



Heybridge Parish Council

Play Policy

1. What is Play?

1.1 The Children's Play Council (2001) defines play as "freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter."

1.2 It can include opportunities to run, climb, skip, hide, play with ropes, jump, practise cartwheels, throw or kick balls, make friends, fall out, tell stories, climb trees, take risks, get wet or dirty, build dens, dress up, pretend, dig holes, swing on tyres, shout, fight, invent games, make things, paint, talk with their friends or just sit.

2. Good Play Opportunities

2.1 Good play opportunities promote good social, mental and emotional health, giving children the chance to try out and experience a range of emotions in a "safe" way. It allows them to learn and develop emotionally by promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem. There is growing research evidence that increased opportunity for free play is the most effective way to ensure that children achieve at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day (as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer.)

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 To provide, where possible, conventional play areas, environmental play areas and community play activities to provide every opportunity to play.

3.2 If we are to provide a society in which people live together and care for each other, we must first create a caring and creative atmosphere for children.

3.3 To ensure that the Parish Council play facility complies with all the appropriate British standards. To minimise the risk of accidents and help provide a safer environment for children to enjoy play.

4. To monitor, assess and review design, installation and layout of the play area and investigate and take note of new research into safety standards.

4.1 To be aware that accidents in playgrounds arise from many causes:

- Inappropriate design and layout of playgrounds
- Unsuitably designed play equipment
- Incorrectly installed equipment
- Inadequately maintained equipment
- Lack of age – and ability – related equipment
- Lack of adult supervision
- Aggressive or dangerous behaviour of children
- Misuse of equipment
- Unsuitable clothing worn by children

4.2 The goal is not for absolute safety, as taking risks is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time playing. Our play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment.

5. To carry out routine weekly and monthly recorded inspections of the play area in addition to a fully documented certified 12 monthly inspection by an independent inspector.

5.1 Sites should be visually inspected weekly for superficial defects and faults to equipment in addition to general cleanliness and removal of dangerous objects.

5.2 Monthly inspections should be more ‘in depth’ and cover fences, seats, gates, litter bins in addition to the play equipment and impact absorbing surfaces.

5.3 The documented inspections shall be carried out in accordance with current legislation by an independent inspector.

6. To monitor safety by keeping a central record of all reported injuries and serious incidents on its playgrounds.

6.1 The information can be taken into account when updating existing play areas and planning new ones.

7. To carefully consider the implications for access to, and experience of, environmental play opportunities when dealing with planning applications relating to new developments.

7.1 Environmental play is probably the most valuable and most natural form of play and adults need to understand a child’s need to experiment with things around them. Children should be given the chance to challenge and manipulate their environment and failure to provide this experience could result in vandalism as they grow up.

8. To encourage play schemes and to provide, where possible, experience of the natural environment.

8.1 This can be achieved by creating small areas of 'wildland' and providing nature trails, nature reserves/conservation areas etc.

9. To liaise with parents, schools and children and take account of children's needs when replacing or updating play equipment.

9.1 Watching children at play and seeking their views on play facilities will be invaluable when planning future play facilities and updating existing play areas. Parents and schools can also prove to be a valuable source of information.

10. To formulate a forward plan and update and amend as necessary and as any new legislation or standards dictate.

10.1 This will take account of all information gained from consultations with the local community and any accidents/incidents reported.

11. To endeavour to introduce more play provision for children with disabilities.

11.1 Disabled children are simply children with extra needs and they should have access to a play environment which allows them the same opportunities for recreation and creativity as able-bodied children.

They should be given the opportunity to mix and play with able-bodied children and, wherever-possible, have the use of suitable play equipment.

Only by giving them the chance to meet and play with children without special needs will they begin to accept each other and help avoid prejudices that can arise as a result of ignorance.

12. To endeavour to make parents aware of their responsibility to children at play and seek their help to provide a safe environment in which they can play.

12.1 This can be achieved by the provision of literature for distribution to all households in the parish, which highlights and explains the need and reasons for the following:-

- Parental/adult supervision in play grounds
- Respect age limits for use of the play equipment
- Prevention of children acting aggressively or dangerously on the equipment

- Wearing of sensible clothing and shoes (toggles on a hood can become caught on a slide and strangle the child)
- Community consultation for future play provisions

13. To designate all playgrounds within the parish and all recreation grounds as areas where dog owners must clear up after their dogs.

13.1 Local Authorities have a duty to keep designated areas in their control, including parks and children's playgrounds, as clear of dog faeces as is practicable under part IV of the Environmental Act 1990.

14. To maintain a site register for the play area.

14.1 To contain: -

- A copy of the Parish Play Policy
- A site plan
- Full equipment details
- Documentation of the planning and development of the site
- Inspection, maintenance and forward planning programme
- Details of reported accidents and serious incidents

15. Summary

15.1 The Play Policy is designed to take account of all statutory requirements in addition to this Council's commitment to provide safe formal play areas and environmental play opportunities within the confines of its budget facilities.

15.2 Heybridge Parish Council understands and acknowledges the need to:-

- i. Consult and liaise with parents, children and schools, before purchasing new equipment and thereby ensure only the type of equipment that will be enjoyed and put to its maximum use will be considered.
- ii. Educate parents/guardians to be aware of their responsibility to their charges at play.
- iii. Provide more play opportunities for disabled children and bear this in mind when considering the purchase of new equipment
- iv. Install signs, in prominent positions, advising that Play Areas are areas where dog owners must clear up after their dogs
- v. Update/or replace old and defective equipment
- vi. Recognise the expected 'life' of existing equipment and create a replacement plan
- vii. Maintain a site register and ensure it is kept up to date.
- viii. Ensure inspections are carried out.

26 March 2015 Reviewed May 2016

Clerk

Risk Assessment of Play Areas at Plantation Hall and Elizabeth Way

| Hazard/Risk | Who is at Risk? | Consequence | Management Controls | Residual Risk and Further Measures |
|---|-----------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Play equipment which is dangerous is not identified | Public | Play area condition deteriorates which may result in injury. | <p>Visual inspections will be undertaken by Community Protection Officers and by Parish Council staff at least monthly to identify any problems/hazards that have been created by use, abuse, weather and age.</p> <p>All routine inspections will be recorded on the Council inspection sheets whether or not there are problems or hazards identified.</p> <p>Annual Inspections will be undertaken on a yearly basis by an accredited independent Inspector.</p> | Tolerable, no further action needed. |
| Play equipment is damaged and not dealt with correctly. | Public | Public are injured whilst using the play equipment. | <p>All equipment will be inspected. All inspection reports will be retained by the Clerk within the Parish Council records.</p> <p>Any issues raised by any inspection will be brought to the Parish Council's attention (Environment and Resources Committee) for action. If play</p> | Tolerable, no further action needed. |

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| | | | equipment has been found to be dangerous, the equipment will either remove or isolate until repairs can be made. | |
| Security | Public | Abduction, assault, child protection issues | Clear signage indicating that children must be supervised at all times as it is a public area accessible by all at all hours. | Tolerable, no further action needed |
| Litter, glass present within the play area | Public | Minor injuries | Inspection of the area and litter pick as required. Litter bins are located near the play area. | Tolerable, no further action needed |
| Dog faeces | Public | Infection, Toxicariasis | The play area is fenced to prevent dogs from entering. Clear signage. | Tolerable, no further action needed |