

Introduction to Inspections

Our Safety Inspectors are registered with the RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) to their annual level and qualified to BTEC Level 3 advanced Playground Operation & Inspection. In addition to this they are also CRB checked and will carry their RPII identification with them. Authentic Inspection reports will show the inspector's personal RPII seal.

Unless otherwise instructed the playground equipment will have been assessed in accordance with BS EN 1176:2008 Playground Equipment.

The European standard was originally published on 1st January 1999 when the existing standards, BS5696, were withdrawn, and was revised in 2008. Equipment installed prior to 1 June 2009 may fail to meet BS EN 1176 in a number of areas. This does not mean that the equipment has become dangerous or that remedial action is required, provided that the equipment met the requirements of previous standards, i.e. BS EN 1176:1998, BS 5696/DIN. As an example, the majority of chains which were installed prior to the advent of EN 1176 will fail in relation to the gap in the links being in excess of 8.6mm. These chains need only be replaced when they are broken or worn, with new chains that meet the new standard requirements, however it would not be an issue requiring immediate action.

The risk criteria we apply in our inspection reports are as follows:-

Very Low – No remedial action is required

Low - Items are considered safe for use and require monitoring only as part of your regular inspection procedures.

Medium – Items require appropriate action within resources and individual site assessment. The equipment should be safe for use, but you must consider this in relation to your detailed knowledge of the site.

Medium High – Safe for continued use but remedial action should be planned or implemented within three months but again to be considered in respect to your detailed knowledge of the site.

High – Items require urgent action. The equipment should be immobilised or removed until repairs are carried out.

Where any compliance failures occur, these are briefly noted and a risk assessment made of the failure. Where we believe action is required, this is indicated in more detail and identified as a medium or high risk. In rare cases where an item is likely to result in major injury or death, the operator or appropriate representative will be notified from the site by telephone.

Where present, multi sports facilities and wheeled sports facilities and outdoor gym equipment will also be inspected and each area will be charged as a separate area.

Multi-Sports facilities will be inspected to BS EN 15312:2007.



Wheeled Sports facilities will be inspected to BS EN 14974:2006+A1: 210 (design recommendations relating to roller-sports equipment for use of in-line skates, roller skates, skateboards or similar sports, as well as BMX cycles, the standard refers to manufactured structures and does not include specific requirements for BMX tracks; inspections of such facilities will be based on observation and risk assessment). Note EN14974:2006+A1:2010 has been published and fully supersedes EN14974:2006 from 1st February 2011. In both cases items installed prior to the publish date of the appropriate standard will be assessed accordingly, as with BS EN 1176 the standards are neither mandatory nor retrospective.

Outdoor Gym Equipment will be inspected to EN16630. It should be noted that outdoor gym equipment is not play equipment and should not be regarded as such. EN16630 recommends user restriction to youths and adults over 1.4m tall. Scaled down versions of outdoor gym equipment intended for use by children does not conform to and therefore cannot be inspected to this standard.

Where there are items on site that are not covered by any specific BS EN standard then common sense approach will be taken.

The standards stated are neither mandatory nor retrospective.

Wicksteed inspections cover:

- Site safety
- Suitability and conditions of ancillary items including fencing
- Standard compliance, suitability and condition of equipment
- Dimensional compliance, suitability and condition of surfacing

Wicksteed inspections are visual non-dismantling inspections carried out from surface level to a maximum of 3.0m. Inspection of structural parts and fixings above this height will require specialist access equipment (scaffolding, cherry picker, etc) and this is not included within the Wicksteed Inspection. As with vehicle M.O.T. tests, they are only an indication of the state of the equipment at the time of the inspection. Where removal of parts is felt to be necessary for assessment, this will be indicated, but not undertaken unless specifically arranged prior to the inspection.

Wearing of shackle pins and bushes on swings is difficult to detect with non-dismantling inspections. Checks to identify dry bearings and excessive movement in the 'D' shackle can often identify serious defects. But it does not preclude the possibility of shackle pin failure in rare circumstances. It is recommended that random inspections by removal of the 'D' shackle and pin is carried out as a regular part of your routine maintenance (note:- some types of shackles cannot be re-fitted once removed, typically those where the shackle pin is secured with a security pin through both shackle & pin, once removed, this type of shackle should be replaced with new).



