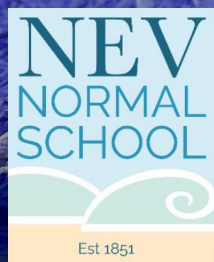


**Neighbourhood
Play System**

**North
East Valley
Normal
School**

OCTOBER 2023



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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**E mihi kau ana ki ngā tāngata whenua e pupuri ana i te mauri o te whenua mā tātou.
We acknowledge the people of the land.**

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Executive Summary

Research Overview

Figure 1: North East Valley.



North East Valley Normal School is a place where every child has the chance to be the best they can be now and for the rest of their lives. The Valley children are caring, respectful, knowledgeable, confident, and competent; they are prepared for life and grounded in the greater good/community.

North East Valley Normal School vision



Play is vital to the development of our tamariki and whānau and to the future of Aotearoa communities. Sport Otago commenced work alongside Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa and other partners to define and develop neighbourhoods through the context of play. This work is called the Neighbourhood Play System. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Play System model is to grow play at the neighbourhood level through co-designed projects, in order to understand and unlock community strengths.

Sport Otago has undertaken a comprehensive play assessment and evaluation for improving the play opportunities for students in years 1-6 at North East Valley Normal School (NEVNS), and in the surrounding community. This report presents our findings for the Neighbourhood Play System surrounding North East Valley Normal School and poses recommendations to support the development of a play-friendly environment.

To gain an authentic understanding for the current state of play across the Northeast Valley School Neighbourhood Play System, we employed a range of research methods. The methodology included a qualitative survey of the tamariki at the school with 150 respondents, neighbourhood site visits and school interactive workshops with tamariki. Research was also undertaken to identify relevant Sport Otago, Sport New Zealand (SNZ) and council strategies and how these relate to tamariki play experiences and aspirations.

Figure 2: North East Valley NPS Area.



This research report looks at understanding how the school and the urban environment around it impact children's play experiences. In our research approach, the tamariki of NEVNS are the central stakeholders in understanding these play experiences. Through the voice of tamariki and their whānau we learn how the key groups influencing these experiences – the school community, Sport Otago the North East Valley neighbourhood residents and community groups, Dunedin City Council – can work towards ensuring a play-friendly environment in the future. We look at the experience and aspirations of tamariki as students of the school, as community members of North East Valley, and as residents of Dunedin city.

The research has revealed that the key factor preventing tamariki from engaging in meaningful play in their school and community is their preference to play inside on technology, rather than choosing to play outside. This report explores why this is the case and how we can influence behaviour and facilitate play experiences so tamariki want to go outside to play and explore as well as having indoor time. This research sought to uncover some of the reasons behind low levels of outdoor play, such as whether this is due to a lack of safety and awareness of play opportunities in the neighbourhood for the tamariki or due to a lack of spaces to play and be creative.

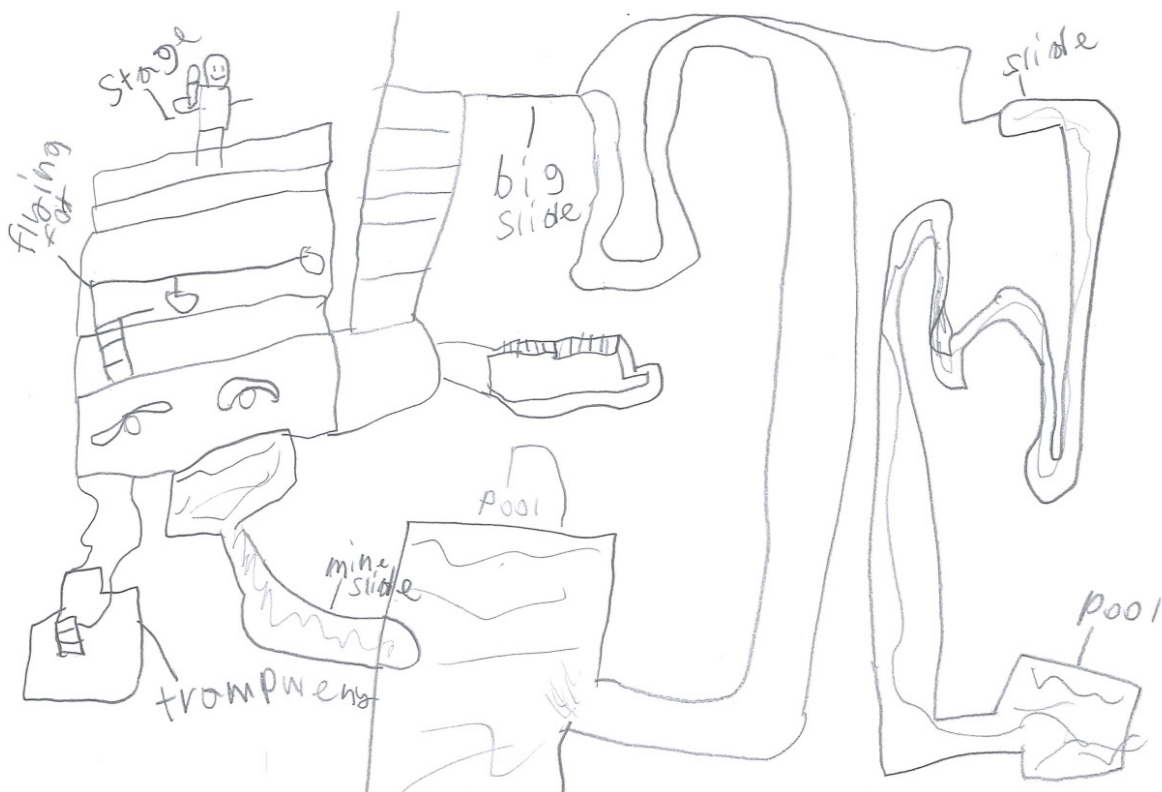
Other factors preventing tamariki from engaging in meaningful play in their school and community are:

- A challenging built environment including steep, busy streets,
- Playgrounds situated away from adult supervision,
- Play spaces limited to basic slides, swings and monkey bars,
- Play opportunities which do not cater to the needs of the growing community population and
- Tamariki avoiding outdoor play due to lack of play spaces and instead spending time indoors on electronic devices.

Co-creating play spaces which are exciting and engaging for tamariki, as shown in figure 2 below, is one of these recommendations to address these issues and give tamariki safe spaces to engage in their own kind of play.

It will also help realise the vision for the 2021 Dunedin City Council Play Spaces Plan – "Ōtepoti, where play is for everyone" in one of the lower socioeconomic suburbs of Dunedin.

Figure 3: Tamariki ideal play space showing a stage, flying fox, trampoline, big slide, mini slide and pools.



To support North East Valley tamariki to enjoy more imaginative outdoor play and to address challenges to play access, we propose a range of 8 recommendations for new actions, messaging and infrastructure.

These have associated timeframes which span the short, medium and long-term.

These proposed solutions were created by looking at the world through the eyes of tamariki from North East Valley Normal School and by taking a community-based approach.

To be truly confident and grounded in their community, action is needed to ensure tamariki have adequate play infrastructure and feel safe and empowered to explore their school and neighbourhood.

We recommend implementing the first phase with three of the eight recommendations. These are:

- Let's Talk Play Workshop for staff, parents and community members to educate and advocate for play in the Valley.
- Develop a new school play policy and carry out a risk benefit assessment within the school.
- Annual play events, such as a community play festival where everyone is invited to celebrate play and the diverse culture of North East Valley.

We challenge the adult decision-makers to enact the intentions of Council strategies, like the DCC Play Spaces Plan which are relevant to play directly, for the benefit of the tamariki that live in the area now and in the future. The first next step is getting everyone on board the "play bus" to create an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of play for tamariki in North East Valley. This can be done through a community workshop on play.

The kids of North East Valley Normal School know what they want in terms of play opportunities.

As one year 4 student put it succinctly:

“ I feel like there are no swings at this school and I love to swing! ”

Year 4 student

Together, we can create a thriving play environment for the tamariki of North East Valley Normal School. This report sets out why and how we can make that happen.

Figure 4: 8 Recommendations

- 1 Let's Talk Play workshop**
An introduction to play for educators, whānau, local businesses and other relevant stakeholders
- 2 Play Policy & Risk Benefit Assessment**
A Policy that sets out NEVNS commitment to providing play opportunities
- 3 Annual Play Events**
An opportunity to be a catalyst towards play opportunities in the valley
- 4 Play opportunities**
Tamariki have expressed their desire for challenging and new ways to play within the school
- 5 Play on the way**
A way to normalise play across the community and encourage more active transport
- 6 Te Ao Māori**
Bringing Te Ao and what the tamariki learn, into the community
- 7 Road Safety**
Ensure social and built environment factors are addressed and allow for mobility to play
- 8 Chingford Park**
Improve the quality of current conditions and work towards new amenities



Introduction

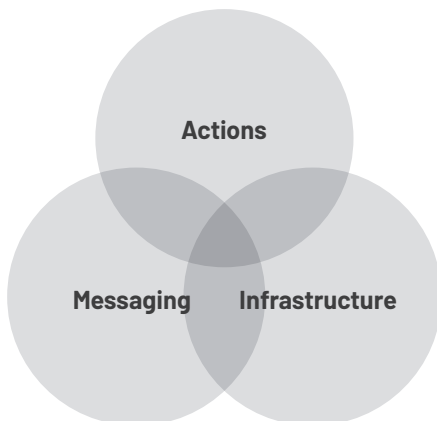
This Neighbourhood Play System report highlights some of the key issues and sets out the current play context at a city, neighbourhood, and school level within and surrounding North East Valley Normal School.

It also proposes a set of recommendations that can be implemented by enablers of play through integrated actions, messaging and infrastructure which promotes play and independent active mobility of tamariki (Figure 5).

- Actions are short term activations, programmes, projects and events, which drive action. These are often low to no cost, are temporary and may include play streets or the activation of school and community play spaces
- Messaging is about how we shape systems, communities, and places for play. This occurs with consideration of Council documents, perceptions, and the ongoing impacts / context of spaces. We will usually try to evolve case-studies and learnings from locally led approaches into policies, strategies and plans.
- Infrastructure is about the transformation of our public spaces in order to create playable communities. This recognises the value that play has in the lives of tamariki and whānau, shaping how we consider and design urban environments to be 'child-friendly'.

