

Thame Town Council

Play Area Inspections Policy

1. General Statement of Policy

- 1.1 The following information is to be used as a guide for routine inspection of the play equipment and surrounding area at dedicated playground sites in Thame. Only suitably trained personnel approved by the Council will be allowed to perform Playground Inspections and this in the first instance will require as a minimum attendance at an Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association course.
- 1.2 This appendix is intended to serve as an *aide-memoire* for the minimum standards necessary when carrying out inspections. This guide should be used in conjunction with the standard reporting forms for each of the play areas in Thame.
- 1.3 As necessary, this guide will be updated to improve the standard and cater for new designs of equipment.

2. Policy:

- 2.1 All play areas will be visually inspected daily Monday – Friday October through to March and seven days a week from April through to September.
- 2.2 A more thorough inspection will take place monthly against the minimum criteria set out below for safety to each play area.
- 2.3 An approved inspection form will be completed after the monthly inspection, identifying any problems and detailing any repairs or remedial works undertaken.
- 2.4 The Asset Manager will examine all completed reports on a regular basis.
- 2.5 The reports will be kept as part of a permanent record on each play area file for a period of 21 years.
- 2.6 An approved independent specialist will carry out an annual Safety Inspection for all Thame play areas to ensure the long-term safety of the site, equipment and ancillary items. A written report will cover the site safety and condition, equipment, surfacing and ancillary item safety and condition and compliance with the requirements of EN1176 (the European Playground Standard) where relevant. Recommendations for any remedial action required will be given together with an assessment of the degree of risk.
- 2.7 The Asset Manager will monitor reports and plan for repairs from both the monthly inspections and from the independent specialist. These reports will identify any play areas that require capital improvements and replacements or an increase to the revenue expenditure.
- 2.8 If serious defects that put safety at risk are found during any inspection, these should be corrected without delay. If this is not possible, the equipment must be immobilised, isolated or removed.

3. Inspection reporting procedure:

- 3.1 A corresponding form for each area is to be completed as a permanent record of the level of serviceability found.

Play Area Sites:

- Church Farm Skate Park
- Southern Road Play Area
- Pearce Way Play Area
- Queen Elizabeth Circle Play Area
- Churchill Crescent Play Area
- Elms Park Play Area
- Elms Park Multi-Use Games Area
- Pickenfield Play Area

4. Reports from members of the public procedure:

- 4.1 Members of the public are encouraged to report any issues for remedial action as soon as they are noticed. This may be reported by a variety of methods i.e. telephone, letter, email or in person. The Council's Enquiries Procedure will be followed obtaining sufficient information to enable remedial action to be undertaken according to the severity of the report / complaint.

Appendix

5. Minimum Inspection Criteria

5.1 Equipment Bars and climbing frames

- Check the security of installation into the ground
- Check the serviceability of all connections holding the frame together
- Check any damage to the framework
- Check for rusted assemblies
- Assess general condition of the paintwork
- Do a Mallet Test
- Check the condition of safety surface
- Look for missing components
- Check free of damage to all grip surfaces

5.2 Slide Frame

- The structure to be checked in accordance with 5.1 above
- Check that the slide is not damaged, leaving sharp edges on handrails or on slide
- Check that climbing treads are fully serviceable and secure
- Check that safety bars are in place
- Ensure the slide is secure
- Ensure landing area is serviceable
- Check the wooden components are secure and serviceable

5.3 Adventure Trail

- Check security of all sections and components connected directly to the ground
- Inspect all timber for rot
- If textile ropes are incorporated check for cuts, fretting and general wear
- If stranded wire ropes are incorporated check for slackness of the installation, security of the cable ends, no protrusion of the cable end strands, excessive rusting
- Check attachments and connections are fully serviceable
- Check timber is free of mould growth and slime
- Where steps are incorporated check for cracks, splinters and any weakness of the structure
- Tighten up any bolts where the timber has experienced shrinkage
- Dress off any damaged surface to blend with the natural surface

5.4 Mound Slide

- Ensure surrounding ground surface is safe
- Check the serviceability of connections into the ground
- Check the slide surface in accordance with 5.2 above
- Ensure the landing area is serviceable and free from obstacles
- Check safety rails in accordance with 5.1 above
- Check wooden structures are sound, dress off any damaged surface

5.5 Three-way Platform

- Check that all timber components are free from damage or excessive degradation
- Ensure that the assembly components are secure
- Ensure the springing action is safe and the equipment comes to rest in the same position after use
- Ensure there is no excessive sideways movement present in the equipment
- Check that the underside and fall area are free of debris
- Check that the seats/standing pads have no damaged surfaces

5.6 Aerial Runway

- Check the supporting structure in accordance with 5.1 and 5.3 above as necessary
- Check the aerial wire is secure and all the attachments fully serviceable
- Check the aerial wire/rope does not have any visible broken strands
- Check the stranded wire does not show signs of excessive wear or rusting
- Check the pulley groove conforms to the profile of the wire rope and is not excessively worn
It must also travel freely along the complete length of the rope when supporting a person
- Check the pulley assembly rotates freely along the full length of the aerial wire
- Check the pulley assembly is secure and the suspended seat attachment fully serviceable with freedom to rotate around its attachment point
- Check the button seat is free of any serious damage
- Check the fall area along the entire length of the area of runway is serviceable and free of debris

