

All Hampstead Hill School Policies are always to be read and considered in conjunction with Equal Opportunities, Race Equality and Inclusion Policies. This Policy of Hampstead Hill School applies to all sections of the school including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Hampstead Hill School

Health and Safety Policy:

Play Equipment



Introduction

Play is essential for the development of each and every child. It is a vital means by which children learn about themselves, their environment and other people. The freedom to explore, to experiment, to interact with peers and to be creative is a necessary ingredient of a child's physical, emotional and intellectual growth.

This document is concerned primarily with outdoor play equipment where items of equipment are permanently installed and where there is formal full-time supervision of play activities.

Safety should permeate every stage in the provision of play equipment from planning, designing, choosing and installing equipment to monitoring and maintaining the facilities.

Play Equipment Standards

There are two European standards for play equipment, namely BS EN 1176: *Playground equipment* and BS EN 1177: *Impact absorbing playground surfaces - safety requirements and test methods*,

There are many minor differences between the above standards and previous British Standards they have replaced. Three are particularly relevant:

- The area of impact absorbing surfacing
- The spacing between play structures
- The height at which barriers with guard rails to prevent falls need to be provided.

When purchasing new or replacing existing outdoor play equipment it is important that Heads of establishments satisfy themselves as to the level of safety afforded by the design, construction and installation of particular items of equipment.

These standards are not designed to eliminate risk from play. The purpose is to ensure that young people can engage in adventurous and challenging play without coming to harm as the result of poorly designed equipment and badly planned facilities.

Risk Assessment

All British Standards now include the statement '*Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations*'. This statement has arisen following the outcome of a consumer protection case, which established that compliance with a relevant standard was not enough. It is therefore not sufficient to rely on compliance with BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177 alone to determine the safety of equipment.

Under health and safety legislation the establishment should carry out a risk assessment of play equipment to determine what precautions are needed. Part of this assessment will involve deciding whether the equipment complies with the relevant standards.

Sometimes it may be necessary to do something more, for example, if the equipment predates recent standards, there may be a need to make some modifications or replace certain items. The playground's location may attract unauthorised use and/or abuse, in which case more frequent maintenance may be required because damage might occur more often and the consequences of using damaged equipment might be more serious.

This risk assessment should be carried out by a person who has knowledge and experience of such equipment.

Safety versus Challenge

Challenge and adventure are natural aspects of young people's play. They will become bored very quickly with equipment that does not offer a range of challenging experiences. As a result they might either stop using the equipment or use it in such a way which compromises their safety.

From research and studies into accidents which occur in play areas, it has been possible to identify the following factors which appear to contribute to accidents:

- Poorly designed equipment
- Poor location and layout
- Inadequate maintenance procedures
- Incorrect installation of equipment
- Lack of facilities appropriate for the age of the child
- Inappropriate use of equipment.

Planning For Safe Play

In planning the development of the provision of outdoor play equipment and considering how best to maintain and improve existing equipment, establishments will need to consider the following:

1. Location

Careful consideration should be given to the location of equipment. Safe access to the play area is essential and the needs of young people with reduced mobility should be considered. The installation should be positioned to allow easy monitoring by staff and it should not act as an enticement to trespassers, thus compromising school security. Consideration should be given to positioning the site away from car parks and access routes used by parents and visitors.

2. Layout

A variety of play needs should be considered when planning the layout of the equipment. It may be possible to create different sectors within the play area, such as:

- A quiet area
- A social play area
- A climbing area
- An agility area.

This may also minimise the risk of accidental collision while at the same time enabling young people to enjoy a range of experiences.

Paths, fencing and natural landscaping of the site can be used to guide young people between activities via a safe route. However, these features can also present risks because they are part of the play environment. Any screening features or planting must be appropriate for use in the play area.

3. Playground Surfaces

Injuries in playgrounds occur from a variety of reasons. The most severe of these are likely to be injuries to the head. Consequently, priority has been given to establishing criteria for surfacing materials, which is intended to assess their ability to reduce the likelihood of head injuries. The requirements of these criteria are contained in BS EN 1177: *Impact absorbing playground surfacing*.

