

Education, Children and Families Committee

10:00, Tuesday, 9 October 2018

School and Early Years Playgrounds Development

Item number 7.3

Report number

Executive/routine

Wards

Council Commitments

Executive Summary

The availability to Parent Council's and Community Groups of various funding sources in recent years has allowed school communities to undertake complex school playground improvement projects. A review of these projects has highlighted improvements that could be made in the way that the Council is involved in and supports the development of playground transformation projects. This report asks that Committee approve the "School Playground Development Guidance" which sets out the process those wishing to undertake a school playground improvement project should follow and the "Vision for School Grounds" document that makes clear the Council's aspirations for school grounds.

Schools and Early Years Playground Development

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
- 1.1.1 Approve that the “School Playground Development Guidance” document (Appendix 1) be adopted as the procedure by which all playground developments are delivered.
 - 1.1.2 Approve the appointment of appropriately qualified inspectors to undertake a first annual inspection of all City of Edinburgh Council’s school and early learning establishment grounds.
 - 1.1.3 Note the intention to return a report to Committee in March 2019 setting out the progress made in undertaking the inspections outlined in 1.1.2 and advise the findings of these inspections.
 - 1.1.4 Approve that the “Vision for School Grounds” document (Appendix 2) be adopted as a brief for future school playground developments.
 - 1.1.5 Note the intention to provide an update on a review of school ground accident monitoring in March 2019.
 - 1.1.6 That this report be referred to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee for their consideration.

2. Background

- 2.1 The “City of Edinburgh Play Strategy” reported to Education, Children and Families Committee on 9 December 2014 highlighted the importance of play in children’s lives and underlined that freedom to play is every child’s right under article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As part of an overall play strategy for Edinburgh the report provided a set of values with the aim of maintaining Edinburgh’s status as a play friendly city.
- 2.2 The “City of Edinburgh Play Strategy” report also noted key achievements relating to the completion of playground transformation projects including six projects undertaken as part of the Grounds for Learning Playing Naturally in Schools project. These projects were to provide exemplars for transforming school grounds for “natural play and outdoor learning opportunities”. As such, these and more complex projects led by school management and parents at several primary schools have been delivered.

- 2.3 The City of Edinburgh Council welcomes the efforts of staff and parents to support play and improve the health and wellbeing of our children. However, these recent projects have highlighted improvements that could be made in the way that the Council supports the development of playground transformation projects, the way that these projects are funded, procured, designed, managed, constructed and maintained. Improvements would clarify responsibilities and procedures and, consequently, help to mitigate any risks to the Council.
- 2.4 Furthermore, the experience gained through these projects has highlighted a lack of centrally held information about school grounds with no database maintained about the surfaces, play equipment and installations within school grounds and need for a programme of regular inspection in place.
- 2.5 The Play Development Support Group (PDSG) was established in July 2016 to advise schools undertaking playground projects and support the development of school playgrounds. This is a cross-departmental group with representation from colleagues in School Estate Planning, Health and Safety, Legal, Facilities Management, Schools and Lifelong Learning and Parks and all schools must refer to this group when planning and installing any play equipment; sand pits, climbing walls, multi-use games zones, astro-turf pitches, etc; or landscaping work.
- 2.6 In March 2017 the PDSG issued to all Heads of Establishments a set of guidelines which established a clear process to help head teachers, parent councils and Council services to work together to improve and manage school grounds for play.

3. Main report

Head Teacher Guidance Updated

- 3.1 The guidance produced for Heads of Establishments by the PDSG group in March 2017 has now been updated to reflect lessons learned since its publication and includes a refined process by which school communities may initiate and deliver school grounds improvement projects. At its core is a requirement for:
- all new playground developments to be designed and installed to EN 1176 standards;
 - Heads of Establishments to understand their role and obligations in any school grounds improvement project;
 - for the parties funding the project to accept and plan for financial responsibility for any necessary ongoing maintenance, remedial work and inspection.

A copy of the revised guidance is available in Appendix 1.

School Grounds Inspection

Quarterly Installation Inspections

- 3.2 The revised Heads of Establishment guidance sets out that, in addition to Post-Installation inspection, all new installations within school grounds be subject to quarterly inspections. This is to ensure that any faults or deterioration arising in the product or it's installation following use are captured in a timely manner. The party funding the installation of the product will be responsible for ensuring a budget is available for quarterly inspections and any resulting actions or tasks which may have financial implications. The scheduling of the inspections and monitoring the progress made by the schools in fulfilling actions and tasks arising from the inspections will be the responsibility of the School Estate Planning Team.

Annual School Grounds Inspections

- 3.3 The focus of the original Heads of Establishment guidance was on large scale 'natural' playground developments at primary schools. As a result the installations within fifteen primary school grounds are now subject to regular annual and quarterly inspection by qualified inspectors. However, the Council has grounds at a further 73 primary schools, 23 secondary schools and 27 Early Years settings, the majority of which have not been subject to any form of inspection that would allow us to ensure compliance with the new Head of Establishment guidance.
- 3.4 Accordingly, this report recommends the appointment of an independent organisation or organisations with expertise in the assessment of school grounds and play areas to undertake annual inspections at all City of Edinburgh Council primary schools, secondary schools and Early Years establishments. It is proposed that this appointment progress as soon as possible to allow a 'baseline' estate grounds status to be established.
- 3.5 The costs associated with undertaking these annual inspections will come from individual school budgets. Actions identified as a result of the initial inspection will, where necessary, be assessed, prioritised and aligned against the appropriate school, facilities management or other budgets.
- 3.6 It is proposed that a report providing an update on the inspections undertaken be returned to Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2019.

Vision for School Grounds

- 3.7 The work undertaken to date by the PDSG has focused on ensuring that school grounds improvement projects are regulated and appropriately managed to avoid exposing school users to unnecessary risk and to avoid exposing the Council to legal risk. However, there has not been any form of documentation that advises school management, parent bodies, communities or design teams of the Council's aspirations for its school grounds.
- 3.8 The "Vision for School Grounds" document attached as Appendix 2 sets out the approach City of Edinburgh Council would like Heads of Establishments, parent and community bodies and design teams engaged in school grounds projects to take. It

highlights the value of outdoor learning and emphasises that school grounds should be safe, inclusive and diverse spaces offering different behavioural settings for different types of learning and play opportunities. A core principle of the vision is that playgrounds and play areas should have educational value.

- 3.9 The “Vision for School Grounds” document also aspires to create outdoor environments that people feel engaged by and have some sense of ownership over. This sense of ownership should, ideally, extend beyond the immediate school community to the wider community and this should be considered when undertaking a school grounds project. Community engagement in school grounds may take a number of forms – from limited scope initiatives managed by the school to open access to school grounds outside of school hours. However, it is recognised that while this should be an aspiration for our school estate, community access may be more challenging for some schools than others.

Open access to School Grounds

- 3.10 School buildings and their grounds often represent the largest single asset for many local communities. The primary school playground is the closest open space to the homes of many children. Ensuring that the use of Council assets is maximised is fundamental to maintaining an efficient estate.
- 3.11 In December 2014 the Education, Children and Families Committee approved as part of the “City of Edinburgh Play Strategy” report a recommendation to accept policy principles which promote the use of primary school grounds for play by community users outside of teaching hours.
- 3.12 However, the report also recognised that a universal policy that allowed free access to all school grounds for play outside of school hours was not achievable. Providing play opportunities outside of school hours within school grounds can be a challenge and some schools and some communities may encounter more challenges than others. How these challenges are met and addressed form part of the risk assessment undertaken by a head of establishment when considering a proposal to open a school grounds outside of school hours. This risk assessment must be undertaken by the head of the establishment as they have responsibility for ensuring their school grounds are safe and secure for the children, staff and other users under their care during school hours.
- 3.13 One of the challenges of opening a school grounds outside of school hours is ensuring that they remain a safe environment when school hours resume. In practice this means ensuring that daily inspections of the grounds take place and that any remedial work necessary is undertaken before children arrive for school. This has resourcing implications.
- 3.14 Most significantly, funding the maintenance of school playground equipment and installations is the responsibility of the school. Accordingly, vandalism, wear and damage of these facilities incurred outside of school hours is a burden both financially and in terms of staff time addressing the issues and the expectation is that these costs will be borne by the school.