For example, to address road safety concerns 'Infrastructure' could include installing safe pedestrian crossings along with 'messaging' (policies) to reduce vehicle speed in the area and 'Actions' to educate tamariki and the community about road safety and the benefits of active and independent mobility for play.

Figure 5: Shows the three domains of work which will sustainably grow play.



What is play?

If we think back to our childhood memories, play is spontaneous, tamariki-led, fun, accessible, social and freely chosen with no pre-determined outcome. It is usually highly active with elements of challenge and risk that tests boundaries in an imaginative way. Play allows tamariki the space to practice, learn and develop the skills they need to be active for life. These include fundamental movement skills, self-directed creativity and innovation, social and emotional connections, resilience, independence, leadership and informed risk-taking.

For more information about how we can grow our Aotearoa play system.

[Play | Play Development | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa \(sportnz.org.nz\)](https://sportnz.org.nz)

The right to play

Children have the right to play and this right is encapsulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 31:

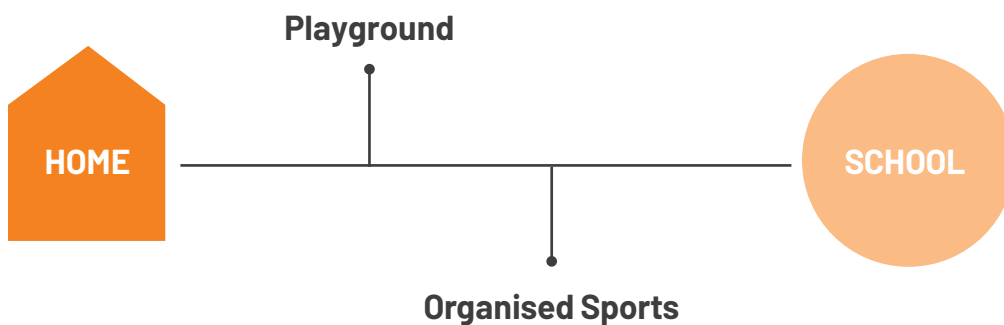
“ That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. ”

Play is under threat

The playful upbringing enjoyed by previous generations is no longer as accessible to many tamariki, due to changing social, environmental, technological and economic pressures. Young people need the time, space and permission to play. But with increasingly structured lives and reduced free time, the loss of traditional play spaces such as streets and driveways, heightened fears around safety and risk, and a loss of societal connections means play deprivation is increasingly becoming a national and international concern.

Play spaces and play locations have become car-centric destinations which require whānau to drive tamariki to, for play to occur (see Figure 6). For too many tamariki however, access to these play spaces and play locations are determined by systemic barriers such as income and postcode.

Figure 6: Car-centric play system.



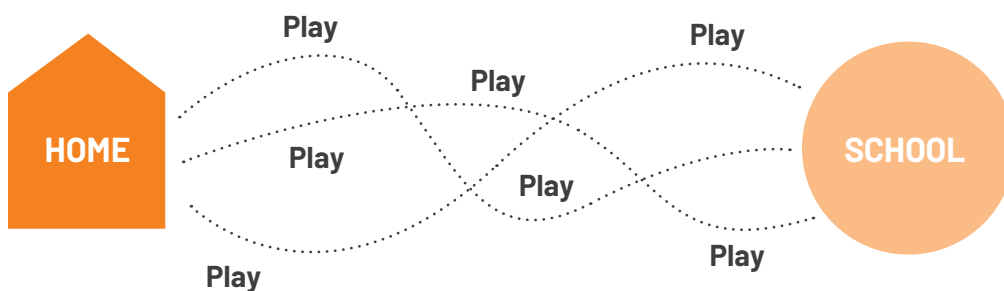
The neighbourhood footprint

Tamariki and whānau need safe and clean streets, access to green spaces, clean air, things to do, the ability to get around, the freedom to see friends, and somewhere to call home. Each neighbourhood across Otago has the opportunity to build upon its' own cultural, political, socio-economic and environmental contexts to realise the benefits of play through child-friendly urban planning.

Schools are usually located at the heart of neighbourhoods and communities but more and more often, school grounds are not publicly accessible after hours (with many schools fenced and gated)- thus dramatically decreasing play opportunities. The neighbourhood footprint surrounding a school is just as important in creating a liveable and playful city for our tamariki and their whānau.

Considering that tamariki spend most of their time at home or at school, these two settings should be used as anchor points for play within the neighbourhood footprint. Providing safe travel routes to enable independence and creating a network of opportunities to play on the way and in every space available helps form the foundations of a truly child-friendly city (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Walkable play system.



The Neighbourhood Play System (NPS) Blueprint

The NPS provides a blueprint to identify key barriers and opportunities for tamariki to play inside their school and in their surrounding neighbourhood. This is approached through the eyes of tamariki and their whānau who live, work, and play in that community (see Figure 8).

The blueprint seeks to link with local plans and funding opportunities and considers how to embed play elements through school grounds, footpaths, streets, alleyways, greenspaces, waterways, industrial zones, marae, churches, and shops to promote play every day.

Approach

Figure 8: NPS approach.



Roaming Radius

The NPS covers a roaming radius of 750m-1km, with the school being the centre point of the NPS. This is a typical distance that a tamariki would walk to get to something, like a playground, skate park or shop (see figure 2).

Through co-design practices and conversation, the key barriers, and opportunities to play in their neighbourhood have been identified and shaped into initiatives that have the potential to dismantle the systems of play inequity within and surrounding the school setting. This is done through a specifically designed blueprint which identifies and addresses key barriers and opportunities for tamariki and whānau who play in their school, neighbourhood and city. This supports the development of recommendations towards ensuring a play-friendly environment.

Research Methods

This project started in November 2022 with on the ground research concluding in July 2023. Writing of the report finished in September 2023. The lead researcher was Georgia Clarke of Sport Otago, who worked in close collaboration with tamariki and school and community members and was supported by Sport Otago and Sport New Zealand throughout the research process.

The research methods employed for this report, informed by the NPS approach, are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of research methods used to inform NEVNS Play Systems report.

Research method	Details	Time frame
In class surveying	On paper with individual responses for years 4-6, group answers per class for years 1-3. Over 150 responses recorded.	July 2023
Desktop analysis	Online research including mapping, Council documents and policies. Review of relevant school documents and policies.	October 2023
Tamariki engagement	3 classroom sessions with 20-30 kids. Each session revolved around play and getting tamariki voice and insights into their lives and how play might be included.	January – July 2023
Community engagement	Online survey sent to school parents/caregivers for the newsletter, The Valley Project Newsletter, Facebook pages. 15 Responses collected. Attended Valley Project Annual General Meeting and presented on the Neighbourhood Play System, allowed for discussion.	March – June 2023
Site visits	One site visit throughout North East Valley with 10 tamariki. Visited the local parks/playgrounds. March 2023. Lead researcher exploring the area and spaces on her own. Taking photos and notes.	Late 22 – Early 23
Research synthesis, analysis and write up	Brainstorming, compiling photos, survey results and workshop content together. Structure and report write up	January – September 2023

Analysis of North East Valley

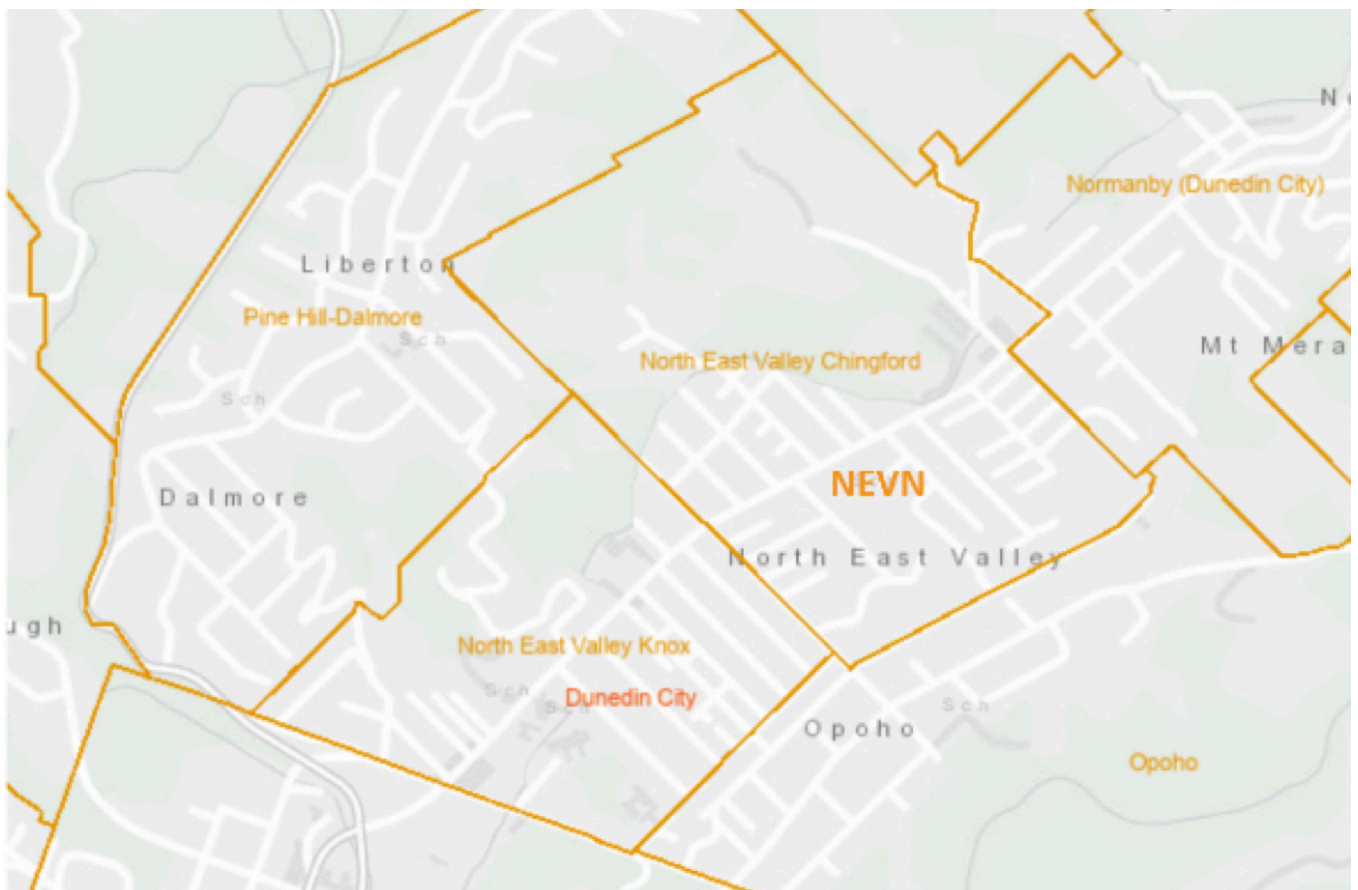
North East Valley Community

In exploring the demographics of North East Valley (Figure 9), North East Valley Normal School sits in the North East Valley Chingford statistical area which borders other statistical areas which make up North East Valley. (Figure 9).

