



OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

This policy links to the following:

- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Volunteering
- Use of Children's Centres by other agencies
- Equality and Diversity
- Partnership with Parents and the local community
- Behaviour Management Policy

Document control

Amendment History

Version/Issue Number	Date	Author	Remarks/Reason for change	Review Date
1	November 2019	Katie Coomber	Reviewed	November 2020

OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT

Safe use of equipment

Supervision

Children must be supervised at all times whilst using outdoor play equipment and the appropriate number of people required to supervise play areas must be determined for each location. Supervising staff should be familiar with the equipment, the rules for use and of the ability of the children.

General guidelines

To assist the children's centre in the development of appropriate arrangements the guidelines detailed below should be followed.

- Staff/supervisors on duty must ensure that outdoor play equipment is visible and can be appropriately supervised when in use.
- Staff/supervisors on duty have a responsibility to make regular checks for defects and report them as appropriate.
- Staff/supervisors have a responsibility to ensure appropriate behaviour management
- Consideration needs to be given to weather conditions, outdoor play equipment should not be used during wet or icy conditions.
- Apparatus must only be used at appropriate times when supervised. Parents need to be informed that the apparatus is for pre-school aged children under 6 years old only.

Clothing/Footwear

Suitable clothing should be worn. Hazards can arise from - unfastened coats, woollen gloves, scarves, ties, etc.

Appropriate footwear must be worn. Hazards arise from - slippery soles, open toed and sling back sandals, heels and untied laces, etc.

Zoning of Activities

Consideration should be given to the range of activities occurring within the play area:

- Ball games/chasing games should be sited away from the climbing area.
- In a nursery garden, wheeled toys in particular, should be used away from the climbing area.

Play equipment standards

All **new** outdoor play equipment must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained in accordance with European standards BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177.

These European standards are not retrospective or a legal requirement but represent good practice in the event of an accident claim. Play equipment which was considered safe under BS 5696 will still be safe under the new standards.

The independent competent person carrying out the annual inspection and maintenance will advise whether any alterations need to be made.

In order to ensure compliance, it is recommended that only manufacturers/contractors with appropriate play industries registration be used which are planning to install new outdoor play equipment. Checks should be made that companies have API (Association of Play Industries) or BSI registration for equipment manufacture and installation.

Scrambling and climbing elements must not exceed 3 metres, for children below 5 years the height should be a maximum of 1.6 metres.

Height should not be the dominant feature on any item of equipment. Interest challenge and enjoyment should be achieved without the need for height itself.

Structures must be spaced clear of each other to prevent one activity interfering with another, they must also be clear of walls, fences etc.

Suppliers of new equipment must supply information relating to surfacing requirements, intended age range, risk assessment, installation instructions, servicing and maintenance instructions

Safety surfaces

All products must meet the appropriate BS EN Standards. Both **portable** and **fixed** climbing equipment that has a fall height of 600mm **must** be on an impact-absorbing surface if used outside. (Fall height is the distance from the clearly intended body support to the impact area)

Although impact absorbing surfaces cannot prevent accidents they may reduce the level of injury. There are a range of surfaces available which provide impact attenuation including rubber mats and tiles, bark etc.

The extent of surfacing around static equipment is dependent on the fall height, this should extend at least 1.75M beyond the outermost points of the base of the frame.

When considering so called safety surfaces their likely effectiveness, durability, practicality and management should be taken into account.

Materials such as top soil and turf do have limited impact absorbing properties.

Where bark is used this area should be a minimum of 300mm deep with a recommended particle size of 38mm max and 12mm min.

Loose materials will spread if not suitably contained and will need to be topped up from time to time, thus it is important to have additional bark available to top up to the original level.

Inspection and maintenance

For new equipment a post installation inspection must be arranged.

BS EN 1176 recommends that all outdoor play equipment be inspected and maintained on a regular basis. Such inspection and maintenance is at 3 levels.

Level 1 checks – Daily / pre use checks by staff (these should be recorded as a daily risk assessment)

Concentrating on the following points:

- No evidence of obvious wear / damage
- Area safe from health hazards e.g. needles, glass, faeces etc.
- Impact absorbing surfaces no cuts, tears, wear or unstuck areas
- All fastening tightly secured
- No broken chains, stretched links or loose or twisted shackles
- Uprights unbroken and firm in the ground

Where any defects / hazards are identified appropriate steps must be taken to prevent use until problems have been satisfactorily resolved.

Level 2 checks – termly inspection in house

A more thorough check of the equipment to be conducted termly and these records kept on site and shared with the caretaker and Forest Academy.

Level 3 checks – annual inspection

A detailed certified inspection by an independent competent person capable of inspecting to BS EN 1176 and 1177 these checks must be formally recorded and records kept on site.

Such checks ensure safety and identifies any improvements required in terms of the European standards

The competent person conducting the annual inspection will advise on the extent of surfacing required for both static and moving equipment

For further information please contact:

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It is intended that by adopting these guidelines and keeping staff, volunteers, families and the management committee informed/trained and up-to-date with procedures, the centre can avoid the need for complaints. However, the Children's Centre Manager is the first point of contact should any queries arise over this policy and its related procedures.

Guidelines endorsement

Signed by	
Name	
Position	
Date	