- 3.15 Many of the funding sources available to school communities raising money for playground improvement projects are conditional on the school grounds being open to the public outside of school hours. Several schools in the city that have recently undertaken playground improvement projects are now subject to this condition. Accordingly, playground improvement projects may carry with them financial and staff time obligations which, in many cases, will remain long after the incumbent Head of Establishment and Parent Council are no longer associated with the establishment.
- 3.16 It is the collective aim of the “Guidance for Heads of Establishments” and the “Vision for School Grounds” documents to ensure that people understand better their role and the obligations on them when entering into a school grounds project and that they have the necessary support and advice available to deliver projects that effectively manage risk and provide inspiring spaces with high educational value.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Increased awareness of the process involved in a school grounds improvement project; the roles and responsibilities of those involved and a design or installation that meets EN1176 standards and is consistent with City of Edinburgh Council’s vision for school grounds.
- 4.2 Improved Wellbeing – which can be measured using the annual Health and Wellbeing survey to demonstrate, in the long term, the success of the Vision for School Grounds towards improvements in health and wellbeing.
- 4.3 Reduced numbers of accidents in school grounds. Accident reporting in school playgrounds is currently administered by the Council’s Health and Safety team. As part of the changes proposed through the implementation of a new estate wide programme of inspection, the School Estate Planning Team will work with colleagues in Health and Safety to review the process by which accidents in school grounds are recorded and reported. The aim is to provide greater clarity on the types of accidents occurring and to identify any commonalities across the equipment, surfaces or installations involved. It is proposed that an update on this be provided to Committee in March 2019.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 Annual school grounds inspections will be undertaken at all schools and early learning establishments by an independent organisation. The cost of this inspection will be approximately £200 per establishment and will be met from existing school budgets. The budget against which the cost of remedial work required as a consequence of this first annual inspection is levied will be assessed on a case by case basis. Typically, these costs will have to be met from existing school or Facilities Management budgets.

- 5.2 Where new equipment is installed this will require a quarterly inspection at a cost of approximately £200 per establishment. The school and/or organisation funding the installation of the equipment will be required to demonstrate before approval to proceed is granted that they can and will pay this additional recurring cost. The cost of any required maintenance and any required remedial work will also be met by the project funder.
- 5.3 The “Vision for School Grounds” will allow future investment in school grounds to be focused on designs that are both safe and provide high educational value.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The “Guidance for Head of Establishments” and the “Vision for School Grounds” documents have been produced to provide schools and parent/community bodies entering into a school grounds improvement project with a clearer understanding of their role, the obligations on them, where they can find support and advice and the approach to design they should adopt. Accordingly, this report will ensure that future school grounds improvement projects are compliant with recognised Health and Safety and play standards and will improve the risk management processes put in place on these projects.
- 6.2 The establishment of a centrally managed database and a programme of regular grounds inspections will improve the safety of the Council’s school grounds by allowing identification of installations and facilities that fail to meet recognised safety criteria.
- 6.3 The cross-departmental Playground Development Support Group will provide a review gateway for all significant playground improvement projects. This will ensure that all projects adhere to the requirements of appropriate playground standards (such as EN1176), that necessary statutory permissions are in place and that funding to address future maintenance is available.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 The “Vision for School Grounds” document sets out the Council’s aspirations for school grounds that are accessible for all. The vision recognises the need for different settings and spaces to provide a play and learning environment that is inclusive.
- 7.2 Accordingly, these proposals have no significant impact on any equalities groups and provide greater opportunities for the needs of all pupils to be recognised in future school grounds improvement projects. For these reasons, the overall equalities relevance score is 1 (out of a possible 9) and a full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Regular inspection of existing grounds will allow a maintenance regime to be put in place which will improve the safety and prolong the life of installations and facilities.

- 8.2 A key principle of the “Vision for School Grounds” is that designs should be low maintenance and offer the flexibility to adapt to the needs of its users.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Creating a sense of ownership and control over their environment is a key principle of the “Vision for School Grounds” document and this may only be achieved through the involvement users in their school grounds design. Accordingly, in taking forward any future school grounds improvement projects, the project lead is asked to identify the level of consultation undertaken with key stakeholders. The degree to which this consultation has been appropriate to the project will be assessed by the PDSG.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 “[City of Edinburgh Play Strategy](#)” reported to Education, Children and Families Committee on 9 December 2014.

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11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 School Playground Development Guidance
11.2 Appendix 2 Vision for School Grounds

School Playground Development Guidance



City of Edinburgh Council
Communities and Families
School Estate Planning Team

Table of Contents

Section	Page
Play Development Process: Key Points	2
Introduction	3
Health and Safety and the Benefits of Play	5
Key Roles and Responsibilities	6
Playground Development Process	7
Appendix 1: Inspection Schedule	13
Appendix 2: School Playground Development Contacts List	14
Appendix 3: Form 1 – Expression of Interest to Develop School Grounds	15
Appendix 4: Form 2 – Risk Benefit Assessment	17
Appendix 5: Form 3 – Risk Assessment	20
Appendix 6: Form 4 - Playground Health & Safety Action Plan	22
Appendix 7: Form 5 – Weekly Check	23
Appendix 8: Form 6 – Daily Check Record	25
Appendix 9: EN 1176	27
Appendix 10: Links to Further Information	33

Playground Development Process Key Points

Change Requirement Identified		
1	Expression of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for Change • Funding sources identified • Project Costs considered • EN1176 Compliance
Approval Gateway		
2	Commissioning and Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned by SEPT on behalf of project • Transfer funds from 3rd Parties to School
3	Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council approved designers • EN1176 Compliance • Vision for School Grounds • Consultation
Approval Gateway		
4	Build/Install	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council approved Project Manager appointed • Risk assess build/install process
5	Post Installation Inspection and Risk Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post installation inspection and remedial works completed
6	Introducing the Completed Installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for opening
7	Ongoing Inspection and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly inspections • Action plan for remedial works

Introduction

The City of Edinburgh Council welcomes the efforts of staff and parents to provide safe, challenging, and appropriate activities and facilities in school playgrounds to support play and learning and improve the health and wellbeing of our children. These guidelines establish a clear process to help head teachers, parent councils, community groups and Council departments to work together to improve and manage school grounds.

For children play is one of the most important aspects of their lives and children need, and are entitled to, quality play experiences as part of their everyday experience. The benefits of play for child development are well known and evidenced, including improving physical activity and dexterity, developing social skills, stimulating creativity and imagination, supporting intellectual curiosity and self-led learning, self-risk assessment and helping to foster a love for the outdoors. Schools that develop their outdoor play provision commonly report: improvements in behaviour; classes that settle more quickly after break time; children who are happier and more content in school; and Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes that happen without direction from teachers.

Children's Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out 54 articles that define how children and young people should be treated and the UK Government have signed up to the convention. There are three articles that are useful to consider when providing for children's play spaces:

Article 31: The right to leisure, play and culture

Children have the right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

Article 12: Respect for the views of the child

When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

Article 15: Freedom of association

Children have the right to meet.

Play Strategy for Scotland (2013)

The Scottish Government's vision is for Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up. The strategy states that: "Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live."

Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future (2009)

The Scottish Government and COSLA's joint school estate strategy sets out their shared vision for Scotland's schools: "...which are well designed, maintained, and managed and which encourage continuous engagement with learning; which are far

more than just 'educational establishments' whose quality of environment supports an accessible range of services and opportunities and which enrich the communities they serve and the lives of learners and families.”

City of Edinburgh Council’s Vision for School Grounds (2018)

The “Vision for School Grounds” document sets out the approach City of Edinburgh Council would like Heads of Establishments, parent and community bodies and design teams engaged in school grounds projects to take. It highlights the value of outdoor learning and emphasises that school grounds should be safe, inclusive and diverse spaces offering different behavioural settings for different types of learning and play opportunities. A core principle of the vision is that playgrounds and play areas should have educational value.

Play in Partnership: a play strategy for the city of Edinburgh (2014)

Edinburgh aims to be a play friendly city where all children and young people can enjoy their childhood. They will have access to play opportunities in a range of different settings which offer variety, adventure, and challenge. They will be able to play freely and safely and make choices about where, how, and when they play.

Health and Safety and the Benefits of Play

The design and installation of all new playground developments at City of Edinburgh Council schools should be compliant with EN 1176 standards. This does not mean that only industry standard equipment can be used in playground developments, but it does mean that the design and installation of natural features and their associated surfaces must be compliant with the standards of EN 1176 relating to protection against injury due to movement, falling, entrapment, protrusions, etc. (For further essential information on EN 1176 see Appendix 3)

A key message from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) is 'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

The HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.