Surfacing has been assessed in terms of the area covered and its condition or security. For items with no protective surfacing and with a fall height in excess of 600mm, you should consider the installation of an impact attenuating surface. It should also be noted that EN 1176 UK national standard allows well-maintained grass for fall heights of up to 1.5m. However, bear in mind that the impact absorbency of such a surface is dependent upon the condition of the grass and the soil and root structure beneath. If it becomes worn it is likely that its performance will be significantly reduced. Wear pads should be considered in areas of high usage i.e. slide run-out, fireman's poles, central arc of swings. Where wet pour repairs are quoted it must be noted that the colour will differ in shades to the existing surface.

Continuous rubber surfaces (wet pour) and rubber tiles can be affected by climatic variation; hot weather can cause materials to shrink which could result in gaps at joints or around the edges, excessive gaps (20mm+) or raised edges could create trip hazards; during cold or wet weather the materials may expand. Wet pour edges can be cut back by approximately 100mm and infilled with new material. The gaps at tile joints can be filled using a rubber crumb mixture, however, this should be considered as a short-term solution and ultimately a full surface upgrade may be required. It should be noted that where gaps between tiles are in-filled the material may become loose as the tiles continue to shrink and expand with climatic change – these areas may be prone to vandalism. We can therefore offer no guarantees on the longevity of any infilling that may be carried out.

Surface materials are normally bordered by timber or concrete edging, these need to be maintained in good condition to prevent tile migration and to protect surfacing edges. In addition, where set into a grass surface, regular grounds maintenance is essential to combat erosion and reduce potential trip hazards and reduce impact attenuation (protection from head injuries) that may be created by exposed or raised surface edges.

Loose fill impact surfaces (bark, wood chip, sand, etc) and their retention edges need to be maintained to ensure that adequate impact protection is provided within the equipment falling spaces. Regular raking of loose fill materials is recommended to maintain even distribution and to remove hazardous objects that may be concealed within the loose fill material (loose fill impact surfaces are not recommended around or below moving equipment such as swings or roundabouts).

Tarmac and concrete are not recommended for use under any playground equipment from which falls are possible, irrespective of the fall height. A risk assessment will be given in the report where necessary.

There can be problems with assessing ground decay of supports where synthetic surface has been installed. Wicksteed takes care to check ground decay and corrosion in supports in so far as they are able, but this cannot be done conclusively without removal or destruction of the surface, which is not something we would undertake.



Where a maintenance inspection has been ordered this comprises of the visual non-dismantling inspection and also the tightening, where possible, of any fixings and greasing of bearings as necessary. In some instances it may not be possible to tighten fixings or grease inaccessible bearings – in these cases it will be noted on the report and any necessary further action advised.

In order to provide economic reports, standard wording is used for most common standards failures. Wicksteed inspectors also work using previous year's reports. Please note that where there have been very few changes to the site, the current report may be similar to the previous years report.

When we are quoting for repainting the specification is to rub down metalwork as required, apply one coat of undercoat and one coat of gloss.

Natural Play is becoming a more important part of play provision. By its very nature natural play is non-prescriptive and therefore there are no written standards applicable so in quantifying the safety of the items you have to rely upon risk assessment. The means by which we will assess the elements of natural play on site will be by means of a risk assessment as required under the Health and Safety at Work Act. This will inevitably be subjective and it is therefore necessary for the end user/operator to satisfy themselves that the criteria used fit within the play operators play strategy. To this end the risk assessment being carried out by Wicksteed will be an indicative assessment which can form part of the overall risk assessment for the site. All natural play elements will be assessed visually however BS EN1176 will be applied where appropriate i.e. head & neck entrapments, dimensions of ends of tunnels.

For more information of Natural Play and managing the associated risk please refer to the publication "Managing Risk in Play Provision:Implementation Guide". This has been published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and free copies are available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications The search reference for this is 00942-2008. There is also a publication called "Nature Play :Maintenance Guide" ISBN:978-1-905818-53-2. This is published by NCB on behalf of Play England. Their website is www.ncb.org.uk.

If you have ordered a detailed analysis of risk please be advised that it is the responsibility of the operator of the site to complete sheets 1 to 3 inclusive. We are unable to complete this for you as the information required is from your own knowledge of the site.