



Making playground equipment safe

Playgrounds and play equipment can cause very serious injuries if they are not maintained in a safe condition. Playgrounds and play equipment need to be designed, checked and maintained to ensure the health and safety of all those using them.

The Health and safety inspection checklist: playground – maintenance provides guidance on what to look for when inspecting playgrounds and play equipment. A system of regular inspection, maintenance and upgrading of playground equipment should then be adopted. Consideration should be given to the allocation of funds for this purpose.

Schools need to consider design aspects before purchase, construction or refurbishment. New and refurbished playgrounds are to comply with the relevant Australian/New Zealand Standards including [AS/NZ 4685](#) series and [4422](#). [Kidsafe Resources](#) also provide guidance on design aspects of playground equipment.

Important points to consider

Design: by considering the design of playground equipment and play areas, many hazards can be eliminated from the surroundings, layout, structures, ground surfaces and landscape. Proposed designs also need to consider the age of students who will be using the equipment.

Risks can more readily be managed through customisation, e.g. some schools have used colour coding to indicate 'out of bounds' areas. One such example is used for height restraints where a red section indicates that the student must not pass if their shoulder is above it. In the case of monkey bars the posts would be green and the top horizontal section would be red, prohibiting students from climbing and sitting on the top of the structure. Such customisation can aid teachers' supervision of play.

Supervision: appropriate supervision of play areas must be ensured so that accident and injury can be avoided. Teachers in the play environment must be aware of the potential dangers and develop suitable rules of play for equipment usage.

Incident trends: accidents and injuries can result from student play. Where an item of play equipment is linked to a number of accidents, alteration or removal of such equipment might be required. To monitor accident trends, accident records should include details of associated play equipment.

Unacceptable equipment: because they have a high incidence of injury, the installation of the following types of play equipment is not recommended in school playgrounds:

- Plank swings
- Boat swings
- Cradle swings
- Flying foxes
- Plank seesaws
- Roundabout
- Chair swings
- Maypole swings

Developing an inspection and maintenance schedule

Playground equipment and play areas should be inspected regularly to ensure that they are clear of hazards. It is recommended that each school develops its own inspection schedule. For example: see table below.

Any piece of equipment found to be unsafe should be secured against use until it is repaired. Hazards should be reported and repairs made a priority.

The checklists are not exhaustive and each school should assess its own play areas and identify its specific hazards (e.g. long jump pits, circuit training equipment).



Inspection records, required actions and the names of responsible officers should be documented. The inspection checklists include an ‘action Sheet’ as an example of such documentation

Inspection frequency	Designated officer	Responsibilities
Daily	Teacher on duty	Visual inspection of all equipment for obvious hazards (including dangerous objects, animal fouling, vandalism)
Weekly	Schools officer (janitor/grounds person)	Inspection of equipment components (including bolts, nail heads, raking of impact absorbing material and sandpits)
Each term	At least two experienced officers, e.g. principal and workplace health and safety officer	Thorough inspection of all play equipment and using health and safety inspection checklist: playground – maintenance

Further information

- [Kidsafe](#)
- [Creating Healthier Workplaces](#)
- [Playground Maintenance Checklist](#)
- DoE staff can also access KidSafe Resources and Australian/New Zealand Standards through the [DoE Library](#).