North East Valley Normal School sits in the North East Valley Chingford statistical area (as shown in Figure 9). This borders other statistical areas which make up North East Valley. While most school students live in North Easy Valley, some students attend from neighbouring suburbs – which is very common in Dunedin.

For the purpose of this report the following data analysis breakdown includes statistical data from North East Valley Chingford, North Easy Valley Knox and Normanby.

Figure 9: North East Valley statistical area.



Demographics

Census summaries show that this is a growing suburb of Dunedin:

- The population of North East Valley grew from 8,400 in 2006 to 9,400 in 2018.
- Dunedin city's population has also grown at a steady state of 1% every year since 2014.

This has contributed to the city's housing prices and rental rates remaining affordable compared to other major centres across the country.

The three census areas have distinct demographics:

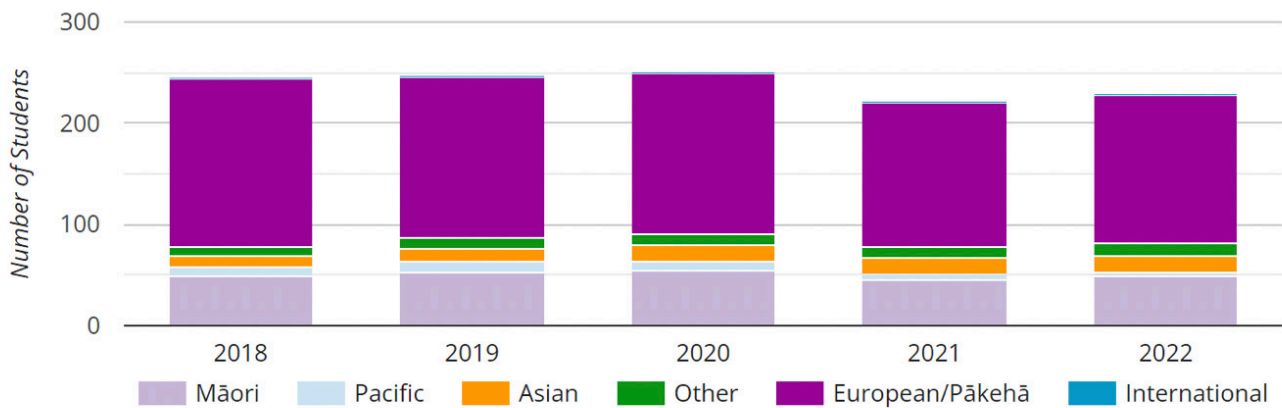
- North East Valley Knox is closest to the University, Polytechnic, and shopping area, and has a higher proportion of tertiary-aged residents (median age 22)
- North East Valley Chingford is midway along the valley and includes NEVNS, and has a higher proportion of families (median age 32)
- Normanby is further away from the city centre and has a higher proportion of older adults (median age 44).

North East Valley has a unique population make up:

- There is a rest home and hospital level care facility, Ross Home
- North East Valley is also home to a large number of tertiary students who attend Dunedin's University of Otago, or Te Pūkenga Otago Polytechnic
- 15.8% of the population are children under fifteen, this is on par with national averages
- The Māori population of Dunedin sits at 9% which is similar with North East Valley at 10%
- The majority of Dunedin's population is NZ European.

While the majority of students are of New Zealand European ethnicity, the school has some roll diversity, although is strongly European. This is in-line with census data, which identifies 82.1% of local residents being NZ European and 12.2% Māori

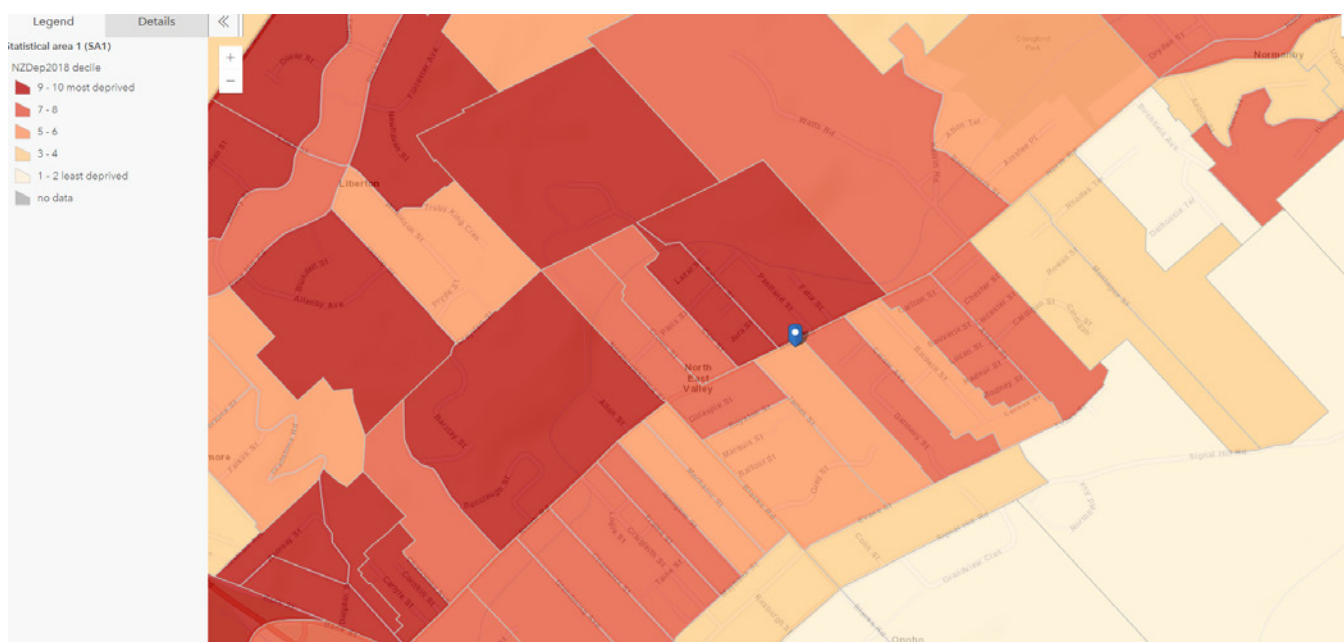
Roll by ethnic group, as at 1 July (2018-2022)



Level of Deprivation

Environmental Health Intelligence NZ monitor deprivation levels across NZ communities. Their deprivation tool shows that North East Valley Normal School home zone features a wide range of deprivation levels locally. Most of the zones of this suburb are in the medium to most deprived range. This is most relevant for the purpose of this report due to the correlation between deprivation and other factors like public health, public safety and social disturbances.

Figure 10: NEVN community deprivation levels (EHINZ)



The deprivation level of the area is 8.0 as opposed to a city-wide level of 5.2. Figure 10 demonstrates the frequency of high-deprivation areas surrounding the school.

From an economic standpoint (2018 Census Data):

- 36% are employed full time, 21% employed part time (city av. 43%/17%)
- 36% are studying full time, 4% study part time (city av. 27%/3%)
- 37% of the population are qualified with a Bachelors degree or higher
- 50% of the population own or partially have house ownership
- Unemployment in the area is 6.5%, against a city-wide average of 4.3%.
- Median income is very low at \$23,100, against a citywide average of \$31,800. It may be possible to put this down though to a high number of students in the area.
- Median local house values sit at \$438,000- way below the national average of \$780,000.
- Almost 30% of the people living in this area have houses that are always or sometimes damp, and 20% have mould in their house over the size of an A4 sheet, always or sometimes.

Transport

The majority of Dunedin residents drive a private vehicle to work and 10% using active transport which is double the national average. Active transport is considered human-powered transport or commuting methods, that is, walking, running, biking et cetera.

North East Valley has a higher than city average of active transport, with over 20% of the local population walking, jogging or biking to work. Forty-one percent of residents use active transport to get to education facilities, including school and tertiary education. According to North East Valley Normal School surveying, almost half of the tamariki use active transport to get to school most often.

North East Valley Normal School

North East Valley Normal School is a primary school situated deep in the valley of North Dunedin, catering for the tamariki of the area and beyond through years 1-6. The school was founded in 1851 and is the second oldest school in Dunedin.

The school has a role of 228. Notwithstanding the ebbs and flows of cohort sizes, the role has been stable for many years.

The Northeast valley is a 20-minute walk from most University of Otago buildings, which has a strong impact in shaping the community. Partly because of this, nearly 50% of those in the area that are accessing the university, usually moving through each day on foot.

The school is located next to the community group – The Valley Project – and sits just over 1km away from the community area including other schools of North Dunedin. The school welcomed a new principal at the beginning of 2023.

Te Ao Māori is an important focus within North East Valley Normal School as tamariki learn about Māori culture and te reo Māori. This includes a junior and a senior te reo Māori class where tamariki can learn immersed in Māori language. Tamariki learn and create through a te Ao Māori lens to embrace and include Māori in their everyday life. The school also has a kapa haka group.

Figure 11: North East Valley Normal School zone map.



School Proverb

He aha te mea nui o te Ao?

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing? It is the people, the people, the people.

School Vision

North East Valley Normal School is a place where every child has the chance to be the best they can be now and for the rest of their lives. The Valley children are caring, respectful, knowledgeable, confident, and competent; they are prepared for life and grounded in the greater good/community.



North East Valley Normal School places an emphasis on 'encouraging and teaching children to work alongside and play with others in op-operative and non-disruptive ways' and ensuring tamariki are confident and actively contributing members of their community. Their ability to achieve this is however impeded by the area's built-environment. To be truly confident and grounded in their community, tamariki need to feel safe to explore their school and their neighbourhood.