5.7 Cradle Swings

- Check the framework in accordance with 5.1 above
- Check the suspension point shackles are not excessively corroded and are free to rotate
- Check the shackle eyebolt (or standard bolt) is fully engaged to retain the top link of the suspension chain
- Ensure locking pins and nuts are secure
- Check the chain is free of excessive interlink wear and corrosion
- Check seat attachments are secure and the chain lower link is free to rotate in position
- Check the cradle seat does not have excessive damage and the safety bar is free to travel between the upper and lower limits
- Check suspension chains are to the same dimension and ensure the seat is level
- Ensure the fall area is free of debris and serviceable

5.8 Junior Swings

- As appropriate, checks for this apparatus will be in accordance with 5.7 above

5.9 Springers

- Ensure the attachment to the ground is secure
- Ensure the upper portion of the spring engages to the apparatus without any slackness at the attachments
- Check all fastenings are fully serviceable
- Check timber or plastic features are free from excessive cracks or missing parts
- Ensure footrests are free of dirt and mould growth
- Check handgrips are in place and secure with no slackness
- Check the spring is free of any inserted debris and is upright, without indicating excessive straining i.e. distortion
- Check where a sleeve is fitted over the spring, it is serviceable

5.10 Roundabout

- Ensure smooth operation of the rotating movement with persons on board
- Check security of all components
- Check handrail and grip surfaces are free of damage
- Ensure the ground below the platform is free of debris
- Ensure wooden components are sound and not excessively worn
- With the platform at rest, check for excessive wear of the bearings by rocking the platform in a vertical axis in three positions around the equipment
- Ensure the outside surface of the platform has a uniform surface and profile

5.11 Seesaw

- Ensure seats and handgrips are free from excessive damage
- Ensure angular movement between limits is free of any mechanical restriction and smooth in operation
- Check bearings are serviceable
- Check the beam surface is free of damage, i.e. dress off any minor damage such as dents
- Ensure interfacing parts are free of debris
- Ensure there is no excessive sideways movement of the slide throughout its entire travel
- Check security of the equipment to the ground
- Check the fall area is serviceable

5.12 Sandpit

- Regularly rake the surface level. Periodically fork the sand
- Top up as required using white soft washed sand

5.13 Polyethylene Panels

- Check for cracks or other damage

5.14 Wooden items

- Ensure all wooden items are not broken and have no sharp edges or splinters

5.15 Rope Components

- Ensure ropes are not frayed
- All fixings are tight and have no protruding sharp edges

- Check for wear on eye bolts welded onto beams, split links and swaged eye terminals attached to rope ends

5.16 Climb Grips

- Ensure grips are in position and secure
- Check grips for algae which could be slippery and clean using water and stiff brush if required

5.17 Skate Boarding equipment

All of the apparatus is constructed into different configurations therefore the following criteria applies to all items:

- Check that steel sheeting provides an even surface to curved or straight sections and that these are free of any serious indentations
- Ensure that the steel surfaces are secured with flush rivets and these are secure
- Check there are no sharp edges
- Check where welding is evident this is to be sound
- Ensure that exposed frames have end caps where these are facing any contact position
- Check timber boarding is free of any serious damage and secured firmly in position
- Ensure excessive rusting at the lower sections of the structure is to be treated
- Check ground anchorage is secure
- Check the special concrete surface is free of any serious wear or damage

5.18 General considerations

- a) Ensure shackles, chains, bolt assemblies, pulley, wire ropes: do not exhibit any excessive corrosion, lubrication should be evident as required, fasteners must be secure with lock nuts or locking pins correctly in place.
- b) Check protective surfaces such as bark or rubber compound are fully serviceable at all times, where bark is present the material is to be raked and lifted periodically.
- c) Ensure fencing is maintained to the original standard where possible, allowing for acceptable ageing. Timber structures dry and shrink so some remedial work may be needed to reinsert items such as nails and staples.
- d) Check gates are fully serviceable. If a locking device is broken it may be removed, assuming the gate will still rest in the closed position.
- e) Ensure grass areas are maintained to a satisfactory standard at all times.
- f) Check paths, steps and concrete areas are clean and free from damage. Timber edging should be serviceable and not cause a trip problem. Wooden steps are free of structural weakness.
- g) Check seating is free of damage likely to cause discomfort to the user. Seats and the immediate area should be free of debris.

- h) Ensure waste bins positioned permanently and cleared of rubbish frequently.
- i) Ensure signs are clean and condition monitored on a regular basis.
- j) Where hedges, trees and shrubs are part of a nominated play area ensure they are the subject of regular maintenance. Reduce any potential hazard to a minimum.

5.19 Maintenance Work

- a) Ensure grass cutting, strimming, tree trimming and general groundwork is carried out only when adequate precautions are in place to eliminate unnecessary risk to the public.
- b) Carry out any play equipment maintenance only using approved parts.
- c) Carry out minor maintenance such as cleaning, lubricating, painting as necessary.