The installation of impact absorbing surfaces will not eliminate accidents. They may, if correctly installed and maintained, reduce the seriousness of an injury. **Impact absorbing surfaces must be installed underneath and around equipment from which falls from a height of 600 mm or greater may occur.**

There is a large and diverse range of products supplied for use as 'impact absorbing surfaces'. Each type of material has its own advantages and disadvantages. Loose-fill materials such as, tree bark, wood chips, sand or pea gravel tend to be popular because of their more 'natural' appearance in the play environment and the relatively low initial cost, when compared to rubber based products.

Loose-fill material used as an impact absorbing surface must be installed to a minimum depth of 300 mm. Rubber materials, either individual tiles, mats or surfaces formed 'in-situ', should be installed by a contractor registered with the Association of Play Industries. A supplier of such materials should provide confirmation of appropriateness for the equipment concerned, together with advice on maintenance and inspection schedules.

All impact absorbing surfaces must be provided with a test certificate. This certificate confirms that the product's impact absorbency properties have achieved the required 'critical fall height' test.

A test certificate **will not** make reference to this specific safety requirement. Therefore, before making a purchase, all establishments are recommended to obtain a sample of the product from the supplier in order to satisfy themselves that the product is free from any sharp edged parts or hazardous projections. In addition, the establishment should require the supplier to provide written confirmation that the product conforms to this general safety requirement.

The National Playing Fields Association, (NPFA) have issued a guidance document, *Impact Absorbing Surfaces for Children's Playgrounds, 1997*. In this document, the loose-fill product which is considered by the NPFA to be the '*most appropriate*' material for loose-fill 'impact absorbing surfaces' is tree bark. In fact, within some product ranges tree bark has impact absorbing properties far in excess of other products. This material does not have the drawbacks associated with some wood chip products such as sharp edges and hazardous projections.

The impact absorbing surface should extend 1.75m beyond the extremities of static equipment and 1.75m beyond the maximum travelling distance of moving equipment. All of these considerations should be adequately addressed, with reference to BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177, by those involved in the design and layout of the equipment.

Where loose fill materials such as tree bark or woodchips are used as an impact absorbing surface, regular maintenance and inspection procedures in accordance with the supplier's instructions are essential to retain the materials safety properties. For example, where an area receives heavy use it should be raked daily, especially where equipment is above the critical fall height of 600 mm.

It is also important to ensure that synthetic materials, tiles, wet pore surfacing, matting etc., are checked regularly and maintained in accordance with the supplier's instructions. With age, rubber products cease to be as efficient and do not yield sufficiently to provide the absorbency required under equipment. All surfaces should be examined regularly for vandalism and wear.

4. Inspection and Maintenance

It is essential that establishments have effective monitoring and maintenance programmes for all play areas. If equipment is found to be in need of repair, it must be removed, replaced or repaired immediately. If this is impractical, steps must be taken to ensure that it presents no danger to children by immobilisation, or erecting protective fencing. The repair should then be completed as soon as possible.

All inspections and maintenance programmes should cover the whole play area and not just the play equipment or the impact absorbing surface. Fences, gates, seating and open areas of play should also be assessed.

Equipment and its components should be inspected and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions at a frequency not less than that given by the manufacturer.

This hierarchy of inspections will enable the establishment to identify hazards which require remedial action and to assess the overall condition of sites and equipment. It is recommended that an inspection and maintenance log book is kept. This log should include:

- Details of all the equipment, including each manufacturer
- The inspection and maintenance records
- Details of appropriate contacts for advice and assistance
- Details of reported accidents involving the equipment.

Equipment and its components should be inspected as follows:

1. *Routine visual inspection:*

The routine visual inspection enables the identification of obvious hazards that can result from vandalism, use or weather conditions, for example the hazards can take the form of broken parts, broken bottles or exposed foundations. For playground equipment which may be subject to heavy use or vandalism, daily inspections of this type are recommended. **This type of inspection can be undertaken by staff in the establishment.**

2. *Operational inspection*

The operational inspection is a more detailed inspection to check the operation and stability of the equipment, and also look for evidence of wear. This should be carried out every one to three months, or as indicated by the manufacturer's instructions. **Again, this can be undertaken by staff in the establishment and a record should be kept.**

3. *Annual main inspection*

The 'annual main inspection' is undertaken to establish, at intervals not exceeding 12 months, the overall condition of the equipment, foundations and surfaces. It will cover the effects of weather, evidence of rotting or corrosion, and any change in the level of safety of the equipment resulting from repairs, modifications or replaced components. The annual main inspection can require excavation or the dismantling of certain parts.