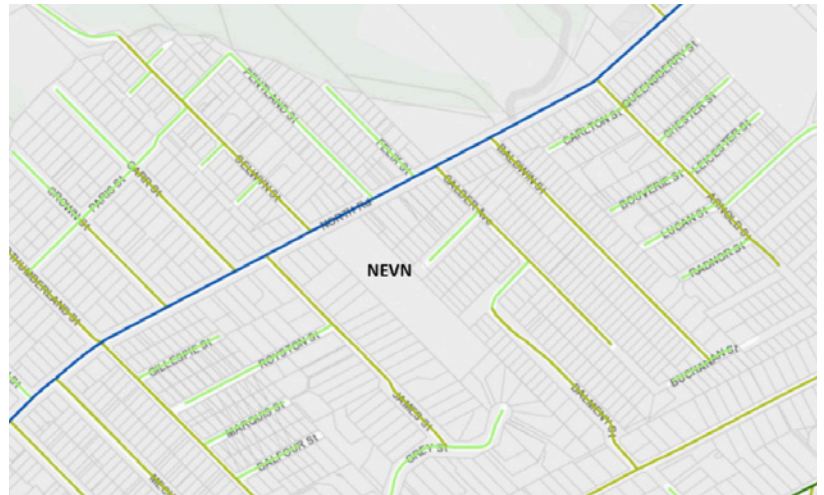
Urban Environment

Roads / Infrastructure

North East Valley Normal School is situated on North Road. North Road is known as the long road down the valley, which residential streets peel off after the small shopping area. This is considered as an arterial road with over 6,000 cars travelling along it every day.

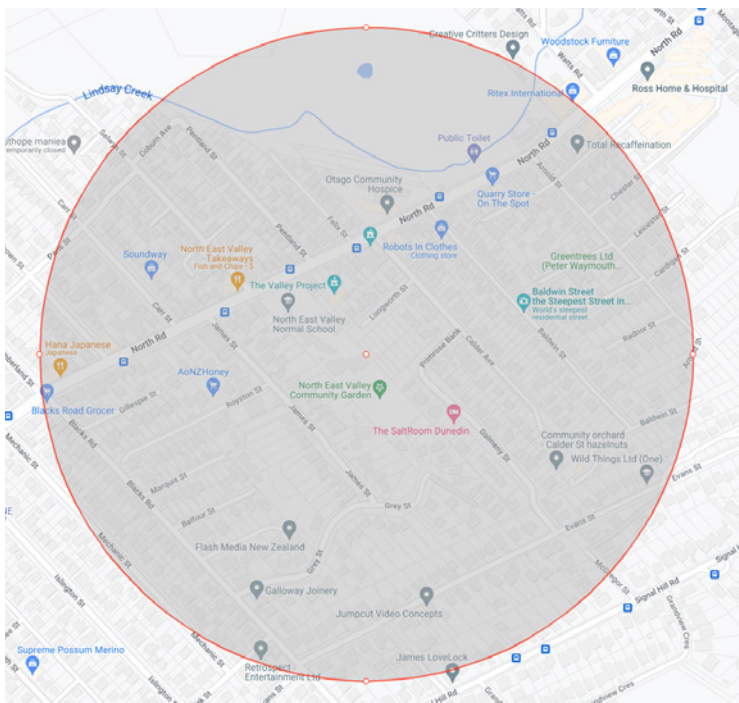
North Road connects to SH1, also known as the one-way, which carries half of Dunedin's traffic going to work, school, or elsewhere in the city. Roads coming off North Road are steep on one side of the valley and the smaller streets that run off those roads, parallel to North Road, are skinny leaving little space for parking and pedestrians. Most of the surrounding streets are low volume, residential streets, and many of these streets are extremely steep, including Baldwin Street, famous as the world's steepest street.

Figure 12: Road classification of environment surrounding the school. Blue = Arterial. Green = Low Volume. Olive = Access Road.



Walkable Catchment (400m radius)

Figure 13: 400m radius of North East Valley Normal School.



The walkable catchment of North East Valley from the school mainly includes North Road and its surrounding residential streets.

As mentioned above, North Road is busy with steady traffic and movement to retail, work, and education areas. The layout of North Road allows for general access down the valley, but beyond this, access becomes more challenging.

The high volumes of traffic on the main suburban road stretching through the neighbourhood has created an environment where many whānau are not enabled to feel comfortable allowing or empowering tamariki to travel independently to play spaces. The residential road layout also discourages parents in letting their children roam the neighbourhood as cars drive fast, even though there is little room for movement. These are also major barriers for tamariki wanting to access play themselves.

There are bike lanes down both sides of North Road with wide spacing and there is also public transport that operates down this end of town. There is a single patrolled zebra crossing outside the school which is operated before and after school. Further north, towards the main park, there are no crossings.

Footpaths and alleyways of the area are in an average condition and allow for use of small wheels for active transport. There are however sections where the pavement is degrading and could cause issues if not taken care of soon. The footpaths are generally narrow. Overall, the area is an average walking and wheeling environment.

Figure 14: Baldwin Street.



Housing

North East Valley was a popular site for early settlement in Dunedin. This is reflected in local landmarks (Quarry gardens, Bluestone Stables) and in the age of the housing stock, with most of the residential housing stock was built between 1900 and 1909.

While some houses are up to 150 years old and of poor quality, there are some new builds being developed in replacement of these older homes. Recently a former quarry was sold and will become a new housing development. Housing in the area is mostly single-storied on small-medium sections with a few large 'manor' type houses further afield.

The house property section sizes in the area vary. During a research focus group, a comment was made that the steepness of the neighbourhood landscape, including backyards, are difficult to play in because they are not flat and are generally terraced, meaning they are less than ideal for playing.

If the backyards are unsuitable and the access to community play areas is unsafe the question arises - where will the tamariki play?

Climate

The geography of North East Valley presents challenges for tamariki living in the community. Throughout winter the valley can be cold and damp, with sun not hitting all the spaces. The average yearly temperature averages between 12-13 degrees celsius. The harsh Dunedin winter has the impact of driving kids indoors for months on end. Anecdotally, 'it being too cold' was a factor that stops tamariki from playing in the area.

Play spaces

Play itself has a low profile in this community and play provisions are said to be 'uninviting'. There is limited accessibility to playgrounds and the playgrounds that are in the area are situated off-street, amidst tall trees and away from passive adult supervision. The playgrounds are difficult for people with disabilities to reach or to be able to engage with. This makes existing play spaces feel unsafe or uninviting for tamariki.

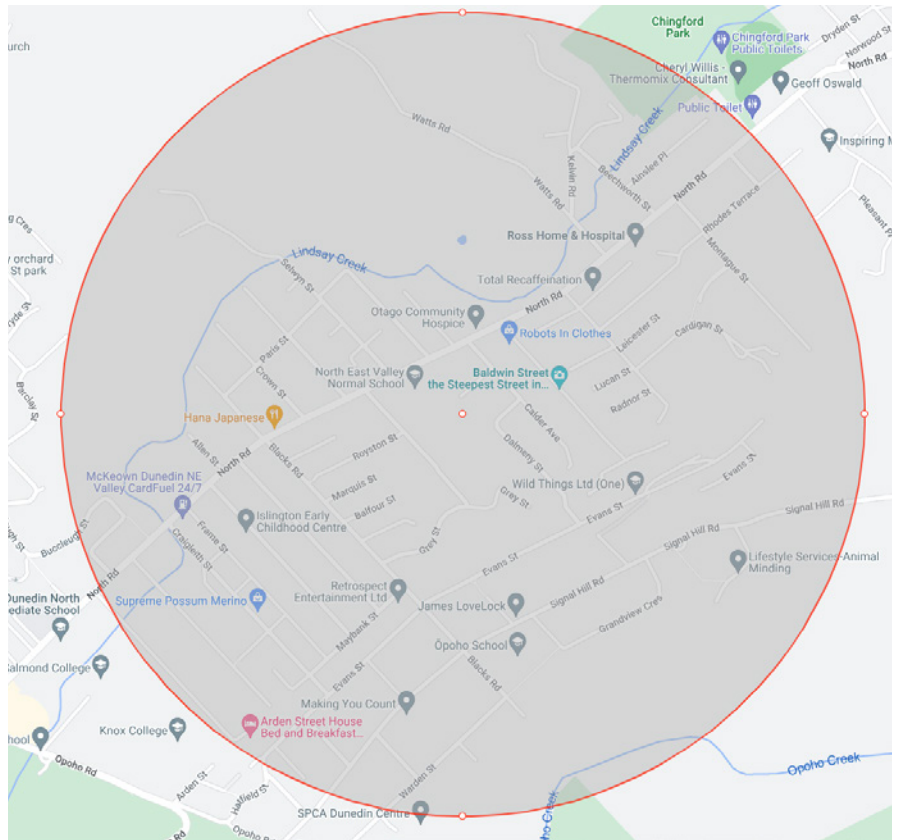
Ongoing safety concerns are a key challenge in this neighbourhood. This influences whānau decision-making and hampers the ability of tamariki to access play independently.

The play spaces in North East Valley are limited to slides, swings and monkey bars. These spaces have limited emphasis on being accessible and appealing for all ages, abilities and cultures. This restricts play opportunities with negative consequences for the physical, cognitive, and social development of local tamariki. The continual population growth in this area is an additional driver for development which supports the need to expand on existing creative outdoor play opportunities.

A recommendation which is highlighted in more detail at the end of this report is develop play spaces that involve utilising less obvious and traditional play spaces. This could include play streets in some of the smaller cul-de-sacs away from North Road, or urban play trails.

Dedicated play spaces in the community

The roaming radius for this report is classified as 750m-1km as mentioned earlier in the report. This is the typical distance some of the tamariki walk to get places. There are two dedicated play spaces within the radius and one on the outside of the radius.



The two dedicated play spaces within the radius are Pentland Street Playground and Chingford Park.

Figure 15: Pentland Street Playground.



Figure 16: Chingford Park Play Space.



Pentland Street Playground:

This is a small local playground with three pieces of equipment; a roundabout, a swing set, and a climbing frame. This playground is down a small street, there is no signage to this playground or fencing to allow for safety. During site walks with tamariki, half of them were unaware this space was here.