The HSE and the Play Safety Forum have produced a joint high-level statement that makes clear that:

- Play is important for children's well-being and development.
- When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits.
- Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits.

Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer bench marks that can help (HSE, 2012).

Key Roles and Responsibilities

Heads of Establishment

- School playground facilities are managed by the Head of Establishment.
- All expressions of interest in undertaking any playground improvement project must be submitted by the Head of Establishment.
- The Head Teacher is responsible for demonstrating that children, parents, and other key stakeholders have been appropriately consulted in the design of any playground improvement project.
- All liaison with the School Estate Planning Team, the Playground Development Support Group and other Council departments must be undertaken by the Head Teacher or a nominated senior member of the establishments leadership team.

School Estates Planning Team

- The School Estates Planning Team within the Council's Communities and Families Service will provide a coordination role for all playground improvement projects
- All expressions of interest in undertaking any playground improvement project or queries concerning playground improvements generally should be submitted to the School Estates Planning Team (playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk)
- The School Estate Planning Team will determine whether a project requires to be referred to the Playground Development Support Group (PDSG).

Playground Development Support Group

An inter-departmental Playground Development Support Group (PDSG) has been established to advise and support the development of school playgrounds. All schools must refer to this group when planning and installing any play equipment including:

- climbing walls;
- multi-use games zones;
- sand-pits;
- astro-turf pitches;
- landscaping work.

Playground Development Process

To ensure that any new playground development is compliant with Council standards and regulatory requirements, Heads of Establishments must be aware of and adhere to the following process for any playground improvement or development project within their establishment grounds.

Planning for Change

Often the first step in planning for change is in response to work with the school Parent Council or a Community Group who wish to raise funds for a grounds improvement or development project, and the most successful projects are taken forward as a **partnership** between the school leadership team and that group. The Head of Establishment **must** ensure that consultations take place with children, parents, and other key stakeholders to inform the project. In the past individual Heads of Establishment have taken responsibility for the management and delivery of playground improvement projects, under the new guidelines most projects will be carried out by Council appointed contractors and/or the Council's Property and Facilities Management Service. Heads of Establishments will be responsible for the day to day management and health and safety of the completed facility or installations.

If the head Teacher is not leading the project personally, the Head Teacher must ensure there is a senior staff representative of the school to lead on liaising with the School Estate Planning Team, the PDSG, other Council services and the school Parent Council, and report to the Head of Establishment on a regular basis.

STEP 1

Expression of Interest

The school or Early Years establishment will be required to have *Expression of Interest* approval at the outset of the process to commission a new project. Approval must be received before any appointments are made, so that the appointments can be undertaken without exposing the Council or parent or community body to any liability issues.

Heads of Establishments **must** submit an *Expression of Interest* form (see attached Form 1) to the School Estate Planning Team (playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk) for **any** playground improvement or development project. This includes minor projects such as the placement of sheds, containers, benches, bins, and planters etc.

Heads of Establishments at PPP facilities should discuss the completion of the *Expression of Interest* form with the appropriate Estate Contracts Officer.

As part of the *Expression of Interest*, the school and Parent Council or community group must demonstrate that they have planned for all the project costs including (where applicable):

- Design team fees;
- Clerk of works fees;
- Project management fees;
- Delivery and Installation costs;
- Post installation inspection costs;
- Quarterly (operational) inspection costs;
- Costs associated with remedial action arising from inspections;
- Costs for ongoing and maintenance of surfaces, equipment and installations;
- Contingency;
- Any necessary signage;
- Other hidden costs associated with the project (for example: preparation of a plan which can be used when seeking funding from grant making bodies).

The *Expression of Interest Form* should provide full details of the source of funding for the project, including terms, conditions and constraints attached to that funding.

Note: many funding sources are time limited and the *Expression of Interest Form* should include details of any such constraints.

Within 14 days of receipt of the *Expression of Interest* form the School Estate Planning Team will provide feedback. This feedback will be either:

- Approval to proceed to next stage.
- Referral of the proposal to the Playground Development Support Group with details of the date when it will be considered (Head of Establishment may be invited to attend).
- A Request for further information.
- Refusal to proceed, outlining rationale for decision.

STEP 2

Commissioning and Procurement

Following receipt of Approval to proceed the Head of Establishment may, dependent on the scale of the project and advice received from the School Estate Planning Team:

- Procure items for installation/services according to standard procurement processes (see Council Contract Standing Orders document).
- Request that the School Estate Planning Team commission the project via Property and Facilities Management.

Note: for major or more complex proposals the commissioning, procurement and design stages may take around a year.

Where the services of a designer or design team are required the Head of Establishment or their nominated senior member of staff should liaise with the Council's **Senior Early Years Officer** to prepare a clear brief based on the school's requirements, including a Risk Benefit Assessment (see Form 2 - *Risk Benefit Assessment*).

Any funds raised by a Parent Council or community groups for the project must be transferred to the school following approval to proceed (this may have procurement, VAT, insurance and liability implications).

Where a commission is raised via Property and Facilities Management, the school will be required to provide a Cost Centre.

STEP 3

Design

Any design work required will be undertaken by companies or individuals approved as part of the Council's Procurement Framework and/or appointed following a competitive tender process and will be appointed by Property and Facilities Management along with any other necessary professional services (for example Civil Engineers for drainage designs).

The design of all new playground developments at City of Edinburgh Council schools must be compliant with EN 1176 standards. This does not mean that only industry standard equipment can be used in playground developments, but it does mean that the design and installation of natural features and their associated surfaces must be compliant with the standards of EN 1176.

All designs should reflect the principles and ethos of City of Edinburgh Council's *Vision for School Grounds* document.

The designer must also ensure adherence to all relevant technical standards and ensure that:

- a clear strip (minimum 1.5m in width) is maintained around the school building to enable scaffolding to be erected so that gutter cleaning and the like can be undertaken easily.
- Emergency and service vehicle access and circulation of the grounds must be maintained

The Head of Establishment must ensure that proposals are shared with children, the Parent Council, the wider parent forum (and, where appropriate, the wider community), and that parent and pupil views are taken into consideration.

The proposed design and a Risk Benefit Assessment should be submitted to the School Estate Planning Team (playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk) who will provide the Head of Establishment with confirmation of the date when the proposal will be considered by the PDSG. As the manager with responsibility for the proposed design, the Head of Establishment may be invited to attend the relevant PDSG meeting.

At the meeting where the proposal is considered, the PDSG will either:

- Approve that the project progress to the “Build/Install” stage; or
- Conditionally approve that the project progress to the “Build/Install” stage; or
- Request further information; or
- Refuse the proposal, outlining the rationale for this decision.

STEP 4

Build/Install

Once the design has been approved and signed off by the PDSG, the School Estate Planning Team in liaison with the Head of Establishment will ask Property and Facilities Management to appoint a suitably qualified project manager and the associated costs will be assigned to the project budget.

The project manager will progress a procurement process to appoint a contractor who will be a company approved as part of the Council’s Procurement Framework and/or appointed following a competitive tender process.

The Head of Establishment should be aware that there are CDM (Construction Design and Management) regulations which will apply during the build, although these will be implemented by the project manager appointed by Property and Facilities Management. The Head of Establishment should discuss CDM requirements with the project manager.

The Head of Establishment is responsible for risk assessing and managing public access to the school or establishment grounds and the children’s use of the grounds during the build/installation process. Access arrangements, management of vehicle movements (contractor, staff and visitor), contractor compound areas and working times should be agreed between the Head of Establishment, the establishments Facilities Manager, the project manager and the appointed contractor. Where appropriate these arrangements should be shared with pupils, parents and establishment staff.

The project manager or an appointed Clerk of Works will ensure the work carried out by the contractor and any appointed sub-contractors is to standard set out in the plans.

STEP 5

Post Installation Inspection and Risk Assessment

ALL new school grounds landscaping, surfacing or equipment installations must undergo a post-installation inspection. The project will not be officially complete until an independent post installation inspection has been carried out (by RoSPA Play Safety or equivalent RPII Annual inspector) to ensure compliance with EN 1176 and any necessary remediation works necessary following this inspection have been completed.

The Post Installation Inspection cost must be met by the project.

Following notification from the Head of Establishment of the completion date for the project the School Estate Planning Team will book the post-installation inspection.

