and vandalism

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- To prevent acts of crime, arson, drug use and damage
- To reduce maintenance costs associated with damage to property
- To prevent dog related incidents such as fouling and out of control dogs
- To secure the safety of pupils on the school playing fields
- To satisfy safeguarding requirements
- To improve the general environment benefiting pupils, staff, parents, visitors and the wider community

### Current fencing:

The school building itself has a fence around it. Whilst this reduces the risk of intruders into the building, it does not protect the playing fields which means pupils are currently 'penned in' to small play spaces at social times. The current fencing can be seen in the diagram below.

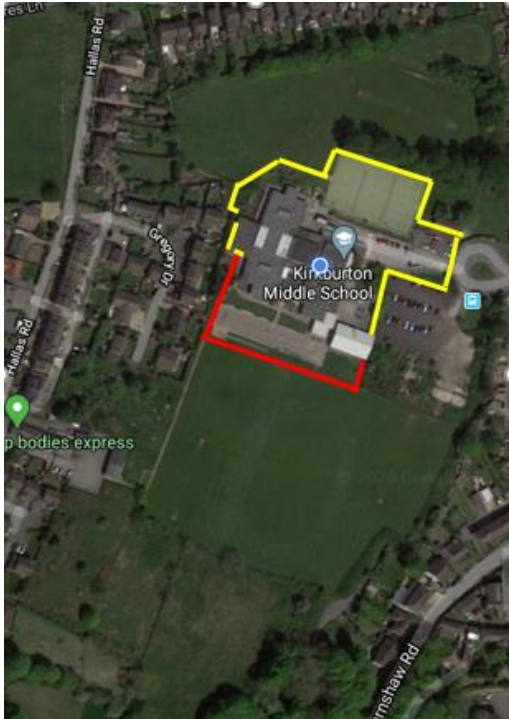


The school wishes to open the fields to the children so that they have the opportunity to access their playing fields; to have the freedom to run, play games and benefit from fresh air, space and exercise without risk of injury or harm. A lack of perimeter fencing around fields currently means this is not possible without very high staffing levels and therefore access for children is very limited and due to the staffing levels currently required other opportunities have to be restricted.

Children have not had the freedoms afforded to many generations due to the Coronavirus restrictions. Now more than ever, it is essential for the children of Kirkburton Middle School to be able to freely play on their playing fields – the physical, social and mental health benefits of this are enormous.

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### Current fencing:



### Proposed fencing:



### Specific Rationale for fencing South side

There is no current fence on the South side of the playing fields and no perimeter barrier between the public and school fields. There is no boundary between access to woodland; the scout hut; roads and some residential properties.

The south side of the playing field is entirely insecure. These photos show points of open access



The plan would provide gated access to the field for the Scout group who use this hut. The group would benefit from the added security of the site. Currently this whole area is entirely open with no barrier

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There are significant issues with dog fouling; dog walking - including without leads; litter. There have also been historic incidents related to fly tipping and some anti-social behaviour, including drug use on evenings and weekends. Before PE lessons and weekend football matches, the fields have to be risk assessed to ensure they are a safe place for the children to play and the hazards have to be removed by teaching staff, coaches and parents taking time away from lessons and training sessions. This area is regularly subject to trespassing including during lessons and the school has had issues with dog walking through lessons - including with dogs off the lead which has meant lessons have had to be stopped. The insecure boundary means that currently people are able to access the fields on quad bikes or motorbikes should they choose to. The level of risk is unacceptable and therefore children cannot have regular access to the fields and have to remain inside the building perimeter fencing unless the area is risk assessed, cleared of hazards and staffing levels are sufficiently high.



Boundary fencing in the southern area will allow the school to open the fencing from the hard play ground to the fields. This will mean that children can go and play freely in this area at social times and PE lessons can take place without disruption. The secure site will also deter antisocial behaviour in the evenings and weekends to the benefit of residents. Once the boundary is secure, potential hazards and risks will be significantly reduced and therefore children can have regular access to the fields and space to run and play with manageable supervision levels.

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### Specific Rationale for fencing North side

On the North side of the schools, the fields are enclosed by housing, but the boundary is not secure and consequently, children cannot play in this area without a high staff supervision levels. There are low walls; open paths from residents' gardens onto the field and barbed wire. This insecure boundary means that the school cannot control visitor access; ensure safety around the perimeter or ensure there is no risk of intrusion by trespassers or dogs.



In places, there is barbed wire along the boundary which is currently accessible to children



In places, the boundary is insecure, whereby there is no barrier between residents' garden and the playing field



In places, there are boundary walls, but these are very low and therefore do not create a sufficient barrier to prevent trespass and/or dogs from accessing the field.

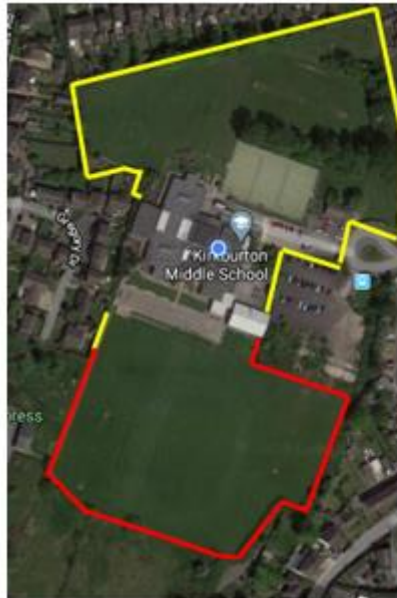
The school wishes to secure the boundary of this area to enable children to freely access this playing area at social times and during PE lessons and to control the current risks which mean staffing levels have to be very high.

### Adaptations following feedback form residents on the north side:

During the on-going informal consultation, some residents raised concerns about the loss of view. This issue is particularly prominent for the houses at the top of field as their properties are elevated and some are also single story and with narrow gardens. In response to this feedback, the school made an adjustment to the original plan.

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### Original plan:



### Proposed Adaptation:



This area – created by the adaptation to the original plan, will be used to create an active garden/wildlife area.

This adaptation means that residents at the top of the north side of the school, which is elevated, will not be affected by the fence directly in front of their properties.

### Community Use:

The school is absolutely committed to working with the community to ensure Kirkburton Middle School remains an intrinsic part of the community. An adjustment has been made to the plans to ensure ease of access during the annual Beer Festival and once the South field is secure, we will be able to support secure access to the Scout group and other local childcare providers in Kirkburton so they can also benefit from a safe, open space. The school is committed to continue to work with local community groups, but wishes to ensure that the community access is controlled and managed in a way which enables a safe and secure environment for our children and those using the site for community events.

Currently, the site is used by Kirkburton Junior Football Club who have worked with the school to secure the funding required for the all-weather pitch and pavilion changing block. The football club has identified the same challenges as the school when using the South fields for training and will also benefit enormously from the proposed fencing which will enable them to use the fields without having to clear litter; dog excrement and other hazards from the site. There have also been occasions where the football club have called games off in order to protect the pitches after periods of prolonged wet weather only to find members of the community using the pitches and causing damage, sometimes by riding bicycles across the field and leaving tyre indentations.

The fencing will not prohibit community use, but will allow us to ensure it is controlled and therefore that the site is a safe and usable space for all users particularly the children of Kirkburton and surrounding villages.

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### Specifics of the fencing:

The mesh panels have vertical 6 mm diameter wires supported between two 8 mm diameter horizontal wires (8-6-8 format). Vertical wires are spaced at 50 mm intervals and horizontal wires at 200 mm intervals.

The fencing, which will be installed is Heras Pallas fencing. This is the largest mesh fencing available.

In sympathy with the rural surroundings of the school, the fencing is designed to be as unobtrusive as possible and sympathetic to the green environment. It is a green mesh with the widest spaced posts available. The mesh design means that climbing the fence is very difficult creating security, but the thickness of the wire means that it blends with green scenery. The proposed fencing is the same as the fencing which was put up to secure the school building and there were no objections to this fencing at the time of construction. Putting up this fencing will allow us to immediately secure the boundary so that children can access the fields for play in the summer term following an elongated period of lockdown.



At a distance, the fencing is not overly intrusive of views as shown by the fencing at front of school

The design of the fencing allows it to blend well with the green environment and limit the impact on views as shown by images of the current fencing used at the school to enclose the building and hard play areas.

Building works will recommence on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March. If anyone has any questions or concerns they wish to raise in relation to this project, please contact Melanie Humphreys (Executive Administrator) [mhumphreys@themast.co.uk](mailto:mhumphreys@themast.co.uk). These must be concluded by Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March.