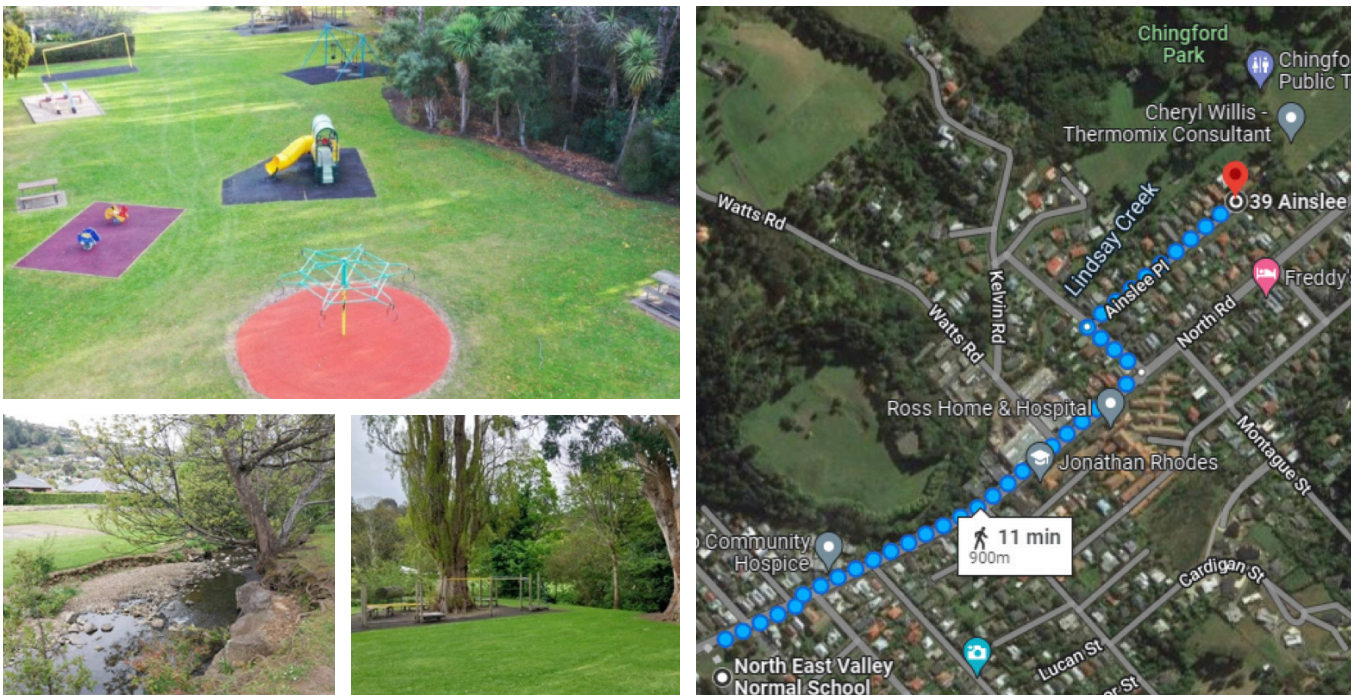
Figure 17: Pentland Street Playground: Climbing frame, roundabout, and swing set. 5-minute walk from the school.



Chingford Park:

Found at the edge of the roaming radius. This is a large recreational reserve with multiple open spaces, a dated playground, disc golf, walking tracks and fields. There are picnic tables and public toilets which are un-kept and uninviting. There are elements of natural play throughout the park that are underutilised including giant trees with rope swings and a creek.

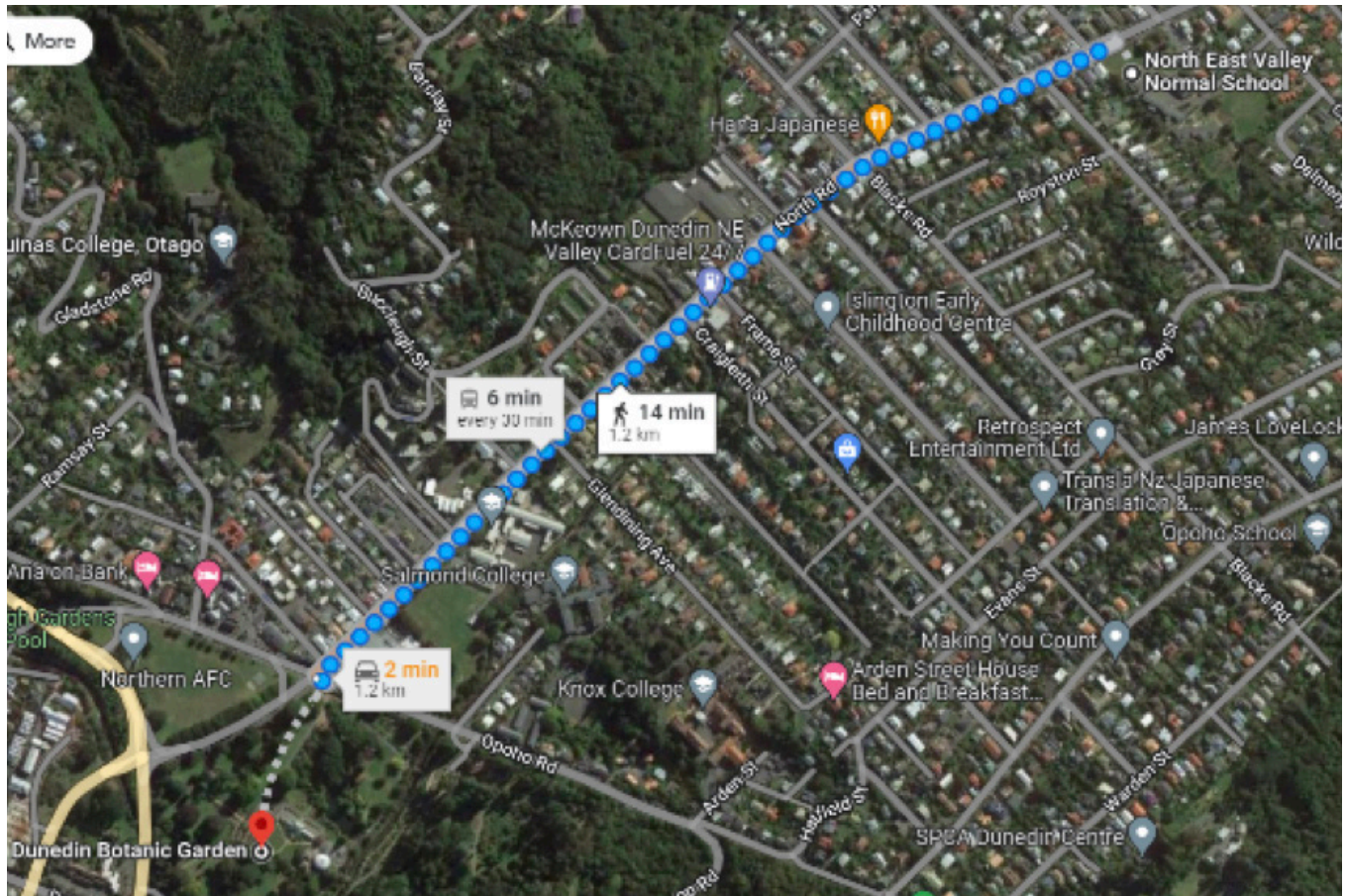
Figure 18: Chingford Park: small child rockers and slide/fort, 'spinnny thing', see-saws, monkey bars, swing-set, wooden obstacle playground. Nature play with trees and Lindsay Creek running through the area. 11-minute walk from the school.



On the other end of the 1km radius is the Dunedin Botanic Gardens which provides a potential space for nature play and exploration. This play asset is not encompassed within the Neighbourhood Play System but is an important part of the community which should also be utilised.

This is a 15-minute walk from the school and goes through the main hub known as ‘The Gardens’ in the entrance of the valley, crossing a busy intersection at traffic lights.

Figure 19: Dunedin Botanic Gardens. The Dunedin City Council has over 120 playgrounds throughout the wide city area for 17,000 0-12-year-olds, two of them being in North East Valley. The Play Spaces Plan, released in 2021 will focus on establishing value across play spaces and the playability for everyone in the spaces.



Challenges to Urban Environment

The top challenges of the urban environment for safe and fun play for tamariki of North East Valley Normal School are:

- A challenging built environment including steep, busy streets
- Playgrounds situated away from adult supervision
- Play spaces limited to basic slides, swings and monkey bars
- Developing play opportunities that cater to a growing population
- Tamariki avoiding outdoor play due to lack of play spaces and instead spending time indoors on electronic devices.

Figure 20: Main shopping/retail area of North East Valley called 'The Gardens' with busy traffic intersections for children to navigate.



Figure 21: Two schools, Dunedin North Intermediate and Sacred Heart School - located closer to 'The Gardens'.



Research Findings

Interacting with the tamariki from North East Valley Normal School, we gained many insights through class surveys with 150 respondents, site visits and class focus group sessions. The insights allowed us to understand how the tamariki experience play at home, school, and in the neighbourhood.

Key themes came through in these conversations which will help shape our understanding of what a successful play environment looks like, as well as opportunities in response to the barriers and experiences tamariki raise.

Key research findings for understanding the play experiences of the tamariki of North East Valley Normal School are summarised in the table below by research area.

Table 2: A summary of key research findings.

Research Question	Key Findings
What were the main things tamariki were saying about their play spaces?	The majority of tamariki said they wanted more opportunities in school to take risk, feel thrills like swinging and jumping. They know that safety is an issue in the neighbourhood with many parents not letting tamariki go to play spaces alone. Many amenities and equipment are less than ideal which doesn't encourage play.
What is play like in the school gates?	Outdated school play equipment is prominent in the school and sport is almost always being played. Playground rules are inconsistent and depend on the teacher supervising play time. Each teacher has their own rules. There is not an option for everyone to play, with some tamariki spending their play time 'walking and talking'.
What does North East Valley look like as a neighbourhood that NEVNS tamariki live and play in?	A valley with the main road stretching down the residential area up to a more rural area. The sides of the valley are steep, where the majority of the tamariki live. Older houses mean housing quality is less than ideal and deprivation levels range but are in the medium to highly range. A wide variety of ethnicities, ages and economics are found in North East Valley. There are two primary schools, one intermediate school and three early childhood educators. Bike lanes stretch down the main road and active transport is used by most of the population. There are many opportunities for spaces to be utilised for play.
What impact does the North East Valley neighbourhood on tamariki play experiences?	With the lack of passive supervision near the play spaces, it makes the space feel unsafe for tamariki to play unsupervised. Busy and steep streets make navigation tricky and seem risky for tamariki.
What are the dedicated play spaces in the community? (Outside the school.)	Pentland St Playground: down a side street, majority of tamariki didn't know it existed. Swing set, roundabout and climbing frame. Chingford Park: major park/reserve in North East Valley, multiple open spaces, disc golf, walking tracks and fields. Small child rockers and slide/fort. Washing line spinny thing (this is the title the tamariki give to a washing line with handles for swinging - see figure 23), see-saws, monkey bars, swing set, wooden obstacle playground. Many natural spaces including trees and a creek running through the park.
What Strategic/Planning contexts are relative to North East Valley and NEVNS in terms of play?	The DCC and Sport Otago have strategies and plans to support the promotion of play and development of play spaces. The DCC Play Spaces Plan vision - Ōtepoti, where play is for everyone.