The Post-Installation report will be made available to the Head of Establishment and the School Estate Planning Team following its publication.

All playgrounds will also require that Heads of Establishments complete a *Health & Safety risk assessment* (see attached Form 3) prior to opening. This should incorporate any recommendations arising from the Post-Installation inspection and a *Health and Safety Action Plan* (see attached Form 4) put in place to carry out remedial actions as soon as possible.

The *Risk Benefit Assessment* (see Step 3) should be revised and updated with information from the *Health and Safety Risk assessment* and *Health and Safety Action Plan*.

Throughout the process children should be actively involved in the risk management measures.

All the above documentation should be submitted to the School Estate Planning Team BEFORE new school grounds landscaping, surfacing or equipment installations are opened for use by pupils or the public.

STEP 6

Introducing the Completed Installation

The Head of Establishment should prepare a plan in advance of the opening of the new facility to introduce the new facility, to children, parents and the whole school community. This should be discussed with the Play Development Officer.

STEP 7

Ongoing Inspection and Maintenance

The Head of Establishment should ensure that maintenance and playground supervision work plans are in place and that records of the following are maintained:

- Health & Safety Risk Assessment;
- daily visual check procedure;
- weekly recorded inspection;
- accidents occurring on or as a result of the new facility;

Quarterly (*RPII Operational) and annual (*RPII Annual) inspections will be arranged by the School Estates Planning Team. All associated costs, including any recommended maintenance actions or replacement/ removal recommended by the Inspector must be met by the school.

The Head of Establishment should ensure that, following inspection, an action plan is prepared to address any issues identified. This plan will be requested by the School Estate Planning Team within 14 days of the inspection. Failure to provide a plan demonstrating how inspection actions will be addressed may result in closure of the new facility until such time as an appropriate plan is provided or, where necessary, the remedial work has taken place.

Copies of Action Plans should be sent to the School Estates Planning Team (playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk).

APPENDIX 1 - Inspection Schedule

- **Post Installation Inspection** by RoSPA or other approved inspector registered with the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) to confirm facility and installation conforms to EN 1176.
- **Annual Inspection** by RoSPA or other RPII approved inspector to check long-term compliance of installation and other areas of school grounds with required safety standards.
- **Quarterly Operational inspection** by RoSPA or other RPII approved inspector to check continued safe operation, stability, wear etc. of installation.
- **Weekly inspection** by establishment staff recording components inspected and any actions required (see Form 5) *
- **Daily visual risk assessment** by establishment staff recording components inspected and any actions required (see Form 6) *
- **Dynamic risk assessment** by supervising staff during use by children, with any required actions noted (Form 6) *

* Appropriate immediate actions or action plan must be put in place if defects are noted with the item taken out of use if necessary.

APPENDIX 2 – School Playground Development Contacts List

All playground queries: playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk

School Estate Planning Team:

Robbie Crockatt, Acting School Estate Planning Manager, Communities and Families

robbie.crockatt@edinburgh.gov.uk

Julie Kelly, School Estate Planning Officer, Communities and Families

Julie.kelly@edinburgh.gov.uk

Play Development Support Group:

Lynn Paterson, Senior Education Manager (Early Years), Communities and Families

lynn.pateron@edinburgh.gov.uk

Louise Caldwell, Senior Early Years Officer, Communities and Families

Louise.caldwell@ea.edin.sch.uk

Alan Grevers, Technical Officer, Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries

Alan.Grevers@edinburgh.gov.uk

Murdo Macleod, Maintenance Standards Officer, Property and Facilities Management

murdo.macleod@edinburgh.gov.uk

Martyn Phillips, Health & Safety Adviser, Resources

martyn.phillips@edinburgh.gov.uk

Kevin McKee, Senior Legal Manager, Resources

Kevin.mckee@edinburgh.gov.uk

PPP contacts:

Calum Gordon, Operation Estates Contracts Manager, Communities and Families

calum.gordon@edinburgh.gov.uk

Graeme Lawler, Operational Estates Contracts Officer, Communities and Families

graeme.lawler@edinburgh.gov.uk

Jennifer Black, Operational Estates Contracts Officer, Communities and Families

jennifer.black@edinburgh.gov.uk

APPENDIX 3

Form 1 - Expression of Interest to Develop School Grounds

School Name	
Headteacher	
Phone Number	
Lead Person	
Lead Person's Email	
Date	
What is the proposed playground development concept? (What type of facilities are envisioned?)	
Which area in your grounds are proposed for development? Please attach a diagram showing scale and position in relation to buildings, perimeters, gateways and other features.	
What are your proposed timescales?	
Who has been involved in any consultation? e.g. Pupil/ HWB Group, Parent Council/PSA, Community Council, Local Business (detail who and how)	
What is your proposal for funding the project?	

How will you secure the funding for your playground future costs e.g. inspection and maintenance?

Have you currently raised/secured any funds, and if so how much?

£

Please return this form to School Estates Planning Team:
playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk

PDSG Feedback to School (to be completed by the Play Development Support Group):

PDSG Group – Compliance to EN 1176 Approved

Name:

Designation:

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX 4

Form 2 – Risk Benefit Assessment (edited from Play Safety Forum, Risk benefit Assessment)

Overview of Risk-Benefit Assessment

Project/ proposal name:			
Type of assessment (<i>tick one box</i>):	<i>Designer</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<i>Provider/manager</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<i>Post-installation</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<i>Monitoring</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assessor:	<i>Name</i>		
	<i>Position</i>		
	<i>Date</i>		
Description and location of facility, feature, activity or equipment:			
Date to review risk-benefit assessment:			
Signature of senior worker/manager:			

Main Form: Risk-benefit assessment

Benefits:	
Risks (<i>taking into account any technical information identified in the supplementary form below</i>):	
Local factors:	
Precedents &/or comparisons:	
Decision:	
Actions taken:	
Ongoing management and monitoring:	

Supplementary Form: Knowledge and/or specialist expertise needed (if any) for this risk-benefit assessment

Use this table to give information about any additional specialist or technical expertise that is felt to be necessary. In some circumstances, no such input will be needed. If this is the case, a suitable note such as 'none applicable' or 'N/A' should be made in the table (which should otherwise be left blank). In other circumstances, such as those involving bespoke structures or unusual sites, specialist input may be appropriate. Such expertise might, for example, cover the following topics: trees, structural engineering, rope specialisms, water, soil, EN standards and maintenance. In rare cases, other areas of expertise may also be needed. Ensure that relevant information is noted above in the main form.

Knowledge or specialism	Person providing the knowledge/ carrying out the assessment	Any checks carried out and actions proposed

APPENDIX 5

Form 3

RISK ASSESSMENT

Department		Unit/Section	
Date of assessment		Assessor(s)	
What is the activity?		Where is the activity carried out?	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done

Manager's name		Signature	
Date		Assessment review date	

Are other specific risk assessments required?

Asbestos	<input type="checkbox"/>	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	Display Screen Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electricity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lone Working	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual Handling	<input type="checkbox"/>	New and Expectant Mothers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Noise	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Protective Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stress Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vibration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare	<input type="checkbox"/>	Working at Height	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 6

Form 4 Playground Health & Safety Action Plan

School:

Item	Activity/ Hazard	Recommendation	Actions	Action Owner	Target Date	Status Date
Item	Activity/ Hazard	Recommendation	Action taken	Action Owner	Target Date	Status Date

KEY: STATUS

	Not started
	In progress / on track/ ongoing
	Overdue
	Completed
	EN standard covered off in previous recommendations

APPENDIX 7

Form 5 – Example Weekly Check

School:

Weekly Check – Monday morning after the weekend

Date:

Completed by:

Weather/ conditions:

Area of Playground being inspected (examples)																			
	Tunnel under slide		Amphitheatre		Football pitch		Rocks and path to field		Sandpit by P4/5 door		Tyre wall		Climbing wall		Boat Astro turf		Upper Trim Trail		
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	
Structure: bent, cracked, loose, broken, rotten																			
Surface Finish: rust, corrosion, sharp edges,																			
Fixtures: missing nuts, bolts, loose nuts or bolts, broken or worn																			
Exposed Mechanisms: hooks, links,																			
Moving Parts: worn ropes,																			

seized, lubrication																		
Seats: missing, wear																		
Surfacing: depth, wear																		
Loose Play																		
Date	Action required																	

APPENDIX 8

Form 6 - Daily Check Record - School Playground

An example of areas to include when carrying out the daily visual check (please note this list is not exhaustive):

- Weather – is there a need to salt/grit the playground or any play equipment? Should any areas be put out of use due to them being wet and slippy?
- Are there any obvious signs of wear and tear to play equipment, surfaces, benches or fences etc?
- Is the loose fill material free of foreign objects and debris?
- Is the loose fill material uncompacted and of sufficient depth in all areas?
- Is the play area adequately drained?
- Is the playground free from miscellaneous debris and litter e.g. cans, glass, animal waste etc?

