

Wheatley Parish Council Play Area Inspection Guidance

Drafted October 2020, Reviewed February 2023



Wheatley Parish Council has a legal responsibility to routinely inspect its play areas and equipment.

Routine, weekly inspections are to be carried out, internally by council staff or councillors. Quarterly inspections (if required) can either be carried out internally or by using external contractors.

Annual inspections must be carried out by an independent, competent assessor.

Carrying out the inspections

The council has three play areas of varying size, shape and contents. The order in which they are inspected does not matter, similarly the route in which each one is inspected does not matter, but a consistent route should be established, to avoid missing anything.

A check list is available for weekly inspections, to aid this and for record keeping. The check list covers all items within the play area/site and includes ancillary items too.

Start your observations and checks as you approach the site, look for issues with fences, walls, gates, paving, are there any items protruding onto paths that could cause an issue.

When checking equipment, it is best to use all your senses. Look at, listen to and use the equipment. Some issues or problems that are difficult to be seen can be identified by a change in sound. Do not put your hands in areas that you have not visually checked beforehand, avoiding sharp objects.

Be hands on, with equipment and use it where possible.

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

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

Roundabouts should move noiselessly so use your hearing to check for any issues, standing on the edges can identify any movement that may indicate wear to bearings.

With slide units stand at the top and look down the slide. Check the steps are secure and the chute is free from obstructions. Try standing on the slide run out to see if there is any movement. The run of shoots and drop also needs to be checked.

With swing units check seats for damage (replace when you have cuts more than 80mm wide exposing bare metal).

With toddler cradle seats, check that the centre strap (that goes between legs) is firmly fixed. Turn the seats over and check that there are no projecting bolts underneath. Separate the links on chains (where the chains meet the seats and where the diagonals meet) to check for wear. Replace chains at 30%-40% wear. Throw the swing seat vertically up in the air and watch closely the shackle pin for movement. If the pin moves sideways only, there is unlikely to be bush or shackle wear. If however, there is a rocking motion, this can indicate that the shackles or bushes are worn.

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

Your physical weight can help in checking stability of items. Pull on ropes, chain or other fixings to ensure they are secure and in good condition.

Ropes should be tight and not able to create a loop.

For any equipment, a change in colour on panels or around fixings can indicate a missing item or cover.

Play equipment can include metal features. As well as the external condition, the condition of the inner can be checked for rust. Tap with a rubber mallet to check for the sound of rust flakes dropping down, this may sound like rain falling.

Tubes can also be prone to changing shape, due to water/frost damage. This can lead to the metal splitting.

Quarterly and Annual Inspections

These are currently carried out by separate council appointed contractors.

Reporting and Record keeping

Council staff should complete inspection sheets each week for each site, noting any issues and action taken.

These should be returned to the Parish for any further action to be taken and for record keeping, in line with the council's retention and disposal policy.

Reports from external bodies (quarterly/annual inspections) should also be received, actioned, and filed. Actions are allocated according to the nature and complexity of repairs.

These records may need to be provided to insurance companies.

Date of policy: 06.10.2020
Approving committee: Full Council
Reviewing Committee: Open Spaces Committee
Date of committee meeting: 06.03.2023
Policy version reference: N/A
Supersedes: N/A
Policy effective from: 06.10.2020
Date for next review: 2025