Tamariki Voice on play

The quotes featured below have been categorised into their relative area of the Neighbourhood Play System and have been taken from tamariki voicing their opinion during site visits, class focus groups, and the tamariki survey.

In School

- "I feel like there are no swings at this school and I love to swing!"
- "A trampoline park would be awesome"
- "I want a big twisty slide"
- "I just play minecraft"
- "We just walk and talk because there isn't anything else to do"

Safety

- A crossing outside the park would be good because I have to walk all the way to school to cross the road in the weekend if I want to go to Chingford Park"
- "The streets where I live are really skinny and there are lots of cars driving fast and you can't see them, so my parents don't want me crossing the road alone"
- "There is no fence here (Pentland St Playground) and if someone was spinning really fast, they might fall off and roll onto the road"
- "Sometimes there are scary dogs barking when I walk to the park"
- "I would feel safer if there were less cars"
- "I could walk around the neighbourhood if I knew where I was going"

Figure 22: Tamariki showing thumbs down to the entrance way at Chingford Park.



Amenities

- "The toilets at Chingford Park aren't always locked, they're gross and I don't like using them."
- "These entrance gates don't look like there would be a playground inside"
- "There is no sign to point to the playground"
- "This place would be better if they added more stuff like more places to sit and a place to drink from"

Figure 23: Tamariki showing thumbs down to the toilet facilities at Chingford Park.



Figure 24: Play equipment at Chingford Park.



Quality of equipment

- This equipment is growing moss and is always wet”
- “I would love a fort or a tree house to play in”
- “There is lots of space here, can we have a basketball hoop?”
- “This is the best thing (washing line spinner) to play on, but the paint is falling off”
- “I like to play at the rope swing first because I like to swing and then we go to the playground”

Figure 25: Tamariki playing on the washing line “spinnny thing” at Chingford Park.



Figure 26: Tamariki thumbs up and heart reacting to the rope swings and trees at Chingford Park.



Accessibility

- “The gravel entrance to the playground will be hard for a wheelchair to go on, or a scooter or bike”
- “I don’t think there is anywhere someone with a wheelchair could play”
- “When it rains there is no shelter, but I want to keep playing”
- “You can’t see the playground from the road which might stop some kids playing by themselves”

Figure 27: Chingford Park entrance.



Figure 28: Chingford Park on-street signage.



Key survey responses

From the survey results, we found that:

- Over 2/3 of the tamariki live in North East Valley.
- Half of the tamariki said that they had friends in their neighbourhood who they play with.
- The majority of the tamariki spend 5+ days a week playing and hanging out with friends during the week but over 50 respondents played 2 days or less a week.
- The most common barrier, or thing that stops the tamariki from playing, is that they are 'too busy playing video games, using their computer or iPad'. Homework and other activities were also high responses. These children would rather be inside playing on technology than be outside exploring their unique environment. Structured routines like homework, chores, sports etc are also often replacing free play time.
- When asked what would make it easier for play, providing fun things to do was a top priority for tamariki followed by more spaces to play, playing in bad weather and finding safe ways to cross the roads.
- An overwhelming majority of tamariki said that one of their favourite ways to play is nature play; water, trees, garden and exploring. Playing games was popular along with swinging and running.

Play inside the school gates

Play within the school gates is very similar to other play opportunities in the valley: play equipment is mostly outdated and uninspiring to the tamariki and there are many opportunities for progress and development. The school grounds are talked about by some tamariki as being a place to play in the weekend as the school is fully fenced creating a feeling of safety and is always open to the public. The lower playground in the school has shown to be a popular spot which was observed during site visits and tamariki workshops, and next to this is a bottom field. There are two courts between school blocks, an upper field which is predominantly used to play football, a small sandpit which is mainly used by the youngest students, and an upper play area which features newer play spaces like tunnels and some nature play spaces.

Researcher reflection

While observing break and play times at school, there were many children standing around, walking around and not engaging in play. I asked a few tamariki "what do you like to do at play times?" many of them responding with "just walk around; I'm not sure; there isn't anything I like". It became obvious to me that there was a major lack of things to do and places to play for a large amount of tamariki.

Georgia Clarke
Report author and Regional Play Systems Lead
Sport Otago

Figure 29: Students at play time. Many were observed standing around.



The lunch time rules of what ‘you can and can’t do’, change with the teacher on duty as different teachers have different rules. There are inconsistencies in terms of the extra gear or equipment that gets used during certain days, and there is nothing in terms of play equipment or play spaces that allows for or facilitates risk-taking or challenge-creating behaviour among tamariki.

Tamariki usually partake in play that is considered to be standard or traditional play behaviour in the school; for some it is playing football or rugby on the field. If it is wet, they must use the court space, but some might be playing basketball. For others it is walking, sitting, and talking or making up their own imaginary games. During allocated play times, many of the tamariki stand around, or walk and talk with their friends, but lack equipment or creative spaces to engage in play or social activities. Many of the line markings on the court are dated and wearing out. With some updates, the court could be utilised for more than just play-time opportunities.

Researcher reflection

“It has been excellent working with North East Valley Normal School. Immediately following our discussion, they have taken the intention of our play kaupapa and put it into action by ordering some Sport Waitākere ‘Magic Play Boxes’. Once these arrive, NEVNS will work with the Sport Otago Play Lead to integrate these into the school appropriately.”

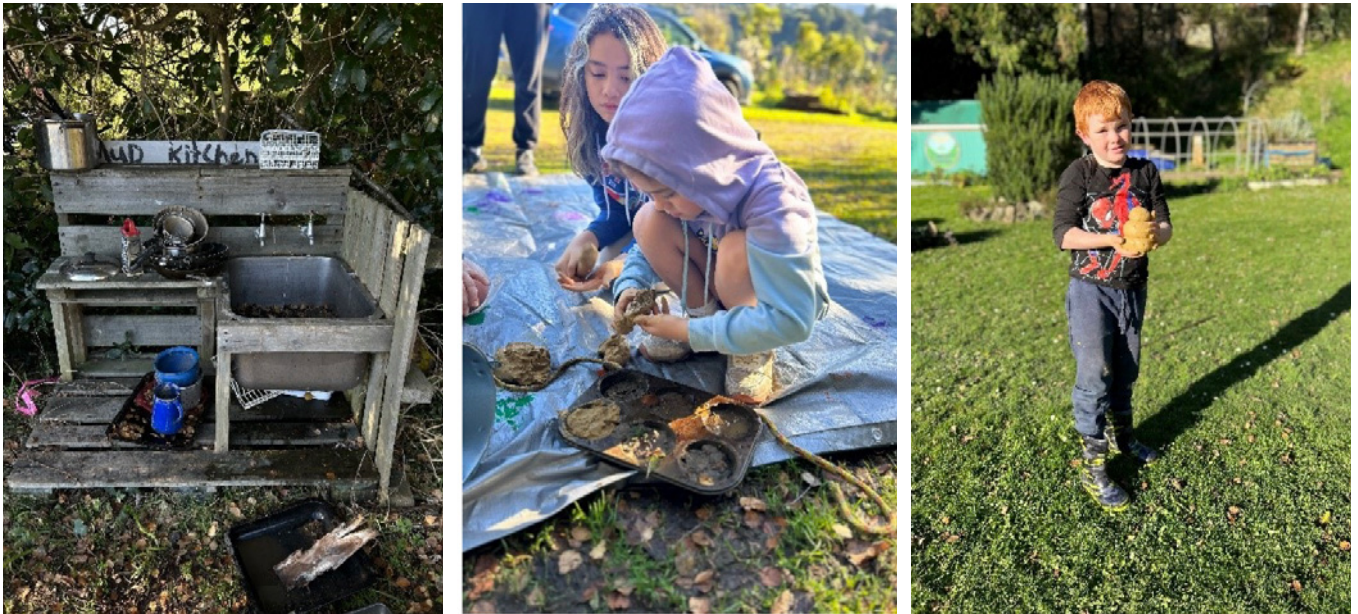
Georgia Clarke
Report author and Regional Play Systems Lead
Sport Otago

Figure 30: Tamariki during break times; worn out line markings.



The school has made more progress recently on their play journey, this is evidenced by their application to Sport New Zealand's Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa Fund, for support of their 'Nature Club'. A teacher identified an opportunity and an unused space for this club. With support from the Play Lead, the teacher has established a small group that meets once a week after lunch to be a part of nature club. This area is not yet available for use during lunch times, but we are looking to progress this idea once the space has been further developed.

Figure 31: Nature club at the school.



Engagement from teachers

There has been a clear message from the tamariki that different teachers have different rules for play which means the children face inconsistencies and are being given different messaging. For a child, this means they are unsure about what they can and can't do when it comes to play, making their experience unnerving and not fun. Teachers also have different understanding of what play is which was alluded to during an introductory staff workshop Sport Otago ran on the Neighbourhood Play System. The new principal, along with the assistant principal are both strong play advocates and are keen to get more staff on board the play bus.

Teachers would benefit from learning more about the importance of play for tamariki, what kind of play motivates the students, and how to facilitate that in their teaching and at playtime at school. A play workshop with the staff facilitated by Sport Otago would accelerate this learning and help spread play throughout more than just play time. It would also be beneficial to work with the staff on a risk benefit assessment for school play. This would help them learn and understand what the benefits might be that outweigh the risk that the tamariki might be taking when playing. For example, when climbing a tree a child will learn motor control, gripping skills, problem solving, and how to challenge themselves. The only risks are they might fall out, and they might break their arm.

Time, Space, Permission

The school is unlocked and tamariki and whānau, can use the play assets before and after school as well as in the weekend. Tamariki stated that they want longer play times, because there is not enough time to play in between classes and they don't get many chances to play during the week, at home or in the weekend due to barriers like restricted time, other family members, accessibility, bad weather and more.

There are no limits to where the tamariki can play, except for the community garden which is cared for by The Valley Project (community group). The Nature Club space which is a small forest area at the back of the school grounds next to the Community Gardens, is only used during specific times as it is an area which is located away from the rest of the school assets.

