



Charity registration number 1089224

## A recreational facility for disabled children, their families, friends and schools



### Sports and outdoor activities at Thomley

Physical play is an essential part of every child's development, contributing to their health and well-being. More specifically, sports and outdoor activities enable children to develop and maintain physical strength and fitness, coordination, confidence, social skills, independence and team spirit. As for their non-disabled peers, disabled children need an outlet for their energy so to expend stress and anxiety and to maintain healthy sleep patterns. Yet due to physical or attitudinal barriers, accessible playgrounds are few and far between meaning that disabled children have limited access to safe or stimulating play opportunities.

#### Outdoor activities for children of all ages and abilities

For the above reasons, Thomley offers a variety of fully accessible play equipment, suitable for all ages and abilities so disabled children can enjoy the same active and sporting opportunities as all other children. Thomley's securely enclosed 7 acre site gives children a freedom found in so few other places, especially for those living in urban areas. The rural and expansive calming space is one of the key reasons families return to Thomley again and again.



Thomley's field is interwoven with a 1km purpose-built, all-weather track designed for use by bikes, trikes, wheelchairs, prams and walkers. This track gives unique opportunity to disabled children to cycle safely, many of whom are unable to cycle at home due to dangers of the road. Road safety features along the length of the track aid Thomley's cycle-ability courses, designed to improve children's cycling skills and road awareness. Thomley provides a wide variety of bikes, trikes and scooters as well as a soft tarmac area for beginners.

Other playground equipment includes a zip wire, adapted swings, wheelchair accessible roundabout, clamber wall, assault course, football pitch and outdoor music equipment. Facilitated team games enable children to join in and learn new skills. Thomley's rural environment gives rise to projects such as nature trails, den building, camping and horticultural activities, each helping to increase children's interest, understanding and respect for the natural environment.



#### Involving parents and carers

The outdoor area gives parents and carers opportunity to enjoy a relaxed walk or bike ride together with their child. Trained staff provide tips on how to launch learner cyclists. Dad's and male carer days encourage adult participation in football or other team games. Thomley helps signpost families hoping to buy equipment to appropriate suppliers.

#### Awareness raising about disability

Thomley believes disabled children should have choice amongst a diverse range of leisure opportunities and has successfully lobbied playground suppliers to make play equipment more disability friendly. Thomley shares experiences and approaches to inclusion by welcoming visitors from the local community who, with greater understanding and acceptance of disability issues, are more able to include disabled children within community activities. Thomley also shares with others in the play sector through networking meetings and outreach play days. *"Thomley hall has changed my life! I have a whole new view of the world! I just love coming here!" - Community user*

#### Cost of providing outdoor activities and sports

The cost of providing this outdoor facility is **£86,701 per year**, equivalent to **£15 per child per visit**. This covers the cost of the rent and upkeep of the large field, provision of adequate numbers of qualified staff, maintenance of playground equipment, cycle track and bikes, facilitators for sports activities and environmental projects. **£50,000** has been pledged towards these specific costs already, leaving a shortfall of **£36,701**.

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