Sign once complete and record any actions required overleaf.

Week beginning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Date	Action required				

APPENIDX 9 – EN 1176

The full Standard (EN 1176) is an extensive document published in seven parts:

Part 1: General safety requirements and test methods

Part 2: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for swings

Part 3: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for slides

Part 4: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for runways

Part 5: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for carousels

Part 6: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for rocking equipment

Part 7: Guidance for installation, inspection, maintenance and operation

EN 1176 : GENERAL REQUIREMENTS (From RoSPA Play Safety)

MINIMUM SPACE AROUND EQUIPMENT AND ZONES

* This is intended to reduce the likelihood of collisions

Protection against injuries in the free space

* No obstacles in the minimum space (other than structures to assist or safeguard the user)

* Traffic flows should not go through the minimum space

Protection against injuries in the falling space

* Free height of fall should not exceed 3m

* No obstacles in the falling space

* Platforms with fall heights of more than 1m between them require surfacing

Protection against injuries due to other types of movement

* No unexpected obstacles

SURFACING SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

* Surfacing should have no sharp edges or protrusions

* Loose fills should be 200mm more than the depth required to meet the HIC reading (usually 100mm) = 300mm

* Hard surfaces should only be used where the fall height is not over 600 mm and where there is no forced movement

* Testable Impact absorbing surfaces if falls over 600mm are possible. Topsoil or turf may be used up to 1.5 m

* Impact absorbing surfaces (IAS) must extend for a minimum of 1.5m clear space all around a fall height over 600m, extending with height

DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE

* The equipment must be suitable for the user and risks should be identifiable by the child

* Accessibility: adults must be able to gain access to help children

* Grip requirements: permitted diameter 16 - 45mm (e.g. overhead bars)

* Grasp requirements: maximum diameter 60mm (e.g. handrails on steps)

* Easily accessible equipment has stricter requirements

FINISHING

* Timber species and synthetics should be splinter resistant

* No protrusions or sharp edged components

* Bolts (*and natural object nibs or protrusions*) should not protrude by more than 8mm

- * Corners, edges or projecting parts over 8mm should have a 3mm radius (*including natural objects such as logs or boulders*)
- * No hard and sharp-edged parts (i.e. razor blade effect caused by sheet steel)
- * No crushing or shearing points
- * Connections should not come loose by themselves and should resist removal
- * Timber connections should not rely solely on screws or nails
- * Leaking lubricants should not stain or impair the safety of the equipment

ROPES

Fibre ropes

- * Conform to EN 701 or 919 or have a material and load certificate
- * Ropes used by hands shall have a soft, non-slip covering

Wire ropes

- * Non-rotating and corrosion resistant with no splayed wires outside the ferrule
- * Wire connector clip threads should protrude less than 8mm
- * Turnbuckles should be enclosed, have a loop at each end and be secured

Chains

- * Maximum opening of individual links: 8.6mm in any one direction
- * Connecting links between chains must be less than 8.6mm or over 12mm

Swinging suspended ropes

- * Not combined with swings in the same bay
- * Less than 2m long: over 600mm from static parts; over 900mm from swinging parts
- * 2m - 4m long: over 1000mm from anything * Diameter: 25 - 45mm

Climbing ropes

- * Anchored at both ends and movement less than 20% of rope length
- * Single climbing rope diameter: 18 - 45mm (nets comply with Grip requirements)

ENTRAPMENTS

- * Entrapment: a place from which children cannot extricate themselves unaided
[There are several probes: the Torso Probe, the Small Head Probe, the Large Head Probe, the Wedge (fish) Probe and the two Finger Rods. There is also a toggle test to reduce the dangers of clothing toggles being caught on slides, fireman's poles and roofs.]

Bridges

- * The space between the flexible bridge and rigid sides should be not less than 230mm

Entrapment of feet and legs

- * Inclined planes (not suspension bridges) less than 45° should have no gaps over 30mm
- * There are no requirements for suspension bridge gaps other than the main entrapment requirements

Finger entrapments

These occur in: 1. gaps where child's movement may cause a finger to become stuck; 2. open-ended tubes; 3. moving gaps

- * Tube ends should be securely enclosed and removable only with tools
- * Moving gaps should not close to less than 12mm

BARRIERS AND GUARD-RAILS

- * Hand-rail: a rail to help the child balance
- * Guard-rail: a rail to prevent children falling
- * Barrier: a guard-rail with non-climbable in-fill

Hand-rails

- * Where required they should be between 600 and 850mm above the standing surface

Easily accessible equipment

- * Platforms over 600mm require a barrier with a minimum height of 700mm high + impact absorbing surfacing

Equipment that is not easily accessible

- * Platforms up to 1000mm: No barriers or guard-rails required + impact absorbing surface over
- * Platforms 1000-2000mm: 600 - 850mm high guard-rail + impact absorbing surfacing
- * Platforms 2000-3000mm: 700mm high barrier + impact absorbing surfacing
- * No bars, infills or steps which can be used as steps. Tops should discourage standing or sitting

MEANS OF ACCESS

All means of access should have no entrapments; be securely fixed; be level to ± 30 (ramps across width) and have a constant angle. It does not refer to agility equipment used as an access i.e. arched climbers, scramble nets. There are specific measurements for ladders, stairs and ramps.

SWINGS

Requirements

- * No all rigid suspension members (i.e. solid bar top to bottom)
- * Design should be principally for use by seated children (RoSPA interpretation)
- * Two seats per bay maximum. Cradle and flat seats can be mixed in the same bay, but ensure this is suitable
- * Some types of swings have slightly different requirements . Information should be obtained from the supplier
- * Single points swing chains should not twist round each other
- * Single point swings require a secondary bearing support mechanism if the bearing is not designed for swings

Dimensions

- * Minimum ground clearance at rest: 350mm (400mm for single point swings and tyres)
- * No maximum seat surface height but RoSPA recommends a max. height of 635mm for cradles and flat seats
- * Distance between seat and frame: 20% of swing suspension + 200mm
- * Distance between seats: 20% of the swing suspension + 300mm
- * Pivot splay (separation distance) at crossbar: width between seat fixings plus 5% of swing suspension length (20% for contact swings)

Siting

- * Swing sets for young children should be separated from those for older children and sited to avoid cross traffic

Surfacing requirements

Forward and Back

* Different areas for synthetic and loose-fill surfaces in a box or pit. Measurements each way are:

1. synthetic: .867 x length of suspension member + 1.75m + 0.50m clear space
2. loose-fill: .867 x length of suspension member + 2.25m + 0.50m clear space

Side width

- * Seat width no greater than 500mm: 1.75m minimum (i.e. 0.875m each way from seat centre)
- * Areas for two seats in one bay may overlap providing the distance between seats is correct

Single point swings

- * Circular area with a radius equal to the Forward and Backward figure for other swings

SLIDES

Safety requirements

* Free-standing slides: the max. vertical height which a stairway can reach without a change of direction is 2.5m.

* Starting section at the top of each chute: length 350mm minimum, zero to 50 downwards at the centre line. **N.B.** This can be the platform if the slide is attached to it

* If the starting section is over 400mm long, platform requirements apply

* From a platform, the gap to the slide is the same width as the slide

* Attachment slides over 1m free fall height should have starting section barriers 500mm min. high at one point

* Attachment slides over 1m FFH should have a guard-rail across the entrance at a ht. of between 600-900mm

Sliding sections

* Maximum angle: 60° at any one point and an average of 40°

* The width of open and straight slides over 1500mm long should be less than 700mm or greater than 950mm

* Spiral or curved slides should have a width less than 700mm

Run-outs

* Run-outs of at least 300mm are required if the sliding section is under 1.5m long.

* Additional requirements are required for different types of slides

* Average angle of run-outs: type 1 is 100°, type 2 is 50° (both downwards)

* Height of run-out: Less than 1.5m sliding length: max. 200mm. Greater than 1.5m sliding length: max. 350mm

* Users should come to a stop on the run-out section (type 2 only)

* Chutes should have a side height related to the fall height:

1.2m: 100mm minimum : 1.2m - 2.5m: 150mm minimum : Over 2.5m: 500mm minimum

* Maximum side angle from slide bed: 30°

* Tops of sides should be rounded or radiused to at least 3mm

* Tunnel slides should be a minimum 750mm high and 750mm wide

* Tunnels should start on or at the end of the starting section and be continuous over the sliding section only

Surfacing requirements

Normal distances except for the run-out which should be:

* *Type 1*: 1m each side and 2m beyond

* *Type 2*: 1m each side and 1m beyond

CABLE RUNWAYS

Safety requirements

- * Stop at end should progressively slow down the traveller
- * Traveller should not be removable except with tools
- * No access to internal mechanism
- * Suspension mechanism: flexible, exclude risk of strangulation or be at least 2m above the ground in the middle
- * Where children hang by the hands, the grip should not be enclosed (e.g. a loop)
- * Climbing should be discouraged onto the grip
- * Children should be able to get off the seat at any time (i.e. no loops or straps)
- * Maximum loaded (1 x 130 kg adult) speed is 7m per second
- If two cables are placed parallel the min. distance between them is 2m

Impact areas

- * 2m either side of main cable

ROTATING ITEMS

Note: Rotating items under 500mm diameter are excluded from these requirements

Safety requirements

- * Maximum free height of fall: 1000mm (For overhead items: 1500 - 3000mm)
- * Hand grips should be between 16 - 45mm

Specific requirements

There are specific requirements for different types of roundabout . The two most common ones are:

Platform roundabouts:

- * Platforms should be circular and enclosed
- * All parts should revolve in the same direction
- * No super-structure over the edge of the platform
- * Mechanism should be enclosed
- * Height between underside and ground 60 - 110mm for 300mm inwards, then at least 60 mm for the remainder
- * Protective skirts should be of rigid material and have no burrs or other defects
- * The bottom edge should be flared towards the inside or protected

Giant revolving discs

- * Clearance of underside at lowest point: 300mm
- * Max. platform height: 1m
- * Free space: 3m
- * Upper surface should be continuous, smooth and with no handles or grips
- * Underside should be continuous, smooth and without any radial variations (i.e. spokes) or indentations

Minimum space

- * Free space: Horizontal: 2m all round
- * Vertical head clearance from platform: sitting 1.5m ; standing 1.8m
- * Small rotating items under 500mm diameter are excluded but RoSPA suggests as for rocking items

Surfacing requirements

- * There are no special extra requirements for surfacing areas
- * Surfaces should be continuous underneath and level

ROCKING ITEMS

Definitions

- * Rocking equipment which can be moved by the user and is supported from below
- * Damping: any movement restricting device. (N.B. Springs are treated as self-damping)

Safety requirements

- * Throughout the range of movement gaps in all accessible joints should be under 12mm
- * Progressive restraint at extremity of movement is required
- * Foot rests should be provided where the ground clearance is less than 230mm
- * Hand grips should be provided for each seat or standing position
- * Foot rests and hand grips should be firmly fixed and non-rotating
- * Hand grip diameter: 16 - 45mm (for toddler items: 30mm maximum)
- * Right-angled corners on moving equipment should be 20mm radius min. (i.e. a bird's beak)

Minimum space

- * 1000mm between items at maximum movement.

Surfacing requirements

There are no special extra requirements for surfacing areas

INSTALLATION, INSPECTION, MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION

Safety

- * Appropriate safety systems must be established by the operator
- * No access should be allowed to unsafe equipment or areas
- * Records should be kept by the playground operator
- * Effectiveness of safety measures should be assessed annually
- * Signs should be provided giving owner details and emergency service contact points
- * Entrances for emergency services should be freely accessible
- * Information on accidents should be kept (RoSPA has a suitable form)
- * Staff and users should be safe during maintenance operations

Inspection

- * Manufacturers will recommend the inspection frequency although some sites may need a daily check

Frequency

Routine visual inspections: identification of hazards from vandalism, use or weather conditions (RoSPA recommends a recorded daily or weekly inspection)

Operational inspection: every 1-3 months or as recommended. Checks operation, stability, wear etc.

Annual main inspection: checks long-term levels of safety

- * An inspection schedule should be prepared for each playground, listing components and methods
- * Appropriate action should be taken if defects are noted

Routine maintenance

- * Basic routine maintenance details should be supplied by the manufacturer

Corrective maintenance

- * This covers remedial work and repairs as required
- * Alterations should only be carried out after consultation & agreement with the supplier or a competent person

(Adapted from EN 1176 General Requirements, RoSPA Playground Safety)

APPENIDX 10 – Links to further information

Further essential information on **EN 1176** specifications, with details of heights, fall zones and safer surfacing areas, are explained in '*An Essential Guide to BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177, Children's Playground Equipment & Surfacing: updated for 2008*' (Davies and Heseltine, Wicksteed, 2008) which is available on line:

<http://www.wicksteed.co.uk/pdfs/EN1176%20and%20EN1177.pdf>

A booklet is available from **RoSPA**, (£12.00 plus £3.50 post and packing), which attempts to explain in everyday terms for the interested lay person the main new requirements and to identify changes from the old British (BS 5696) and German (DIN 7926) standards where these may be assessed on site.

<http://www.rospa.com/play-safety/advice/en1176-equipment-standard/>

For more information on **Loose Parts Play** see the Loose Parts Play Toolkit at:

<http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/media/58451/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf>

HSE Statement - Children's Play and Leisure: promoting a balanced approach

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/chilids-play-statement.htm>

A Vision for School Grounds



Why are school grounds important?

We want our pupils to be: successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

“school grounds can play a significant role in delivering these outcomes, providing safe, stimulating environments where children and young people can learn, explore, play and grow, regardless of their educational needs.”

Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds

“Education Scotland, The Scottish Government and the General Teaching Council of Scotland have identified Outdoor Learning as an essential element of a young person’s development and as an entitlement of curriculum for excellence and learning for sustainability”

CEC Outdoor Learning Strategy 2016 – 2020

“school grounds are a vital resource for learning”

Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds

“all schools have a ‘hidden curriculum’ – all those messages given out by the feel of a place where children grow and develop. This is their environment”

Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds

“capital projects [should] devote as much attention to the ‘outdoor classroom’ as to the innovative design of buildings and indoor space”

Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds

“Natural spaces are essential for human development and wellbeing, and none more so than those we set aside for the use of our children”

Conserving Wonder with Sir David Attenborough



Instead of thinking about what children WANT TO HAVE in their school grounds, we should think about what children are GOING TO DO in their school grounds?

Wellbeing

Research suggests that a well-designed school ground creates a positive improvement in pupil and teacher wellbeing. School grounds are the most easily accessible outdoor area for teachers to bring outdoor learning into their lessons and being outdoors in nature can improve feelings of wellbeing and motivation.

HGIOS 4 states that Outdoor spaces should be used effectively to promote positive relationships and wellbeing and that schools take account of the beneficial link between outdoor learning and green space with wellbeing.

Articles 31, 12 and 15 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should be considered when exploring the importance of our school grounds.

31: Children have the right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

12: When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

15: Children have the right of freedom to associate with each other.

Good Quality Outdoor Spaces

There are compelling reasons that make school grounds important to our pupils, staff and communities.

Most pupils will spend around 1500 hours of their life in their school playground. By providing quality school grounds children can have access to good outdoor space that they may not have at home.

Children can be actively involved in the management of their school grounds creating a sense of responsibility and the outdoor space can become a valuable community asset.

Our Vision

We want our school grounds to be inspiring spaces that are safe and inclusive and improve wellbeing. They should provide diversity in learning experiences and play opportunities and promote social and environmental responsibility.

This document says what we think our school grounds should aspire to be. Every school and its community is unique and will need to decide how this vision needs to be tailored to reflect its needs, priorities and concerns.

“if children don’t grow up knowing about nature and appreciating it, they will not understand it, and if they don’t understand it, they won’t protect it, and if they don’t protect it, WHO WILL?”

Conserving Wonder with Sir David Attenborough

“Schools are well designed, accessible, inclusive learning environments that inspire and drive new thinking and change and which support the delivery of high quality educational experiences through Curriculum for Excellence;”

Building better schools: investing in Scotland's future 2009

“Research supports the many health benefits of contact with nature, including reducing stress, decreasing symptoms of ADHD”

Nature Play and Learning Spaces



Base camp at the Forest Kindergarten, Lauriston Castle

INSPIRATIONAL

WE WANT to create school grounds that stimulate creativity, where nature can thrive, and learners have the opportunity to develop curiosity, be active and learn in a meaningful context.

AGILE

WE WANT our school grounds to provide a variety of behavioural settings so pupils can freely engage in different activities. These settings should be linked by pathways to promote wayfinding and free flow movement between activities. Our work in agile classrooms should extend to the outdoor environment allowing flexibility to accommodate growth made by pupils and teachers.

SOCIAL

WE WANT to provide spaces that encourage social activities and different types of interaction. We want them to become a valuable community asset and a place people want to be.

SUSTAINABLE

WE WANT our school grounds to be embraced as an extension of the classroom and for outdoor learning to be embedded into the school's curriculum.

INCLUSIVE

WE WANT to have easy access to the outdoors for all with free flow between inside and out. We want all users of our school grounds to have a sense of ownership.

SAFE

WE WANT learners to feel and to be safe and secure in our school grounds. We want our pupils to be involved in assessing risk and identifying ways of mitigating it.

MAINTAINABLE

WE WANT to achieve a natural and beautiful space that minimises maintenance and repairs through good design. We would like schools to embed the responsible use of the school grounds through learning experiences and community engagement

Key components for our school grounds

Child's right to play (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Develops physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills

Behaviour that is intrinsically motivated

The universal language of childhood

Behaviour that is personally directed

A fundamental part of childhood

Essential to children's wellbeing

Behaviour that is freely chosen

Healthy development

School play policy

Physical activity

SAFE

Learning

Diversity

Play

Community

Environments that have educational value

School's Quality Improvement Plan

Whole school approach

Environmental learning

Collaborative learning

Experiential learning

Physical education

Informal learning

Outdoor learning

Formal learning

Physical activity

Changes in height

Diverse range of plantings

Flexibility and variety in the spaces and uses

Providing a variety of learning and play experiences

Sensory elements: variety of textures, scents, things to see and hear

Lets and events

Community links

Community access

Organisation involvement

Inclusive and accessible design

School community: peer interaction

School community: parent and child

Referring to pupil feedback during a pilot study at Sighthill Primary School:

“The children asked for more well-defined settings so that they could be engaged in different activities without getting in the way of others.”

Khan, M. (2017) Environment, engagement and education

“The characteristics of savannas that people prefer include depth, openness, uniform grassy coverings, and scattered trees, as opposed to obstructed views, disordered high complexity, and rough textures. The preference is found across all age ranges and cultures, though it is strongest in children and grows weaker with age.”

Universal Principles of Design: Savanna Preference

“Schools may want to use maintenance of part of the grounds as a learning experience for pupils. This can be made easier by careful positioning of outdoor taps, for example, or creating raised beds for easy access for all.”

Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds

Variety is a key principle in designing a quality outdoor learning environment. Any outdoor space will have learning opportunities but a more varied space will present a wider range of options.

Grounds for Learning/ Learning through landscapes: the good school playground guide

Diversity

Research suggests that a good outdoor learning environment is designed as a combination of behaviour settings linked by an open yard or a continuous pathway. Similar behaviour settings should be adjacent to each other to stimulate free flow movement between the settings. The size of these and the elements within them will depend on the size of the school ground and availability of different elements locally.



Parsons Green Primary School

A PLAYFUL SPACE

WE WANT planting schemes to add to the biodiversity of the area. For the school grounds to be playful landscapes, where simple features lend themselves to whatever the children want to use them for. Providing year-round interest for all ages and abilities.

AN INCLUSIVE SPACE

WE WANT to minimise hard boundaries using planting to make school grounds feel more accessible and natural. For children with additional support needs, natural play environments provide play opportunities and diversity that other play spaces may not offer.

AN INSPIRING SPACE

WE WANT to provide diverse environments that create opportunities for a variety of activities which are enhanced by different textures, smells, tastes, sights and sounds.

A DIVERSE SPACE

WE WANT a variety of behavioural settings which should be linked by pathways to encourage free flowing movement. Closely positioned settings will offer seamless natural territorial expansion as children discover new and exciting activities.

A NECESSARY SPACE

WE WANT pupils to have the freedom to experience low risk natural settings to help them learn to risk assess and develop resilience. Providing them with the environment and associated learning opportunities they may not encounter at home.

AN AGILE SPACE

WE WANT a flexible school ground that can continuously be used to its full potential as it changes with the seasons, over time and a space that can change with the needs and priorities of the school and community.

Behavioural settings

The image below suggests the types of behavioural settings we would like to have in our school grounds. The areas a school might have will vary to reflect the age range in the school, the school and community needs and priorities and any local constraints. If the size of the school grounds is restrictive; behaviour settings can be combined for example, adding water into the area with loose parts and combining the wild garden with the natural learning area. The image shows only one of each area but areas can be spread out over the school grounds. For example, there could be multiple wild gardens acting as boundaries or areas of beauty. We have also included notes on things you may find in these settings.





Holyrood Park

AROUND AND INBETWEEN THE BEHAVIOURAL SETTINGS

PATHWAYS

- To link all the areas for natural and free flow movement between the behavioural settings
- Low maintenance surface to keep well defined and weed free
- Could be stepping stones with numbers on (use in numeracy)
- Could be colourful wet pour
- Flexible pathways - children making their own paths through long grass areas then letting them regrow

Consider

- strategic placing / design for high impact footfall to avoid early wear and tear of surrounding surfaces.
- Designated paths will be wheelchair accessible.

GRASS

- Meadow planting.
- Leave areas of grass uncut in between spaces and let nature thrive.

Consider maintenance strategy with Facilities Management team.

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF HEIGHT

- Providing the opportunity to look out over an open area.
- Dips and multiple mounds or landscaped slopes.

Consider

- Avoid route becoming a desire line causing wear and tear by high volume footfall.
- Hills require a solution to avoid wear and tear or turning into mud.

SEATING

- Provide a variety of seating areas that are comfortable and inviting to encourage social activity

Consider adult needs for outdoor grounds use and supervision as well as children's use.

NATURAL BOUNDARIES

- Plantings that provide multiple uses and learning opportunities such as edible hedges, trees and planters

IDEAS TO CREATE A SENSORY AREA

SIGHT: plants and trees, a forest walk location is recommended.

TOUCH: different textured plants, paths and walls using mosaics, pebbles, gravel, polished glass pieces and shingles. Walkways, decking or sculptures made from timber- rough, smooth, grooved.

SMELL – plants, herbs and flowers that give pleasant smells.

HEARING: Musical elements such as xylophone walls, running water in a self-contained pebble pool or water fountain.

TASTE: edible hedges, fruit orchards and fruit and vegetable gardens.

“We need to provide our children with natural settings in which to play, learn, and thrive. We need to help them form emotional bonds with the abounding beauty of flowers and trees, rivers and streams, critters and clouds. We need them to be fascinated by these things, to grow into close and careful observers of the world around them, to feel not only appreciative but protective, and to be prepared to live their lives accordingly.”

*Howard Frumkin, M.D., Dr.P.H, Dean, University of Washington School of Public Health
Nature Play and Learning Spaces*



Visual representation of diversity of behavioural settings

Play

“The Scottish Government’s vision for children and young people is clear: for Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up.”

*Play Strategy: Play Out of Hours!
Scottish Government 2016*

“It’s often assumed that SECONDARY PUPILS no longer want to play. Observations and focus groups suggest this is not the case...”

ACTIVE PLAY isn’t just important for providing aerobic exercise. It’s also crucial for developing physical literacy...

CHILD-LED FREE PLAY unleashes and stretches children’s natural creativity.”

*GjL /Learning through landscapes:
the good school playground guide*

“The HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child’s risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.”

Health & Safety Executive, 2012

School grounds have primarily been thought of as a place for children to ‘let off steam’ through physical activity however, we believe that our school grounds can facilitate numerous types of play which are fundamental to children’s healthy development and wellbeing. We think our school grounds should be places where free play can be explored by all ages in their own context and promote GIRFEC’s wellbeing indicators to provide a high-quality environment for play.

