**Inspecting your playground equipment**

The safety of children on playgrounds does not depend solely on the initial design but on continued management, inspection and maintenance programmes in schools. You must ensure checks are made:

* Routine inspections of play areas must be completed on a regular systematic basis. The daily/weekly inspections checklist is designed to be used internally by the responsible person.
* A operational recorded inspection once a term, where you would be checking moving parts; oiling and tightening; minor repairs and checking fences and gates etc; these can be carried out internally or by a contractor and;
* An annual inspection carried out by independent competent assessors.

The actual route followed around the area does not matter. However, it should be a consistent route to avoid missing anything. This daily/weekly checklist will help with this. The generic checklist can be used to produce your own checklist by picking and choosing items relevant to your area

Around 60% of all accidents on play areas do not occur on play equipment but on ancillary items or approaches, so ensure these areas are included in your inspection. A high proportion of accidents occur from tripping on uneven surfaces.

It is important that inspections are ‘hands on’ and that you use all of your senses. Look at, listen to and use the equipment. Sound differences in particular can help identify problems that would not otherwise have been obvious. Take extra care not to put your hand where you haven’t looked first,just in case any sharp objects have been left.

Start looking for hazards as you approach the play area. Check that paths are in good condition, without trip hazards and that there is nothing overhanging or projecting onto the path which children could run into.

When you reach the play area check the general surface for trip hazards including that the edges of all ‘safer’ surfacing are level with the surrounding areas (trip hazards). Check the ‘safer’ surfacing is in good condition and all tiles are in place. If any are loose, stick them back down. Check surfaces for slipperiness. Rubberised surfaces can get an almost invisible algae build up which can make them very slippery when wet.

Use a ‘hands on’ approach on all equipment and use it where possible.

On spring items, try giving them a hard push to make them rock violently. Listen and you will find that if there is anything loose you will hear it.

On roundabouts again use your hearing to help. It should revolve noiselessly. Stand on the edge and gently bounce up and down to check for excessive movement which might indicate that the bearings are worn.

Where you have a slide on a unit, stand at the top and look down the slide. Check the steps are secure and the chute is free from obstructions. Try standing on the slide run out to see if there is any movement (indicative of loose fixings).

On swings check seats for damage (replace when you have cuts more than 80mm wide exposing bare metal). Check on cradle seats that the centre strap (that goes between legs) is firmly fixed. Turn the seats over and check that there are no projecting bolts underneath. Separate the links on chains (where the chains meet the seats and where the diagonals meet) to check for wear. Replace chains at 30%-40% wear. Throw the swing seat vertically up in the air and watch closely the shackle pin for movement. If the pin moves sideways only, there is unlikely to be bush or shackle wear. If however, there is a rocking motion, this can indicate that the shackles of bushes are worn.

From time to time sit on the swing seat and gently swing, looking upwards to the top bar. This should not move. If it turns at all then the head bar is loose in its fixings.

Use your weight to check stability of items. Where there are chains or ropes on any equipment make sure they are secure and in good condition and that ropes cannot form a loop (so they can’t be caught around a neck).

Look for any areas on equipment where there are unexpected changes in colour. These can indicate that a component is missing.

If you have old metal tubes as part of play equipment construction, try hitting the metal with a rubber mallet and listen. If there is serious internal rusting you will hear a sound, like rain, as the rust you have disturbed falls down inside the tube.

If hollow metal appears to be ‘bowing’ at any point this is an indication that there may have been damage due to water build up in the hollow, which when it freezes then ‘bows’ and eventually splits the metal.

**Daily/weekly checklist for children’s outdoor play areas & equipment**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Site general | Yes | No | N/A  | Remedial action Required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are barriers present and in place? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are fences secure and complete without any protrusions? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are gates in working order? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are pathways undamaged and free from obstructions? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the site free from litter, glass or any other dangerous object? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is site and surrounding areas free from animal fouling? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do nearby trees appear to be in good condition and not likely to fall? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Ancillary items | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are all seats and benches undamaged and in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are litter bins secure and undamaged? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Have the bins been emptied? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the planting safe and undamaged? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Surfacing | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are safety surfaces undamaged and free from any trip hazards? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are loose-fill surfaces levels, at least 300mm deep and without rubbish or fouling? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is safety surfacing level with surrounding ground and not causing trip hazards? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are there weeds present? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the site well drained without excessive puddling? |  |  |  |  |  |
| If surfacing is grass, is it in good condition without undue wear? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| All Equipment | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial Action Required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are all supports present, secure and free from decay at ground level? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is all timber and metal work undamaged and free from corrosion? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are supports secure in the ground and are all fixings secure? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all safety barriers present? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does equipment work properly and without undue noise? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Swings | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial Action Required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are the chains intact and in good condition  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are the swing seats unbroken with no exposed metal? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are the seats fixed securely (with secure centre bar on cradle seats)? |  |  |  |  |  |
| On single point swings is the beam padded where children might strike it? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Slides | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial Action Required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are steps in good condition and not slippery? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are handrails secure and in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the chute securely fixed, undamaged and clear of foreign objects (carefully check under sides of chute)? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Rotating items | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Is it undamaged and is the platform level? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does it revolve smoothly and noiselessly? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all safety features present? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do speed restrictors work? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are there protruding bolts etc. under the platform? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is there rubbish underneath? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Rocking & spring items | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are all supports and springs present and secure and free from decay at ground level? |  |  |  |  |   |
| Are ground fixings secure with undue movement? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the item move smoothly and noiselessly? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all hand grips and footrests present and securely fixed? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Where chains or ropes are present are they secure and in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Climbing and agility items | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are all supports present and secure and free from decay at ground level? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is all timber/ metal work undamaged and free from corrosion? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all the bars in place, securely fixed and any tube ends plugged? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are any overhead bars/rings all present, securely fixed, with no rotation  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all ropes or chains present and in good condition and secure.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all nuts and bolts secure without any projecting thread? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do loose ropes not form a loop? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Cable runways | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are all supports present and secure and free from decay at ground level? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is all timber or metal work undamaged and free from corrosion? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are the supports secure in the ground and take off platforms in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the cable in good condition and securely fixed at each end? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the seat securely fixed with chain in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the trolley move easily and noiselessly and are guards intact? |  |  |  |  |  |
| If hand grips are present are they good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| If trackway, is it free from rust and are all joints level? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Bridges | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Is there no gap opening at the ends which children can slip through? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are bridge slats all present, secure, and evenly spaced? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all fixings secure and in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are chains and ropes secure without undue wear? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Sand Play | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Is the sand pit surround in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the sand free of rubbish and fouling? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are sand play items in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are surround areas in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Multi-Play Items | Yes | No | N/A | Remedial action required | Action taken by whom? |
| Are goals/nets in good condition and undamaged? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all fences and barriers in good condition and undamaged? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are all nuts and bolts secure without any projecting thread? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the surface in good condition and free from rubbish? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is surface level with surrounding ground and not causing trip hazards? |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are surrounding grass areas in good condition? |  |  |  |  |  |

Recording:-

1. Have all the above faults been reported to the relevant person?
2. Has action been taken on previous faults?

Name of Establishment …………………………………………..

Signed……………………………………. Print Name ……………………………...

Date ……………………………………..