The 'annual main inspection' should be carried out by a competent person in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The level of competence of the person carrying out the inspection will vary with level of risk associated with the complexity of the equipment.

For example, in the case of a play area with a limited number of low risk activities, for example low level balance beam, log walk, sandpit, playhouse, all without any moving parts, **a member of the establishment's staff** who has been given adequate information about the equipment and their responsibilities, would be considered appropriately qualified for the nature of the task.

However, where a play area contains equipment which has either moving parts, a fall height of 600mm or more, slides, stairs or guard rails, it is essential that the annual main inspection is carried out by a registered Playground Equipment Inspector, who is suitably experienced and trained for the task. Organisations, such as The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) or the equipment manufacturer, will provide an annual main inspection service for an individual establishment.

5. Unauthorised use of outdoor play equipment: Safety Information

All establishments must anticipate the use of their outdoor play equipment by unauthorised users, and therefore take suitable precautions. Providing that both the equipment and the impact absorbing surfaces are safe for the intended use and comply with relevant BS EN Standards, it will be sufficient to display a suitable notice. There should be at least one notice in the play area which gives the following information:

- the location of the nearest telephone to contact the emergency services
- the telephone number and name of the person to whom any accidents and damage should be reported **and**
- a statement to the effect that:

The equipment is intended for use by children from the ages of (e.g.) 5-9 years, that play activities should be supervised by an adult and with the agreement of the Head of the Establishment.

6. Vandalism

It is a sad fact that some establishment's sites will suffer from vandalism. Vandalism may be encouraged by poor maintenance procedures. Prompt action in cleaning graffiti and fixing damaged equipment is essential if the equipment is not to deteriorate and become dangerous.

7. The Use of Chemicals

On occasion chemical substances are used in playgrounds, for example, to remove graffiti. Water based fungicides or preservatives must be used as alternatives to creosote.

8. Dogs

Establishments should take effective action to ensure that the outdoor play equipment areas are not fouled by dogs. Dog fouling is unpleasant, unhygienic and can cause serious illness particularly to young children.

A range of practical measures can be taken if dog fouling is likely including the provision of:

- dog-proof fencing
- self-closing gates.

Installation of New Play Equipment

The provision and installation of play equipment is a complex task, requiring specialist expertise and knowledge. There are many reputable manufacturers of play equipment who offer advice and a range of services to establishments which are seeking either to improve existing facilities or install new equipment.

However, where competence can be demonstrated, the expertise and knowledge required to undertake a project may be found from among the staff, volunteers and parents of the establishment.

Any relevant health and safety issues need to be considered and the review should:

- Identify the possible hazards involved with carrying out the work, and assess the risk to the personnel installing the equipment, the school's employees, children and members of the public
- select a play equipment installer who is competent to deal with these risks
- discuss safe methods of work with them
- highlight any particular hazards on the work site
- monitor the work throughout the duration of the project

Key factors to consider where an establishment undertakes a 'self-build' or 'self-assembly' project using non-specialist staff/volunteers

The design and layout of an outdoor play area can be a very involved task, requiring a detailed understanding of the requirements of the appropriate standards. For 'low risk' installations, such as sandpits, playhouses and low level balance features, the key factors to consider are:

- The dimensions and degree of difficulty of the equipment should be suitable for the intended age group.
- The provision of sufficient space between play structures to avoid accidental collisions.

In order to reduce the initial cost to an establishment some play equipment manufacturers offer a self-assembly option, whereby the manufacturer delivers the parts to the establishment and the assembly is undertaken by staff or volunteers. In such cases, establishments must ensure that they receive detailed plans and assembly instructions.

Post installation inspection

Whether an establishment has equipment installed by the equipment manufacturer or staff and volunteers, it is School policy that a 'post installation inspection' is carried before young people are allowed to use the equipment. **Do you want to include this?**

The 'post installation inspection' certifies that the equipment and surfacing conforms to the requirements of the appropriate standards, BS EN1176 and BS EN 1177. This inspection can be carried out by the equipment manufacturer.