SAFE: providing a safe environment

HEALTHY: improving physical and mental health

ACHIEVING: developing skills and confidence

ACTIVE: creating opportunities for play, recreation and sport

RESPECTED: having a say

RESPONSIBLE: playing an active role

INCLUDED: allowing everyone to take part and have fun

A FUN SPACE

WE WANT to provide a variety of areas for different types of play as we recognise that play is fundamental to children’s development.

A MANAGED SPACE

WE WANT to provide environments in which children are and feel safe yet which allows children to experience managed risk.

A CONSIDERED SPACE

WE WANT the play opportunities for appropriate age groups and community requirements to be considered when developing school grounds.

AN ACTIVE SPACE

WE WANT to provide school grounds that balance informal learning with physical activity.

A WELL USED SPACE

WE WANT to provide experienced practitioners of loose parts play and provide support to schools to enable them to create these play opportunities confidently and safely.



The image shows play types, examples and features that enable these types of play, to be considered when thinking about how children use school grounds.

We want our school grounds to allow our Early Years and Primary pupils to do these outdoor learning activities

50 Ways to experience outdoors in Edinburgh before you're 11³/₄

Anywhere

- Use a Kelly Kettle
- Create a sound scape
- Make a quadrat and do a survey
- Capture a spider's web
- Go on a scavenger hunt
- Make a fractions museum

Concrete

- Make a sundial
- Measure evaporation of puddles
- Encourage wildlife
- Experiment with the wind
- Lie down and look at the sky to spot shapes
- Jump in puddles
- Draw with chalk
- Construct a weather station
- Make a windmill
- Plant a seed and watch it grow

Grass

- Make a daisy chain
- Play in cut grass
- Make a grass trumpet
- Roll down a hill
- Dance for worms
- Go on a bare foot walk

Water

- Build a dam in a stream
- Make a trail with sticks
- Make a mud pie and hold a mud banquet
- Play pooh sticks
- Build and float a boat

The top ten sites

- 1 Climb Arthurs Seat and step back in geological time in Holyrood Park
- 2 Storm the gates of Edinburgh Castle and discover the history inside
- 3 Visit the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
- 4 Explore the Royal Mile and its myriad closes
- 5 Take a trip to the seaside on Edinburgh's coastline
- 6 Explore the Water of Leith walkway and call in at the visitor centre
- 7 Discover the countryside in the city at Gorgie City Farm
- 8 Enjoy the view from another of Edinburgh's seven hills
- 9 Take life at a slow pace on the Union Canal towpath
- 10 Visit another of Edinburgh's castles

Trees

- Find, collect and play with conkers
- Build a den for you and your toys
- Press leaves and flowers
- Collect as many colours and shapes of leaves
- Climb a tree
- Hug a tree
- Create a rainbow or paint palette with leaves and petals
- Journey sticks
- Make clay faces in trees
- Kick fallen leaves

Bugs and beasties

- Make a home for a wild animal
- Set bug traps
- Set up a snail race

Did you know...

You can develop and learn new skills through outdoor learning in one of our three centres for outdoor learning which are in Caimgorm National Park, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, and the outskirts for Edinburgh.

We offer specialised adventurous activities, technical advice and training, schools/community group activities, and holiday accommodation for families, groups or organisations. www.experienceoutdoors.org.uk



Community

“Schools accommodate and provide a range of services, activities and facilities that make a difference to people’s health and well being, to sustaining economic growth and to the strength and vibrancy of communities” ...

“explore how best to encourage community use of both indoor and outdoor facilities within the school estate by making schools more open, accessible and welcoming at all times” ... “In Berlin, the grounds of one primary school are a popular venue for children’s birthday parties. After school, parents relax with coffee and cake in the attractive grounds while children enjoy the amazing outdoor play features provided by the school.”

Building better schools: investing in Scotland’s future 2009

We should recognise that school grounds are valuable community assets and wherever possible ensure that learners and their communities are given access out of school hours.

Education Scotland: Vision 2030+

CASE STUDY: creating links with local businesses can help fund edible garden maintenance and be an important learning tool. Pupils at **Chisenhale Primary School, London** sell some of the fruit and vegetables they grow to their local Waitrose supermarket. In doing so, they also learn about marketing and economics.

A school can be at the centre of its community but the local’s own connection with the school changes over time. If we want the school to be at the centre of its community we need to create provision and allow access that appeals to and benefits the whole community. The Scottish Government has indicated that it would like to see further development of the concept of the school being a community hub and that this would be to the mutual benefit of both schools and communities. Opening school grounds to the community has been considered in both City of Edinburgh Council’s Open Space 2021: Edinburgh’s Open Space Strategy 2016 and Play Strategy. All schools and their communities have different needs and priorities. The decision whether to open a school ground to the community ultimately rests with the headteacher.

“Rather than questioning whether or not the gates are locked, it may be more useful to consider when they are locked and who locks them.”

Play Strategy: Play Out of Hours! Scottish Government 2016



A COMMUNITY SPACE

WE WANT school grounds to be used to their full potential as a wonderful community resource, that is open to the public out of school hours, to be freely accessible for all and to be a safe space to enjoy.

A CONNECTED SPACE

WE WANT schools to create links with their communities and use this as an opportunity for learning.

A SUPPORTIVE SPACE

WE WANT to support our schools to create these community resources.

A COLLABORATIVE SPACE

WE WANT to involve community organisations and partnerships in supporting schools to create and maintain their diverse outdoor environments.

A SOCIAL SPACE

WE WANT school grounds that promote different types of social interaction across all age groups. Where parents and children go to socialise and play, developing a sense of community cohesion.

IDEAS TO GET THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED

ALLOTMENTS / COMMUNITY GROWING

There is a higher demand for allotments than there is provision. Hosting an after-school gardening club for pupils, parents and the community can help with maintenance of the school grounds.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Outdoor Learning Partners Forum, involving organisations can help support schools in the creation and maintenance of their outdoor spaces. [Edinburgh Living Landscape](#)

EVENTS AND LETS

Consider whether some areas of the school ground could be let to the community such as the open space or group gathering area.

ORGANISATIONS

There are organisations that you can contact to see how they can support your project.

The Beautiful Scotland Campaign supports community groups to make improvements to their local environment.

Earth Calling supports schools and communities with environmental projects and activities.

Edible estates support communities to create community food growing and greenspace projects.



CONSIDERATIONS

Not one size fits all.

Community access to new school builds should be considered at design stage to allow for well-designed access points and provision.

Consider a strategy for ensuring the school grounds are safe for the public and for the school at the point of handover.

Schools must have adequate risk assessment and provide appropriate and safe environments for their pupils.

The authority must have the right policies and procedures in place.

Consider the legal requirements for unsupervised use of the school grounds.

Consider the needs of younger children and babies who will visit the school grounds with their parents when collecting older siblings.

Consider developing a whole-school policy for community partnerships and use of the site.

Further reading

Practical Guidance

School ground Design

- Grounds for learning/Learning through landscapes: the good school playground guide
- Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds

Play

- Inspiring Scotland: Loose Parts Play

Open grounds

- Play Strategy: Play Out of Hours! Scottish Government 2016

Further Information and Guidance

- Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning
- How Good is Our School 4
- Building better schools: investing in Scotland's future 2009
- Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013)
- Getting it Right for Every Child - Wellbeing
- Nature Play and Learning Places, Robin C. Moore
- General Teaching Council Scotland - The Standards for Registration
- Education Scotland: Vision 2030+ Concluding Report of The Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group
- Learning for Sustainability
- Play Scotland Play Types Toolkit

City of Edinburgh Council Strategy and Design Documents

- City of Edinburgh Council's Outdoor Learning Strategy
- City of Edinburgh Play Strategy
- Edinburgh Design Guidance
- Open Space 2021: Edinburgh's Open Space Strategy (2016)
- City of Edinburgh Council's Play Area Action Plan 2011-2016
- Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-18
- City of Edinburgh Council's Allotment Strategy 2017-2027

Research, Studies and Media

- Conserving Wonder with Sir David Attenborough
- Khan, M. (2017). Environment, engagement and education: investigating the relationship between primary school grounds and children's learning: a case study from Bangladesh (Doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh)
- Research by Professor Stephen Heppell
- Outdoor Environments for Primary School Teaching and Learning: An Exploratory Study, Khan, Bell, Silveirinha de Oliveira, McGeown
- Universal Principles of Design: Savanna Preference

If you would like any further information please contact the School Estate Planning Team at playgrounds@edinburgh.gov.uk