Dunedin tends to see four seasons in one day, and if it's raining, wet, or cold, the kids are told to play inside which is a burden for the teachers and the tamariki.

Figure 32: View of the school from the top classrooms.



Figure 33: North East Valley community gardens.



Figure 34: Tamariki showing a space that they would like to be more playful in Chingford Park, which was previously historic bathing pools.



Impact of North East Walley neighbourhood on play

The presence of young adults and ‘student life’ across the neighbourhood may at times pose a negative issue of the ‘unknown’ of how tertiary level students might behave or how safe the area might feel to tamariki and their care givers. Examples of this include vandalism, rubbish being left around after the weekend and glass bottles etc. On the positive side, the consistent stream of traffic and foot-traffic from the high uses of active transport enhances the ‘passive supervision’ in the neighbourhood (i.e., adults who can indirectly observe the behaviour of children at play) which can be beneficial to an overall feeling of safety.

For many tamariki across New Zealand, access to playful spaces is not equitable and can be determined by income and post code. Most zones of North East Valley are in the medium to most deprived range and, some areas near North East Valley have a lesser deprivation rating. Improving equitable and easy access to safe playful spaces will improve the health and wellbeing of tamariki and aligns with Dunedin City Council (DCC) and Sport Otago goals around having a choice of quality places to go, spaces to be active, valuing and respecting our environment and living in a compassionate, caring community.

Figure 35: ‘Where is your favourite place to play?’ answered during a focus group with tamariki.



Strategic Environment

In aiming to further understand factors that support or inhibit play at a community level, we looked at the wide range of strategies and plans of different organisations involved in the community and play. These include Dunedin City Council, Sport Otago, Sport New Zealand. In general, there is an alignment between the Dunedin City Council strategies and the promotion of play. The school protocols and general information do not contain information that specifically provides for the support and promotion of play but there is opportunity for a play policy to be created by staff and tamariki.

Table 3: Relevant council plans and how they link to tamariki play aspirations.

Strategy/Plan	Description of strategy or plan	How the strategy or plan links to tamariki play aspirations
Get Dunedin Active 2015/16 Dunedin City Council	This plan has the vision of Dunedin being New Zealand’s most active city. The goals include encouraging environments to foster active lifestyles, ensuring people know how to be physically active in Dunedin, and increasing capabilities of organisations that facilitate and deliver physical activity opportunities.	Improving play spaces and neighbourhoods is a key part of getting our tamariki active, where they live. Play is a way of being active, so encouraging a safe and playful environment will therefore create active residents.
Play Spaces Plan 2021 Dunedin City Council	The Dunedin City Council is focussing on establishing value across all the play spaces where variety, inclusivity, and sustainability form the basis of a city where play is for everyone. This plan goes beyond managing play assets to the importance of play as beneficial for the wellbeing of our wider community.	The play spaces plan and the Neighbourhood Play System have a very strong level of alignment. This report is an insight into to how we can improve the play spaces in North East Valley, with feedback directly from the tamariki and whānau in community.



Strategy/Plan	Description of strategy or plan	How the strategy or plan links to tamariki play aspirations
Young Person's Strategy 2007 Dunedin City Council	This strategy ensures the needs of the young people in Dunedin are being met and addressed. This includes ensuring young people are involved in decisions that impact on them or their community, have the same rights and access as others and ensures young people feel a part of their community.	The Neighbourhood Play System uses tamariki and community voice to reflect the needs and wants of the community. This aligns with this strategy to ensure that the young persons' voices are heard, and they have an impact in their community.
Parks and Recreation Strategy 2017-2027 Dunedin City Council together with Sport Otago and other Stakeholders	This strategy is a collaborative product with several stakeholders including Sport Otago, it will work with the feedback from community to guide planning, development and management of Dunedin's recreation facilities, parks and open spaces. At the core of this strategy is a vision to encourage Dunedin's communities to be more active, more often.	With feedback from the tamariki and community through the Neighbourhood Play System, this strategy can improve the play spaces which will encourage the community of North East Valley to be more active, more often.

Table 4: Play Relevant policies and plans.

Strategy/Plan	Description
Kia Hīanga Sport New Zealand	This play plan provides Sport NZ's vision for play in Aotearoa NZ. It is underpinned by the 'Principles of Play' and its importance to tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and communities. Kia Hīanga aims to bring to life the aspiration of 'Every Body Active' through purposeful commitments and priorities for action.
Sport New Zealand (SNZ) Strategic Plan	This strategic plan "Every Body Active" is focussed on mainly tamariki and rangatahi. SNZ will be working towards increasing physical activity levels for tamariki through supporting Play and Physical Education.
Sport Otago Strategic Plan	This strategic plan outlines Sport Otago's vision - 'every Otago Whānau active, every day' and the purpose - 'to enhance individual and community wellbeing through physical activity'

In general, there are a number of strategies and plans which aspire to create better outcomes for tamariki and whanau in the area of play. We need to work with those implementing these plans to understand how play can be considered as an everywhere activity, rather than something which takes place in dedicated spaces. There is also potential for a more regular community conversation regarding aims shared by these groups, and how they serve tamariki.

Recommendations

There are many opportunities to shape access to quality play opportunities for tamariki and whānau living in North East Valley. This section of the report sets out:

1. North East Valley tamariki play recommendations:

A series of 8 specific recommendations that are strongly informed by tamariki voice, and

2. Ideal state of play:

What success would look like for tamariki play experiences in NEVNS as an ideal state of play according to the classifications of the Neighbourhood Play System framework.

North East Valley tamariki play recommendations

The 8 recommendations include a range of projects and events largely voiced by the tamariki themselves, which, when actioned, will immediately begin to make the neighbourhood more 'playable'. They are summarised in Figure 34.

Figure 36: 8 Recommendations

Researcher reflection

“The valley has so much potential in the spaces it provides for unstructured, free, and creative play. The tamariki and the community are unfortunately unaware of the playability of the space.”

Georgia Clarke
Report author and Regional Play Systems Lead
Sport Otago

- 

Let's Talk Play workshop
An introduction to play for educators, whānau, local businesses and other relevant stakeholders
- 

Play Policy & Risk Benefit Assessment
A Policy that sets out NEVNS commitment to providing play opportunities
- 

Annual Play Events
An opportunity to be a catalyst towards play opportunities in the valley
- 

Play opportunities
Tamariki have expressed their desire for challenging and new ways to play within the school
- 

Play on the way
A way to normalise play across the community and encourage more active transport
- 

Te Ao Māori
Bringing Te Ao and what the tamariki learn, into the community
- 

Road Safety
Ensure social and built environment factors are addressed and allow for mobility to play
- 

Chingford Park
Improve the quality of current conditions and work towards new amenities

1. Let's Talk Play workshops

- In play, we have a subject matter of rich emotional currency upon which to build. Encouraging those in the community to share and reflect on their personal play story is a great way to break down barriers and draw the community together.
- As such, local play leadership should use the "Let's Talk Play" workshop to discuss play and the experience of children in the context of the North East Valley Normal School community. This should be rolled out to the NPS working group in the first instance and then considered for educators, whānau and so on.

2. Write a school play policy and risk benefit assessment

- North East Valley Normal School has a few play champions within staff, which leads to a range of possibilities for their students. Producing messaging which is a formal and enduring part of school practices recognises these strengths and will ensure that this remains the case through staff turnover and other changes. This document should also reflect the courageous role that the school could play in working towards safe play opportunities in the school and across the community.

3. Annual Play events

- Given that this is an area with diverse ethnicities, we expect a multitude of play ideas and experiences to come to the surface through further engagement with tamariki and whānau. Play events will present a chance to build upon the great work that the school does in nurturing their diversity. At least one annual event should be developed to be delivered on school grounds, which celebrates different approaches to play.
- An event might look like an informal gathering at the park or the school, with play equipment, play opportunities, networking, sharing of kai and community connections. The first one could celebrate the new school play policy and the journey the school has taken through this Neighbourhood Play System. Other events could include cultural events, play streets, council activations and community group gatherings.
- These events will ideally initiate more events of the same type and have the potential to be a catalyst for more events in the neighbouring schools and communities.

4. Play opportunities

- Within the school, tamariki expressed their opinions on the quality of play within the school. Currently the school lacks in places for tamariki to create, explore, and challenge themselves.
- Providing more opportunities, in combination with recommendation 2, would give tamariki more opportunities to learn and explore through play and support the chance engage in the free explorative and imaginative experiences of a child. This might look like
 - Thrilling play, for example, swinging, jumping
 - Creative/building play for example, loose parts
 - Nature play, for example, trees and gardens
 - Water play
 - Wheels play
 - Line markings re-fresher
 - Wet weather play considerations.

5. Play on the way

- 'Play on the way' is a way to encourage the idea that play can happen anywhere, and is not limited to taking place at a specific destination at parks and playgrounds. This approach includes making playable streets, play trails in urban places and play in leftover spaces on the way to other places.
- The bare bones of an engaging, playful community are already in place in North East Valley, but more work should be done to refresh, promote, and encourage their use. We believe the quickest win for this idea could be to link the front entrance of the school north, towards Chingford Park. This would be an approximately 1km play trail and would encourage the exploration of the community with support from recommendation 7.
- Ideas of how we might do this include:
 - Play 'nudges' like swings in trees and painted footpaths.
 - Pop up activations or one-off events to encourage play for tamariki at Chingford Park.
 - Student-led elements such as footpath markings, murals, and other work.
 - More diverse offerings for family members which encourage them to stay in the play spaces (fitness courses, BBQ area, plenty of seating, accessible spaces).
- Ongoing advocacy for more diverse and interesting play assets, and to refresh what already exists.
- Once this is established, a second play trail towards the retail area of North East Valley could be considered. This is exciting because it would include the other schools in the area.

6. Te Ao Māori from the classroom to the community.

- Evidence of deep Te Ao Māori enquiry is a keen focus of the school with Te Rōpu Manaaki at North East Valley Normal School and is also prevalent though most classrooms. We have an opportunity to use children's work and ideas, and the leadership of the educators, to ensure that these sensibilities and ideas are visible across the community.
- This may include signposting/wayfinding which reflects Te Ao Māori, themed play assets, and public art. A first step would be discussion with local iwi supported by early and ongoing input from local government.

