

DEOPHAM & HACKFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Play Equipment Inspection Policy

Adopted: 1 March 2023

To be reviewed every 3 years. Date of next review: February 2026

Legal Background

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, along with the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 provide a framework to which all owners and operators of play areas should work. There is a legal responsibility placed upon the playground operator (the council) to ensure the health and safety of all visitors to the playground. It is important to have regular inspections, good maintenance programmes and retain documentation on both.

Qualification for undertaking Inspections

The RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) is an OFQUAL Recognised Awarding Body that provides certified competence in playground inspections. RPII Annual Inspectors are qualified to carry out routine, operational, annual and post installation inspections. Annual Inspection Organisations will provide an Annual Inspection Report which should have the copy of the RPII seal on the front. See www.playinspectors.com for further information.

Ensuring play safety is essential - both for the protection of the children using the equipment and to mitigate risk to the council. By using an accredited playground inspector, the council can be sure that they meet the strict criteria set by the RPII and that the inspector has been fully trained to conduct inspections to the required levels of competence.

Routine visual inspections

This is a bi-weekly inspection to check the equipment's basic condition. It is recommended that these inspections are carried out by someone who is RPII Inspector Level (Routine) trained. In practise this is usually done by the Clerk or a councillor. The council will arrange to provide training to the Clerk/any councillor wishing to undertake a basic inspection training course.

Specific attention should be given to vandalism and breakages, graffiti, broken glass, safety surfacing and the overall cleanliness of the play area. Records of bi-weekly inspections will be made using a standard form (as agreed by the council) and kept by the Clerk. It is necessary to keep inspection forms for 21 years. This is because a person has 3 years from the point at which they stop being classed as a minor (when they reach 18) to file a claim for something that happened during their childhood.

The Main Annual Inspection

This must be carried out by an appropriately qualified specialist not connected with the playground operator (the council). This inspection looks at wear and tear, long term structural problems, standards compliance, design along with risk assessment. It also includes the site itself. This report essentially covers the overall safety of the playground.

The council will typically carry out its annual inspection in June/July.

Outcome of the Annual Inspection

A written report will be issued to the council by the playground inspector with an overall risk rating of the equipment/play area along with a risk rating for each individual piece of equipment and any recommendations for repairs/maintenance.

Following receipt of the report the council will consider this at the next council meeting and agree any actions to take. Dependant on the risk and type of maintenance required this will be given a priority;

Low	Monitor situation (ongoing), action required in the event of any deterioration or exceptional circumstances likely to affect risk rating
Moderate	Monitor situation, action required as soon as practicable, and within defined time frame (e.g. 3-6 months), to reduce risk to lowest practicable level. May continue in use until budget is available to undertake the necessary action and/or repairs to form a planned maintenance schedule.
High	May continue in use. Remedial action to be carried out within 3 months. Earlier intervention will be carried out if repairs are standard and there is no requirement to order specialised parts. Risk to be reduced to its lowest reasonably practiced level as soon as possible.
Immediate	Immediate action required and access by the public must be prevented

Any decisions will be recorded in the minutes of the council meeting.

Outcome of bi-weekly inspections

The Clerk will monitor the inspection reports and notify the council at the next meeting of any concerns/risks raised. If necessary the Clerk may arrange for a 'second opinion' visit by either the Clerk or a different councillor (this will not be by the same person as originally reported the concern). If deemed necessary the playground inspector can be instructed to carry out an interim inspection for more serious problems and where qualified advice is sought.

The priority table above will be used to determine any actions to take and the Clerk will seek quotes/arrange repairs as agreed by the council.

E.g. It is identified that litter is increasing in the area and becoming a hazard, at their next meeting the council agree to install a new litter bin. Bin was ordered and installed within 4 months. The litter continued to be monitored and any dangerous items such as glass removed until the bin was installed.

Post Installation inspection

This should be carried out after new equipment has been installed. This will determine whether the equipment meets with the requirements of the relevant standards.

Risk relating to the Play Area

To reduce or mitigate risk relating to the play area the council will;

- undertake a Risk Assessment on the Play Area, this should be reviewed annually, including when a piece of new play equipment is installed
- include the play area in its Risk Management Policy
- ensure it has appropriate levels of insurance in place to cover the equipment as well as holding public liability insurance
- carry out bi-weekly visual inspections of the play equipment to ensure its ongoing safety and maintenance
- carry out an annual inspection using an RPII qualified playground inspector
- ensure it has sufficient budget to maintain the play equipment