

CHILDREN'S SERVICE

Local Code of Practice 12

Agility Equipment Fixed in Playgrounds

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**Children's Service
Local Code of Practice No 12
Agility Equipment Fixed in Playgrounds**

Introduction:

This Local Code of Practice is issued in consultation with appointed Union Safety Representatives and the approval of the JNCC and in pursuance of the employer's obligation under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, section 2.3

It expresses systems of work and safety precautions which are to be followed to protect, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all who may be affected by the activity.

Failure to comply by an employee can result in disciplinary action being taken where this is appropriate.

This guidance on selecting equipment is not exhaustive but covers most of the main causes of injury to children on climbing frames. More detailed information may be obtained from BS EN 1176 and BS EN1177 The new European standards for playground equipment which replaced BS 5696 and DIN 7926 from January 1st 1999.

Application:

This local code of practice establishes standards to be complied with by all community schools and acts as guidance to both Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools.

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on the authority to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the equipment made available on school premises for use by pupils is safe for the purpose.

Employees

A statutory duty is also placed on the LA's staff to co-operate with their employer, so far as is necessary, to enable the Act to be complied with.

The following instructions express the authorities arrangements for achieving safety and absence of risk in connection with the provision and use of agility equipment fixed in playgrounds.

Selecting Equipment:

Equipment should conform to British Safety Standards or European Safety Standards. Before purchasing equipment check with the supplier to which standard the equipment will be made.

When choosing new equipment the following should be taken into account:-

- The age, size and ability range of the users (access to children with disabilities)

- Information from the manufacturers regarding maintenance
- Tube diameters and component dimensions should be appropriate to the user group
- Generally, long, low structures are preferable to height based equipment as lower elements offer better access to play.
- Maximum permitted height is 2000mm
- When purchasing a new structure incorporating a fall height greater than 600mm, the cost must include a safe surface as recommended by the manufacturers
- Structural elements should offer a good grip for hands and feet except for 'slide and 'roll' surfaces.
- Structures which offer alternative escape ways, are preferable to those that channel the user into a set evolution.

Site Selection:

The following points should be considered when deciding upon the location of a fixed item of play equipment:

- **Security:** This may involve either placing the equipment in a secure site or locating it in a conspicuous position where those using it can be easily seen. Consideration should be given as to whether access to equipment can be gained by unauthorised persons outside working hours/ weekends.
- **Layout:** Equipment should be clear of all other structures to minimise inconvenience caused by the users of adjacent equipment
- **Minimum Use Zone:** The minimum space for equipment must include the area taken up by the equipment, users play pattern plus an allowance for children commuting between adjacent fixed structures.
- **Surface:** The surface surrounding fixed equipment should be non-slip, smooth and horizontal. Where a safer surface is not needed, coated macadam is preferred
- **Drainage:** Surface water drainage and surface falls must be effective
- **Concrete:** Concrete is not recommended as a surface
- **Slides:** Slides should be orientated away from the sun to avoid excessive build up of heat from the sun on the slide pan. Users made aware of the slippery surface following wet weather.
- **Fixing:** Corrosion of metal and decay of timber, may be accelerated by contact with macadam, asphalt grass, damp soil or sand. Fixing points should be secured into concrete. The top of the concrete should slope outwards to form a water shed.
- **Supervision:** The structure should be sited to permit ease of supervision.

It is essential that each location develops and publishes a set of clearly defined rules for the safe use of the agility equipment. These rules should be brought to the attention of all staff who have playground supervision responsibilities. Parents/carers should also be informed of the safety issues associated with the use of the equipment.

- **Use at break times:** If it is intended to use the equipment at break and playtimes, staff used to supervise pupils must be employees of the LA.; Volunteer helpers, or work experience students must not be left in sole charge.
- **Training Staff:** Staff and volunteer helpers must receive instruction, training and receive supervision as is necessary to enable them to ensure that the equipment is used safely.
All staff must be familiar with the equipment and the levels of response which they may be reasonably expected from the pupils.
Newly appointed staff should receive this training as part of their induction programme.

Risk Assessment :

Risk assessment to be completed for each item of equipment. Documentation to be held on the premises, along with information relating to the supervision and safety checks to be conducted. One of the control measures identified by the risk assessment is likely to be "rules of use"

Rules A typical set of rules may include the following:

Organised Use: Use is to be organised and adequately supervised

Numbers: The number of children using any piece of equipment is to be limited by the size of the structure. Both staff and pupils should know the maximum number of pupils permitted to use the structure at any one time.

Sizes: Small children especially nursery children, should not use the structure whilst older pupils are on it. It is preferable to arrange a rota to separate size groups.

Footwear: Users should wear sensible footwear. Footwear should afford good traction and feel between foot and structure. Rigid, smooth soled footwear should be avoided.

Clothing: Overcoats and loose clothing with trailing cords must be removed

Weather: Agility equipment should not be used in inclement weather

Any precautions recommended by the manufacturer in their product literature should be adopted

Any additional measures arising from the ability range of users and local conditions should be considered.

Inspection & Maintenance:

After equipment is erected and before putting to use.
The equipment and site should be checked by the installer and
Premise's Controller.

This post installation inspection should be certificated by the installer.

All equipment should be subject to regular inspection and be checked
daily for defects

The manufacturers will advice on the extent and frequency of
maintenance inspections.
In the absence of Manufacturers advice on annual maintenance, a
survey by a competent person is recommended.

However steps must also be taken to discover defects which occur
when in use.

The premise' controller should arrange for daily, or before use
checking of the equipment for obvious defects to the structure and the
surrounding area e.g: pet/animal faeces A designated member of staff
should be appointed to carry out these daily or pre use checks and
briefed on the appropriate defect reporting procedures.

Checklists

To ensure that checks are systematical and completed, a simple
checklist should be used. (sample checklist attached).
Periodic monitoring of accident/incident report forms should be made,
to ensure that there are no significant injuries associated with the use
of the equipment.

Defects

All defects should be reported and if necessary, the equipment is to
be taken out of use until repaired.

A record of inspections and maintenance is to be kept for reference in
the event of an enquiry.

Maintenance

General maintenance and repairs should be to the manufacturer's
specification.

Paint

Coated surfaces are to be of non toxic material. This should be
confirmed with the supplier.

Safety Inspection Report

Inspected by:.....

Date of inspection.....

Department.....

Premises:.....

Daily inspection list

Structure:

Bending, warping, cracking, loosening, breaking etc

Surface Finish:

Protective coating missing, rust or other corrosion,
Cracks or splinters

Consumable Items:

Missing, bent, broken, loosened, worn, open hooks etc

Edges:

Protrusions, sharp point or sharp edges

Pinch or crush points:

Exposed mechanisms, junctures or moving components
etc

Guard or hand rails:

Missing, bent, broken or loosened etc

Access:

Missing or broken rungs, steps, or treads, loosening
etc

Swing & other seats:

Missing, damaged, loosened, sharp corners, insecure
fittings

Foundations:

Cracked, loose in ground etc

Protective Surfacing under equipment (where fitted):

Compacted or displaced to an ineffectual level, not
extensive

Enough to cover possible impact area, unclean or soiled