



the use of a smooga (smart MUGA) in education.

Why do we need a Smooga?

To avoid conflict in your play spaces. Demand on play space within schools has never been so acute and there will inevitably be conflicts of use and space in the playground. Being able to corral certain activities, keeping children safe from each others' play has been identified by teachers to be a very real issue and proved to be an important area of consideration for Carolyn, Creative Director at Smooga, and landscape architect and designer of play areas.

Who is Smooga?

Smooga are a new business established by husband and wife team, Keith and Carolyn, after a flash of inspiration and about 12 months work. Their aim is to provide Smart MUGAs promoting fun, games and sport for young people in schools (particularly primaries) around the UK.

What's a Smooga?

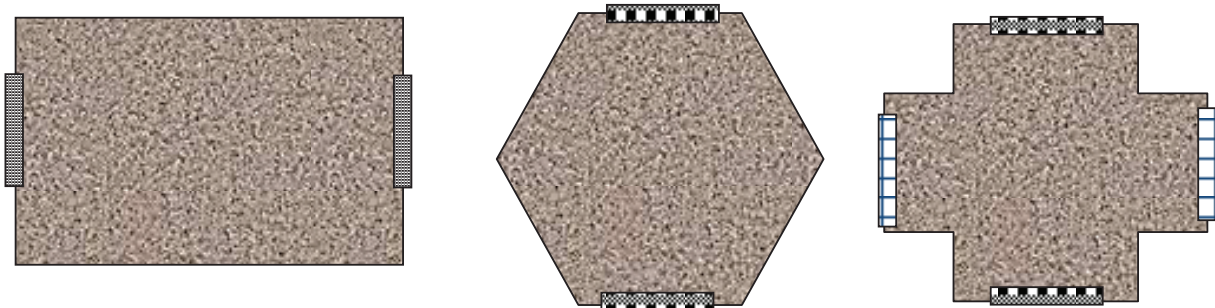
It's a Smart Multi Use Games Area.

What's so smart about this one?

You can move it around and tailor it to your needs, where and when you need it, as big and as small as you wish, indoor or outdoor, it's your choice. Then you can change your mind and move it again. Why the phonetic complication? Smooga sounds nice, Smugger does not (to our ears anyway), therefore to remove the complication we made it phonetically easy.

How can we use it?

Your Smooga will create a fun and secure arena for team games such as football, hockey or handball. We show below some fun ways to change the playing arena to make well known team games different, engaging and fun. Try putting the goals at different points within the shape or more than two goals on a pitch, and so on.





There are many other ways you can use your Smooga. How about keeping rampaging parents off the field of play during sports matches or on sports day? Use as barriers between general school play and reception class areas. Use the Smooga for several small areas to play with fewer pupils at any one time...the list is very long.

Where did the Idea come from?

The initial premise has come from a recognised need to provide safe areas for play and sport within schools in particular.

The ethos behind Smooga is to encourage participation by making play and sport easier and more accessible for all.

No, seriously. There seems to be growing concern that school sports are suffering due to Government spending cuts. The Guardian ran a feature on Tuesday 7th February 2012 asking 'is school sport in crisis?' There have been several well covered stories in the media regarding the selling of school playing fields. On the 22nd August 2012 Radio 4 covered the story of a SW London school being forced to sell off playing fields to developers to fund a £30m refurbishment project. Also fuelling the debate are the new rules on playing space; whereas schools previously had to provide pitches ranging from 5,000 sq m to 54,000 sq m depending on pupil numbers, they now only have to provide "suitable outdoor space".

Whatever the political and socio-economic landscape, sports and play areas are coming under severe pressure and we need to find new ways to optimise the use of the space we have available for recreation, sport and play.

Smooga can offer a solution to schools that encourages some of the kids, some of the time, to participate in games and activity whenever they are in the playground. The key benefit to using the Smooga, is that it helps to resolve the conflicts of use in playgrounds of primary schools (and potentially secondaries) across the UK. As we have said, demand on play space within schools has never been so acute and there will inevitably be conflicts of use and space in the playground.

I think we have all seen recent comment and positioning regarding childhood obesity too. Well that's a whole new discussion to throw into this arena (forgive the pun). One key area for our consideration is that we need to encourage kids to get 60 active minutes a day to keep them happy and healthy. Providing the opportunity, making it fun and new must help. Public health minister Dawn Primarolo said: "The extent of the obesity problem needs a new approach that hasn't been tried before". She stopped just short of saying that we need more Smoogas in the world, pity.



The Background, Keith's perspective as a sports coach

Good, positive early experiences of any kind of sport can have a lasting impact on a young person and can provide the foundation for a lifetime's involvement in sporting activity of many kinds. Sport, when introduced into a young person's life, can have enormous benefits for personal development, social skills and levels of confidence, not to mention the obvious health benefits of an active lifestyle - excellent habits to embed at an early age.

Statistics show that 1 in 5 children leave primary school obese. (The Guardian, 7th Feb 2012). The need to provide areas for play, sport and learning are clearly apparent, and this has received an even greater degree of focus following the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. People are starting to ask, "where is the legacy"? No, they are, really.

We at Smooga are delighted and excited to be involved in encouraging the mix of play and sport in education. As a rugby union coach Keith has seen that through sport and play young people learn their own particular capabilities, what they like to do and what they don't. We are sure that schools will find uses for their Smooga as yet undreamed of by the Smooga team and we would love you to share your ideas with the wider community in the fullness of time.

Additional support

Keith can also offer coaching sessions for school staff and helpers. He provides a session (usually around 3 hours) providing a coaches' perspective on some of the do's and don'ts when taking a lesson for sport or games. For an outline, ask for 'Coaching Guidelines' by Keith, or download the PDF from our web site. Call Keith and ask for details of costs and availability of his sessions.