7. Take steps to improve Road Safety and reduce physical severances by roads

- It is important to consider the placement of another crossing outside Chingford Park where majority of play happens aside from the school. This was mentioned many times as a barrier and safety issue for tamariki and the whānau trying to access play spaces.
- There could be consideration of introducing traffic calming measures in residential areas due to the speed of cars travelling in the unsafe narrow roads. This could include more and new signage in residential areas near the school, lower speed limits, and traffic calming measures.

8. Chingford Park – Improve the quality of current conditions and work towards new amenities

- Improved wayfinding for tamariki to connect and orientate themselves in the neighbourhood and identify known areas for play in conjunction with recommendation 5 and 7.
- Improving playground equipment, beautifying the environment, installing multi-generational play spaces and using existing green spaces will provide tamariki with better opportunities to thrive in their community and inhabit a better sense of belonging. Improving play space amenities such as park benches, picnic tables, BBQ areas, drinking fountains, rubbish bins and better public toilets play a fundamental role in facilitating comfort and experiences in these areas.
- In alignment with recommendation 6, there could be opportunities for incorporating te re Māori and local te ao Māori stories into signage or storyboards.

The map below shows where the recommendations would take place. This includes recommendations at the school and community level.



Figure 37: Map of recommendations.

- Play trail from school to Chingford Park
- Play trail from school to the Gardens

Additional opportunities for creating playful futures with Sport Otago and Sport New Zealand through school play and learning opportunities.

Healthy Active Learning is a joint government initiative between Sport NZ, Ministry of Health, Te Whatu Ora | Health New Zealand, and the Ministry of Education to improve the wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi through healthy eating and drinking and quality physical activity in schools. Throughout working on this report, the Healthy Active Learning team have become interested in the school and have worked alongside the play lead to approach the school to become a Healthy Active Learning school to help continue and support these play kaupapa recommendations.

Play Lab is a project working out of Sport Otago in the Disability & Inclusion space which works with play based line markings to get tamariki active and learning. Educating the staff at the school aims to help deliver and support play and learning opportunities with minimal equipment. Line markings provide many opportunities as a group, or an individual to be active and learn.

Ideal state of play

Dunedin and the North East Valley neighbourhood face a number of challenges that affect the ability for tamariki to play safely and independently. There are however opportunities to support access to play opportunities in the neighbourhood for all ages and abilities. At a city scale, the approach to play in Dunedin is supported by the Dunedin City Council and driven by Sport Otago.

What does success look like?

The success indicators below draw on categories from the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint: Access and Movement, Built and Natural Environment, Awareness and Agency, and Enjoyment. These success indicators do not reflect the current status of tamariki play experiences but rather what success could look like if a number of the recommendations below are implemented. These descriptions answer the question 'what would success look like for positive play experiences for our tamariki as school students, as North East Valley neighbourhood residents and as citizens of Dunedin city?'

Figure 38: Tamariki ideal play space.

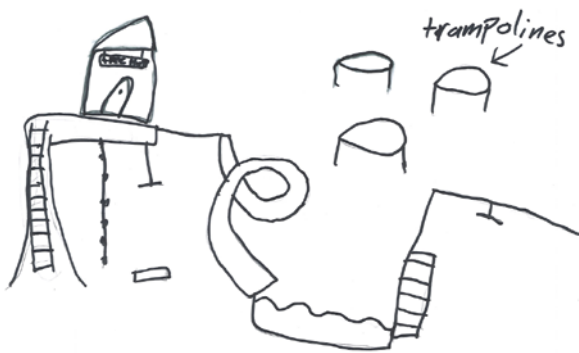


Figure 39: During a focus group: What tamariki think of when they hear the word 'play'.



Access and movement

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System blueprint refers to the degree to which tamariki of all ages and abilities and their whānau can feel safe and are able to freely access play opportunities in their communities.

North East Valley Normal School

Tamariki attending North East Valley Normal School can journey safely and independently to and from school.

The zebra crossing on North Road provides access during and after school hours.

North East Valley

Tamariki can move independently through North East Valley. The neighbourhood streets and public spaces feel safe and inviting.

These areas are maintained, and it is encouraged play pockets and play on the way are included in these spaces.

Dunedin

The city's transport network is safe and accessible, connecting tamariki with play opportunities across the region.

Signage reflects the culture and diversity of the city, and tamariki and their whānau are empowered to connect to the broader play network through high quality active and public transport.

There is somewhere for everyone to play.

Built and Natural Environment

This aspect of the NPS Blueprint refers to the degree to which local built and natural environments facilitate a variety of play opportunities for tamariki of all ages and abilities and their whānau.

North East Valley Normal School

The built and natural environment at school is inviting and well maintained.

The playgrounds are accessible with a diverse range of play equipment to meet the needs of the tamariki of all ages and abilities.

Fences around the school remain unlocked after school hours and tamariki and their whānau can access the play equipment and grounds after hours, safely.

North East Valley

Tamariki have access to a diverse range of formal and informal play opportunities.

Playgrounds are looked after and have diverse high quality and well-maintained play equipment.

Roads and safety are not a barrier to play.

Dunedin

There is a diverse range of playgrounds and play on the way infrastructure across Dunedin, creating a network of play opportunities connected by safe and accessible active transport routes.



Figure 40: Tamariki playing on equipment at Chingford Park.

Awareness and Agency

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System blueprint refers to the degree to which play is actively supported and encouraged (through time and permission) by tamariki and their whānau as well as community members and city authorities.

North East Valley Normal School

Tamariki of all ages are engaged with, encouraging play in the school grounds and when they leave.

Play opportunities, including play streets and community events, are supported by the school.

There is visible investment in play at the school.

North East Valley

Community groups champion play, developing a play-supportive culture and encouraging the community to access and support local play.

Tamariki are allowed to go out and play, go to playgrounds, and play independently with friends and in the neighbourhood.

Dunedin

Dunedin City Council is actively championing play throughout the city, working with the community to create play solutions and investing in accessible play infrastructure.

A play strategy prioritises play and ensures it is embedded and integrated across all Dunedin City Council work streams.

Adult (caregivers, school staff, city-level decision-makers and others) decisions support play provision and continue to work on removing barriers to play and include tamariki voice in these decisions.

Enjoyment

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System blueprint refers to the degree to which tamariki of all ages and abilities with their whānau continually enjoy their play experiences.

North East Valley Normal School

The North East Valley Normal School playgrounds are accessible, well maintained, and meet the needs of tamariki of all ages and abilities.

Tamariki enjoy playing at school, encouraged to explore a diverse range of play opportunities including risk taking.

North East Valley

Tamariki enjoy playing in the neighbourhood alone or with friends and family.

Dunedin

Tamariki have access to accessible and safe playgrounds regardless of where they live. They enjoy spending time outside in dedicated play spaces and other areas.



Implementation and next steps

Capitalising on the opportunities to create an equitable Neighbourhood Play System in North East Valley will require strong local governance, vocal play champions drawn from key community stakeholder groups, and a continuation of the inspiring community-led co-design approach with the tamariki of North East Valley Normal School.

Sport Otago will invite key stakeholders, community members, the school principal, and Dunedin City Council representatives to meet and reflect on what we have learnt from this report and throughout this research journey. It is imperative to take a collaborative approach and to be on this journey together to advocate for an environment that fosters play within the focus area. Sport Otago will support the group to develop and implement the specific actions from the proposed recommendation and continue identifying and advocating for other opportunities that enable tamariki to play in this area.

These are set out below. Note the timeframes included below are a suggestion only and could be discussed further among interested parties.

Short term:

Suggested timeframe Q4 2023

- Create a play-focussed working group to bring this mahi to life. Success of this project is in partnership and working closely with the community, including further community and tamariki engagement.
- Let's Talk Play Workshop (see recommendation 1).
- Play opportunities in school and Tū Manawa, an activation fund for getting inactive youth, active, held by Sport Otago (see recommendation 4).
- Engage with Healthy Active Learning, through Sport Otago to continue the work being done in the Play space. (see additional opportunities).

Medium term:

Suggested time frame Q1 – 2 2024

- Support North East Valley Normal School to create a safe and welcoming play space at school and link with the community to ensure that the space is respected, and the community create passive supervision of the space.
- Play on the way, line markings, and play nudges (see recommendation 5).
- Te Ao into the community (see recommendation 6).

Long term:

Q1 2024 – Q4 2026

- In conjunction with the and Dunedin City Council, investigate temporary and permanent improvements to the movement networks such as footpaths and crossings for safe ways to play spaces.
- Chingford Park amenities (toilets, water fountains, seating, accessibility) (see recommendation 8).
- Crossing further down the valley outside the park. (See recommendation 8).
- Engage with Play Lab opportunities in the future with Sport Otago to continue work in the play space for all tamariki.

Conclusion

The experience of play is a formative part of a child's wellbeing. Through the experience of play, tamariki both adapt to and shape their environments. Play permeates all aspects of children's lives, often in broader and more complex ways than adults expect. As examples, opening spaces to make them inviting for tamariki and whānau, bringing in community art, and even traffic calming measures can add significant play value to a neighbourhood. Local decision makers can address these changes identified in this report. Our tamariki are the experts in this area and can help us achieve this.

This report recognises and elevates tamariki as valued contributors to society, giving them the space to take responsibility for factors that affect their daily lives. This aligns with the school vision of "valley children being... knowledgeable, confident & competent; they are prepared for life and grounded in the greater good/community". They have told us however that their environment discourages outdoor play opportunities which in turn encourages tamariki to be physically inactive and spend more time indoors on electronic devices. There is a lot of opportunity in this area to transition away from a largely non-play friendly environment to an area in which tamariki-centred aspirations for play are realised.

To bring this vision and the research set out in this report to life, tamariki of the school will need adult decision-makers to join them in acting. Through the proposed recommendations, we can begin to make the neighbourhood more playable immediately. In doing so, we will enhance the lives of tamariki with positive flow on effects for their whānau and communities

We hope that this report will be a test case for how we might give our tamariki a springboard into the kind of happy, healthy life that creative and explorative outdoor play can enable. Now that we have a platform of understanding strongly informed by the tamariki, we can begin to unlock play in communities like North East Valley in the unique landscape of Dunedin, we give ourselves inspiration and ideas to ensure that Ōtepoti Dunedin, is where play is for everyone, including the tamariki of North East Valley Normal School.

Researcher reflection

"Doing this research in North East Valley was a great opportunity for me to see what Dunedin can provide in terms of play. I am excited to see where this finished report takes the Council and the community to make change for the tamariki and whānau to make this an awesome playful neighbourhood".

Georgia Clarke
Report author and Regional Play Systems Lead
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