

A new *playground* in 24 hours!

Staff, parent helpers and the community of Gore band together to achieve an amazing result.

East Gore School were in dire need of a new playground. The old one was falling apart; pieces were broken and the kids were no longer playing on it. So the PTA made it a priority to replace it.

Wendy Kitto, Principal of East Gore School, had attended the 2019 Principals Conference where she met Park Supplies & Playgrounds Sales Manager Jenny (Jen) Mullins. Park Supplies & Playgrounds were one of several playground suppliers at the conference, but after the conference, the Park Supplies & Playgrounds team were quick to respond and made contact with Wendy within a couple of days. This coupled with their proactive and helpful approach made them stand out to Wendy.



The finished playground, ready for students!



“When you haven’t done a playground before, you don’t really know what to expect from a cost and process perspective, Park Supplies & Playgrounds were very clear and helpful from the outset” tells Wendy. She goes on to say, “For us the reason we chose them was the people; Jen was great, and her communication was on point straight off the bat! We initially dealt with her until Melissa (Mel) Cowie, Playground Consultant took over our project and she was equally as responsive and enthusiastic. - Wendy Kitto, Principal, East Gore School.”



The final playground design chosen by East Gore School.

Wendy found the team to be very accommodating, “they were happy for us to delay and push back timelines where we needed to. A significant amount of fundraising and grants were required to move forward, and they stuck with us throughout the process.”

From the outset, the team at East Gore School felt it was important the students were involved in the process of selecting playground elements, as at the end of the day they were who it was being built for and meeting their needs was a top priority.

The students had the opportunity to put forward their favourite playground items, naturally a big slide was top of the list, as well as a cube and monkey bars for climbing and the idea of a flying fox was also a big hit. Wendy had seen the Lunar Spinner at the conference and knew that the students would love the spinning motion and the fact it had capacity to hold many children at once was also a plus.

Another significant consideration in the design, was making sure the playground was suitable for their special needs students. "We had seen the research around the ability of swings and swinging motion to calm children. The Lilypad Basket Swing was an easy decision as it provides accessible play for all children."

In the end, the decision was made to get the full playground option. While a slightly scaled back version was considered, Wendy and the team thought that it was much better to do it right from the start and have a space they were proud of and that the children would get full enjoyment out of for years to come.

Old playground out, new playground in – all in a weekend

In order to keep costs down, East Gore School decided to install the playground themselves, which turned out to be no small feat. Luckily their great team of parent helpers also came with some handy skills - builders, excavators and block layers in the mix.



The playground brought to the required level and marked out.



The Park Supplies & Playgrounds Lilypad Swing provides an accessible, all-inclusive play option for students.

Before the install they managed to sell the old playground structures on Trade Me and the buyers came on-site to remove it themselves. A couple of qualified builders amongst the parent helpers measured the site up for everything before the install. Park Supplies & Playgrounds shipped down the two pallets of playground equipment, which had some crossing delays across the Cook Strait but arrived in time to be installed during the last weekend of the July school holidays. The pallets of equipment that arrived from Park Supplies & Playgrounds were very well packaged, labelled and the instructions for set-up of each item were extremely clear, which made for a much easier install.

Wendy explains how the weekend and the playground all came together...

"We were fortunate to have a parent on the team who owned an excavation business so on the Friday before the install he was able to do land works to bring the site to the required level. We were also able to dig all the holes needed for the install the following day.

We were finally all ready to go on the Saturday morning. We had a team of 12-14 helpers on the day of which two were qualified builders and we had a bricklayer, a mechanic, three handymen and the rest were happy to do some hard labour. We were careful to adhere to all Health & Safety procedures for the install and we came up with a clear plan."



The playground begins to take shape.

The build continues...

We split into two teams with one builder on the construction of the Swings and Lunar which were the two major playground items, and the second team led by another builder took care of the other playground elements. We used a laser level for all the holes and blocks and were able to lay the posts easily using professional equipment.

By lunchtime the bricklayer had concreted in the Curved Leg Two Bay Swing with Lilypad Basket Swing and the Lunar Spinner. Apart from discovering a platform was missing (which we created a work around using a bit of kiwi ingenuity) the install was very smooth sailing.

Jon from Park Supplies & Playgrounds was awesome; we were ringing him on the Saturday with various questions and it was no bother at all.

A very dedicated Wendy and her partner even took watch over the concrete into the night while it set to ensure that no posts were moved around by members of the public.



Hard at work spreading the woodchip.



McNeill's delivering the woodchip from Lindsay & Dixon Ltd.

McNeill's had delivered 120m³ of woodchips in an extremely timely manner so by Sunday morning the team were ready to spread the woodchip surfacing. Around 40 parents turned up with rakes to help spread the vast amount of woodchips. We were lucky to have a parent who manages a tractor business kindly provide a telehandler to make the process much faster.

Having the right people on the day was definitely key to the success of the installation. We were extremely lucky to have local businesses come to the party and support our cause – Fulton Hogan donated the sand for the builders mix, ITM provided a great price on cement, Lindsay & Dixon Ltd supplied the wood chip and we received many generous free equipment hires. By the end of the weekend everyone was well deserving of a BBQ and refreshments.”



The helper team at the end of day one.



The day two team celebrates a weekend of hard work and a finished playground.

Park Supplies & Playgrounds were amazed at the talented group the school put together for the install and the successful result achieved in only 24 hours.

The new playground has been a huge hit with the kids! They absolutely love the Lunar Spinner and the Lilypad Swing. There have even been a few dodgy tummies after spinning too much on the Lunar! The teachers all agree it's so great to see the students being so active and healthy now – the playground has really helped to build confidence in many of the students and has also reduced behavioural problems by giving the students more to do.

We asked Wendy, what is the one piece of advice you would give other schools wanting to install their own playground? Her advice...

“ You need the right attitude, equipment and having a qualified builder is a must to keep things feasible and safe. The support of your community is also essential. It was amazing spending time with the parents and it was great to get to know them outside of school.

She adds, The team at Park Supplies & Playgrounds were amazing to work with, nothing was a problem. If I ever do another playground (and a junior one is still on the cards) I wouldn't hesitate to use Park Supplies & Playgrounds or recommend them to others. It would have certainly been difficult to install the playground ourselves without their support along the way.

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PLANNING A NEW PLAYGROUND?

If you would like more information or assistance in planning your playground please get in touch with us on

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