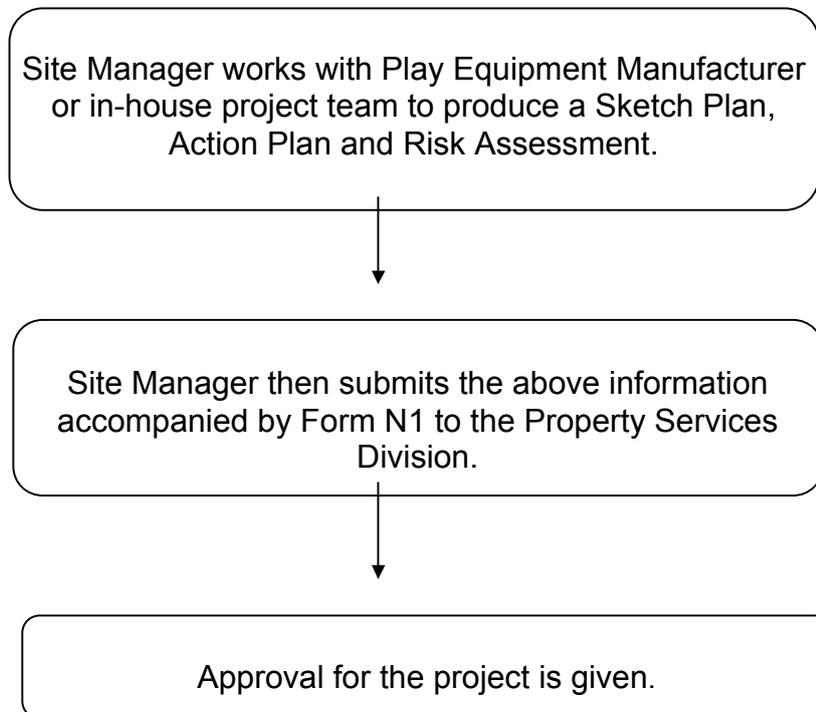
Key factors in selecting a Play Equipment Manufacturer

The reputable Play Equipment Manufacturer should:

- Confirm that the company is a registered member of the Association of Play Industries.
- Offer a site inspection and present a free design service for plans and layout perspectives without any obligations on the establishment to buy equipment.
- Provide written confirmation that all equipment provided is appropriate for the intended age range and the installation of such equipment will comply with BS EN 1176.
- Supply test certificates for all impact absorbing surfaces, confirm its appropriateness for the equipment concerned and confirm that it will comply with BS EN 1177.
- Provide guarantees for the projected life-span of the equipment provided and the impact absorbing surface.
- Confirm that the products are suitable for the area taking into account climatic conditions and anticipated usage and vandalism.
- Provide written confirmation that the main contractor will be fully responsible for the total contract including the work of any sub-contractor.
- Provide minimum public liability insurance of £5 million.
- Provide minimum product liability insurance of £5 million encompassing design and specification risks.
- Confirm that the contractor will arrange for a post-installation inspection to be undertaken to check the completed installation against the European standards BS EN 1176 and BS EN1177.
- Provide a maintenance and inspection schedule for all the equipment.

Planning Flow Chart

The flow chart and pro-forma is provided to guide the establishment's Site Manager through the health and safety issues the establishment will need to consider before starting work on the installation of play equipment.



Throughout the project, the establishment's Site Manager will be responsible for health and safety on site.

Throughout the project, advice can be obtained from:

- Asset Management Group
- Health and Safety Team
- Property Services Division

Project Planning

Action	Progress
<p>Prepare a sketch plan of proposed play area detailing all selected equipment. Carry out risk assessment on the equipment and layout.</p>	
<p>Prepare a health and safety plan for the proposed works - consider manual handling, personal protective clothing etc. Where a contractor is being brought in to carry out the work, refer to Section J2 'Control of Contractors'.</p>	
<p>Submit plans, with the N1 Form to Property Services Division.</p>	
<p>Hold a pre-start meeting with those involved. Use Form HSC1 to exchange information, invite Buildings Officer to attend.</p>	
<p>Organise monitoring arrangements for duration of works, if necessary consult in the Property Services Division.</p>	

Action	Progress
Identify participants and workers on the project.	
Ensure equipment and materials are stored securely to prevent access to young people or intruders.	
Project site to be separated from the rest of the grounds by a clear visible barrier to restrict access.	
Ensure all helpers know how to carry and use equipment and materials safely before they start.	
Seek parental authorisation (for illnesses or allergies) before children take part in practical activities.	

Date adopted: September 2016

Updated September 2016

Name: Andrea Taylor



Signed: