Inspecting Your Adventure Playground

Guidance for playworkers who are carrying out routine visual and operational inspections on their playground(s)

Consultation

This document is being widely circulated for consultation with the field. Please respond by 28th February. It is likely there will be a discussion on this draft and responses at the Eastbourne Playwork Conference (5thand 6th March). Please indicate if you wish your name to be included in the list of consultees. Comments on the guidance should be sent to Rob Wheway at the details below.

Training

Children's Play Advisory Service, with other organisations, will be providing training on this guidance. Please let us know if this would be of interest to you.

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Introduction

Inspection regimes in adventure playgrounds have usually been guided by the "Site Checklist" in "Risk and Safety in Play" (see below). Considerable experience since this was published has found that the "tick box" checklist approach it recommends tends to lead to bad practice.

This publication aims to assist playworkers and managers of adventure playgrounds to have improved inspection regimes. It recommends simple yet robust procedures which will enable playworkers/managers to ensure they avoid unnecessary and/or undesirable risks. It also makes it easier for them to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of children using their adventure playground.

Guidance on inspecting adventure playgrounds is found in "Risk and Safety in Play: The law and practice for adventure playgrounds". This, though published in 1997, is still the most authoritative guidance. Copies available as below.

"Risk and Safety in Play – The law and practice for adventure playgrounds" (1997)

When it was published it was recognised by the Health and Safety Executive as an industry led code of practice and is widely accepted as authoritative by managers of adventure playgrounds and national play organisations (referred to here as "The Code"). It was previously published by E & FN Spon and is now available as an e-book and paperback from Routledge. It may also be available via Amazon.

https://www.routledge.com/Risk-and-Safety-in-Play-The-law-and-practice-for-adventure-playgrounds/Potter/p/book/9780419223702

The Code was compiled following widespread consultations and is the successor publication to "Towards a Safer Adventure Playground" published by NPFA (in 1980 and 1984) and itself subject to widespread consultation.

The Code refers to BS 5696 and DIN 7926, which were the British and German Standards for conventional playground equipment on unsupervised playgrounds, and are quoted as useful sources of guidance. These Standards have been superseded by BS EN 1176, commonly known as the European Standard. The status is advisory not mandatory and EN 1176 does not apply to adventure playgrounds. A revised EN 1176 was issued in August 2008.

Whilst it is to be hoped that The Code will be revised to take account of EN 1176 there are no changes that have made it unsafe.

- *The Code should be readily available and regularly referred to, by all playworkers, constructors and managers. Familiarity with its use should be part of staff meetings/training.*

"Risk and Safety in Play" is aimed at encouraging adventurous and challenging activities rather than trying to make playgrounds so safe that they are boring. The following inspection guide does not change the recommendations made in "Risk and Safety in Play". What it does, however, is recommend improved procedures for the inspection of the outdoor adventure equipment and play items.

Visual Inspections

A visual inspection should be what it says – "visual". Rot, wear and deterioration is not noticeable on a day to day or week to week basis. Experience has shown that where people are asked to do things that are pointless they quite sensibly stop doing them. Because there's no difference in the condition, they get used to ticking the box without even looking at the item.

It is more important that people carry out a thorough visual inspection rather than feel that the main point is to tick 30 or 40 boxes.

If people record what they've found then over time this can be analysed so that resources can be targeted where they are needed.

If, for instance, broken bottles and similar litter tend to be found on Saturday and Sunday morning then the managers know that the inspection may take longer on those days and so can allow for it.

A suggested visual inspection form can be found at Appendix A.

Operational Inspections

These are the main inspections to test for wear, deterioration, rot, etc. They are a full "poke and prod" inspection in which force and weight are applied to the equipment. They will need to be done at least once every 3 months.

For an adventure playground where items are being re-built and modified as part of the play experience then they will probably need a monthly inspection. Some playgrounds may find that once a month is necessary during the period spring half term to autumn half term but can be reduced to 1 every 2 months during the rest of the year when the playground will be less used.

As a simple rule of thumb if the operational inspections keep finding things that have significantly deteriorated then the inspections need to be done more often. If, on the other hand, there are very little changes from inspection to inspection then they can be done less often, but a quarterly inspection is the absolute minimum necessary. Whatever the regime you won't need to do an inspection at the time of the annual inspection.

In an operational inspection the member of staff will need to traverse all of the items and all of the places children might be expected to access.

Unfortunately at some playgrounds where annual inspections have been carried out loose deck planks or rotting barriers have been found just by walking on the decks and pushing the barriers. This clearly indicates that the playworkers have not been carrying out operational inspections adequately.

Tools and Methodology

I have found that 2 tools can be used for a lot of the inspection.

The first is a rubber mallet. Giving supports, barriers, etc a good tap close to ground level will help you to identify rot. Hitting higher up will identify looseness.

If it's wood, the hammerhead will cause the support to dent. If it's significant rot then you will get a hollow sound or it will sound as if the wood is spongey.

If it's metal, it might also dent and internal rust will drop and be heard.

In both cases if there are loose joints, bolts, etc will tend to rattle.

Hitting supports with the mallet should result in a clear ringing sound which tells you that the support at that point is good. If you get a support that sounds different to the others then it is an indication that you need to poke and prod further as there might well be rot or corrosion.

The benefit of a rubber mallet is that it will not damage the wood or metal unless they are rotting/rusting in which case they need to be repaired or replaced. I have found a glazier's hammer to be a useful tool. The rubbery side can be used to hit metal without damaging the paintwork and the plastic side is good for hitting wood.

As far as I am aware, 2 companies produce the glazier's hammer. They are Draper and Thor.

The second a flat head screwdriver which is available from a variety of manufacturers. It is the most common size for a good stout screwdriver. These normally have a blade length of 200mm.

Tools used at inspections

Some of the most serious accidents in recent years have come from wooden supports collapsing because they hadn't been properly checked for rot.

Supports tend to rot/rust just below ground level. The screwdriver should be pushed in 2-4 inches below the surface. Because it's a flat-head it should only cause damage if the support is already deteriorating.

Inspecting for rot with a screwdriver

I would avoid sharp screwdrivers or probes as these will penetrate the wood even when it is sound. Over time you will give the wood perforations which will weaken it. They may also allow bacterial or fungal matter to get into the untreated wood at the centre of the support.

The use of resistographs to test for rot is being recommended in some quarters. A resistograph is a thin drill which measures the resistance and then the likelihood of rot. I would be cautious in using a resistograph. Firstly, if it is drilled a couple of times a year or a quarter then it will give a perforation effect which will make the support more liable to break.

It also will introduce bacterial and fungal matter into the heart of the wood which pressure impregnated preservatives do not reach.

Having compared the use of a screwdriver against the resistograph at a large prestigious site we found that the screwdriver test was as good for finding rot and that the resistograph did give false readings which we found by salami slicing one of the posts in question.

Loose Fill Impact Absorbing Surfacing (IAS)

The other benefit of this type of screwdriver is that the blade is nearly always about 200mm long. This means it can be used to test loose fill impact absorbing surfaces such as bark, wood chip or sand.

These loose fill surfaces are usually installed at 300mm depth. This is 100mm for the required impact absorption and 200mm more to allow for dispersal through use. This is as recommended in BS EN 1176.

Quite clearly the loose fill is likely to compact or migrate quite quickly and the Standard does not state at what lower level the loose fill should be topped up. My recommendation would be that once it starts to go significantly below 200mm then it needs to be topped up. This can easily be checked with a screwdriver. If you push it into the loose fill in various places and it goes into the surface so far that the blade is no longer visible then you know the surfacing has a depth in excess of 200mm.

If the blade disappears in most places but only goes half way in at the bottom of the slide, at the fireman's pole, steps, etc then you know the level in these spots is too low and that other loose fill needs to be raked in from other parts of the area so that it is all nearly 200mm deep.

If, wherever you put it, a large amount of the blade is exposed then you know it needs topping up.

If the fall heights are low then a smaller depth of loose fill will be needed. Grass and earth are sufficient IAS for fall heights of below 1m. Loose fill is also sometimes used as a top dressing to avoid muddiness and keep the soil texture open and therefore impact absorbent.

Annual Inspections

Annual inspections are usually carried out by an independent consultant. Unfortunately some of these are carried out by inspectors who have no experience of adventure playgrounds and often don't even know or, or refer to, "Risk and Safety in Play".

They then inspect the playground to BS EN 1176 which is commonly known as the "European Standard" and is intended for fixed equipment unsupervised playgrounds and specifically does not cover adventure playgrounds with playworkers.

The result of non-specialists inspecting adventure playgrounds to BS EN 1176 is that they make the playground appear to be much more dangerous than it is. They will often recommend work be undertaken that is unnecessary and therefore a waste of money. This has clear implications for your insurance and also for your playground being unfairly sued in the event of an accident.

You are very strongly advised to check that any annual inspector you contract is fully aware of “Risk and Safety in Play” and will inspect to their recommendations rather than BS EN 1176.

Where your playground does include standard pieces of equipment which are commonly installed in unsupervised playgrounds, then assessment to BS EN 1176 is appropriate.

Paperwork

I would strongly recommend that you have a system where after each inspection the report is re-typed with the changes made and this is then used for the next inspection (Appendices refer). I recommend this for the following reasons:

- **Reduce Error Rate**
  Anyone can miss something on one occasion but they are less likely to miss it on two occasions. In the case where different people are doing the inspections a second pair of eyes means it’s even less likely that problems will be missed. This system has been tried and tested and because the inspector is always building on the previous findings it does make errors much less likely to occur.

- **Build Expertise/Continuous Improvement**
  By building on the last time’s inspection you will build your own expertise in how quickly or slowly things deteriorate. So for instance if there was something you thought was fairly minor at one inspection and it looks significantly worse at the next inspection then you know this is an issue to which you need to give a higher priority. On the other hand if you find something where you believe an item is moving in the ground but over a couple of inspections it doesn’t change you may realise that it is natural flex within the supports and there is no problem.

- **Audit Trail**
  What you will be able to see is how problems deteriorate over time. So for instance a worn chain might be reported in successive inspections as:

  “Wear in chain beginning – *Monitor*” which then becomes
  “Wear in chain – *Replace – Low Risk*”
  “Wear in chain – *Replace – Low Risk*”
  “Worn chain – *Replace – Medium Risk*”
  “Badly worn chain – *Replace – IMMEDIATE*”

  In reality the chain wear may be slower than indicated in the above but the examples give you an idea. This means that if you’ve a feeling that some part(s) is deteriorating faster than you expected you can look back through the records and see how long it is lasting. In the case of a catastrophic accident you would be able to look back over the history of the item and see if there are any clues as to how it has occurred.

- **Chase your Progress**
  By going with the previous report you will clearly see if actions have not been progressed. So it is a check that the system is working.

- **Quality Assurance**
  By comparing the last operational inspection with the annual inspection you can check that your operational inspections are being carried out successfully.

  If the operational and the annual inspection find the same things with more or less the same priority then you know the system is working.

  If on the other hand you find a significant difference between the 2 then this needs to be followed up. It might be that the annual inspector is aware of risks that might not be obvious. On the other hand, it might be something peculiar to your playground which the annual inspector has missed.

- **Quality Control**
  The approach should be to treat any difference (as above) as a good learning experience in the first instance. If, however, it is repeated then there is a serious problem which needs to be investigated and appropriate steps taken. If a missed problem has been identified and brought to the attention of the inspector then that is a good learning experience. On the other hand, if the inspector has not bothered to learn from that experience then control or disciplinary procedures may be appropriate.

- **Efficient**
  The operational inspection reports should only take a few pages of A4 a few times a year.

Taken together all the above give you an effective management tool for maintaining quality control, giving you continuous improvement. This is an efficient and robust system which will enable you to offer children excitement and challenge whilst at the same time ensuring you are not vulnerable for charges of negligence.

Examples of how the forms should be used can be found at Appendices B to E.

Appendix B is the type of Annual Inspection report you should have received.

Appendix C is this report cut down to the maintenance issues and should be used for the first Operational Inspection after the Annual Inspection.

Appendix D shows how the cut down report (Appendix C) can be amended in red ink so that the main issues are very obvious.

Appendix E shows how the Operational Inspection (Appendix D) should be typed up for use at the next Operational Inspection.

Appendix F gives an example of allocating levels of risk to hazards that are found.

Appendix A

DAILY CHECK

In signing this document I/we confirm that I/we have traversed the whole site including all items of equipment. I/we have:

- Removed all litter and any loose parts that are broken
- Put back into a safe position any loose parts that create a hazard, eg wheelbarrow in a falling space
- Noted below any damage which requires repair or monitoring (not already detailed in the operational or annual report)
- Noted other important comments relating to safety or play value
- Noted any issue(s) which I/we was/were not able to address but which needs to be recorded with the reason

The comments should include what issues you found and what you tidied up.

Date/Time: …….…… Comments: ……..

…...……..

……Signature(s):……..

Date/Time: …….…… Comments: ……..

…...……..

……Signature(s):……..

Date/Time: …….…… Comments: ……..

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Date/Time: …….…… Comments: ……..

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Date/Time: …….…… Comments: ……..

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……Signature(s):……..

Appendix B

A N Other Borough Council

Report of an Annual Inspection

Example Adventure Playground

The area was inspected on 1 March 2018
by Rob Wheway of Children's Play Advisory Service

General Comments

In general the designs of the equipment are of a type that are commonly found in adventure playgrounds and are suitable for use by children in the context of a play place with playworkers.

The inspection has identified some serious faults which need to be rectified before children are permitted to use the items. The Main Structure shows much deterioration and failures in design which probably means it is uneconomic to modify and repair.

The risks have been assessed using both "Risk and Safety in Play – The law and practice for adventure playgrounds" and the recommendations of EN 1176 for guidance.

Where an item is one which is commonly installed in unsupervised playgrounds then it is assessed against EN 1176 and the layout for these items is different from the adventure playground items which have a more narrative layout.

Priority has been given to making risk assessments based on "reasonable practicability" (Health and Safety at Work Act).

Ancillary Items

The following were found to be satisfactory:

General Surface – Grass

Work is required on the following:

Picnic Table	Rot in support – *Replace – Medium Risk*
	Diagonal bracing desirable to stop sideways sway
	Black seat loose (exposed nails) – *Secure – Medium Risk*
Wood Store	*Tidy up*
Cleanliness	Bits of wood lying around some with protruding nails – *Tidy up before permitting usage of the area – Medium/High Risk*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 1: 2 Towers (starting at building end)**

Gaps between steps give head entrapment potential – *Infill to reduce to max. 89mm – Low/Medium Risk (does not apply when distance to deck is less than 600mm).*

Gaps between barrier uprights exceeds 89mm. As they are at 100mm the risk is acceptable.

Severe rot at 4 supports – *Replace or fit slaves – Medium Risk*

Surfacing – Wood Chip/Carpet

Very low but as decks have high barrier the risk is acceptable

Carpet lifting giving trip points – *Re-bury edges – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 2: Up Long Ramp to Middle Deck (anti-clockwise)

Loose plank at yellow steps – *Make secure – Low/Medium Risk*

Remove dead leaves/moss from corner of decks as they encourage rot

4 missing uprights and missing section between climb wall and ramp – *Replace planks – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 3: Long Rope Bridge

Fall arrest net holed at near end – *Repair – Medium Risk* (Ropes have been fixed to indicate that the bridge it is out of use. It is, however, easy to get past these ropes and the bridge is an obvious inducement for children, therefore the net should be repaired with some urgency.)

Vertical rope at far end is breaking/fraying – *Replace – Low/Medium Risk*

Ropes and net are showing signs of wear and UV degradation *(M)*

Ropes have stretched – *It is desirable to tighten them a little to reduce sway*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 4: Top Deck**

Rot in steps plank – *Replace – Low Risk*

Missing uprights at barrier (has temp. plastic barrier) – *Replace – Medium Risk*

Branches overgrowing – *Cut back – Low Risk*

3 rotten planks in walkway – *Replace – Low Risk*

Walkway planks slightly loose – *Secure – Low Risk*

High area "closed for maintenance" (purpose of the area uncertain) – *Consider removal and barrier off correctly*

Item 2	**Tango Swing**

This is a two cable swing which is constructed from telegraph poles. It has launch decks to 360º. Children launch themselves in a rotational arc with the result that the two cables twist round each other giving an exciting and challenging ride. This item is of a design which is commonly found in adventure playgrounds and is suitable for use.

Satisfactory condition - Fit for use

Surfacing – Bark

Low – *Top up – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 3	Double Scales	Richter

STANDARD: Minor failure to meet EN 1176 but suitable for continued use

- Slightly insufficient falling space *(M)*

CONDITION: Worn bottom links (hidden inside seats) – *Replace – Medium Risk*

Splits in horizontal beams appear to be getting worse – *Monitor carefully and test vigorously*

Wear in top links *(M)*

Seats are too low and a couple bump ground – *Remove links to give 230mm clearance under seats – Low/Medium Risk*

Splits in supports – *Chamfer edges – Low Risk*

SURFACING: Bark

STANDARD: Minor failure to meet dimensions required of EN 1176 *(F)*

CONDITION: *Rake regularly to maintain levels – Low/Medium Risk*

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1 March 2018

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Appendix C

Operational Inspection - Example Adventure Playground

Date: …… ***(extracted from AI)*** Inspection by: ……

Ancillary Items

General Surface	Grass OK
Picnic Table	Rot in support – *Replace – Medium Risk*
	Diagonal bracing desirable to stop sideways sway
	Black seat loose (exposed nails) – *Secure – Medium Risk*
Wood Store	*Tidy up*
Cleanliness	Bits of wood lying around some with protruding nails – *Tidy up before permitting usage of the area – Medium/High Risk*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 1: 2 Towers (starting at building end)**

Gaps between steps give head entrapment potential – *Infill to reduce to max. 89mm – Low/Medium Risk (does not apply when distance to deck is less than 600mm).*

Severe rot at 4 supports – *Replace or fit slaves – Medium Risk*

Surfacing – Wood Chip/Carpet

Carpet lifting giving trip points – *Re-bury edges – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 2: Up Long Ramp to Middle Deck (anti-clockwise)**

Loose plank at yellow steps – *Make secure – Low/Medium Risk*

Remove dead leaves/moss from corner of decks as they encourage rot

4 missing uprights and missing section between climb wall and ramp – *Replace planks – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 3: Long Rope Bridge

Fall arrest net holed at near end – *Repair* – *Medium Risk* (Ropes have been fixed to indicate that the bridge it is out of use. It is, however, easy to get past these ropes and the bridge is an obvious inducement for children, therefore the net should be repaired with some urgency.)

Vertical rope at far end is breaking/fraying – *Replace* – *Low/Medium Risk*

Ropes and net are showing signs of wear and UV degradation *(M)*

Ropes have stretched – *It is desirable to tighten them a little to reduce sway*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 4: Top Deck

Rot in steps plank – *Replace* – *Low Risk*

Missing uprights at barrier (has temp. plastic barrier) – *Replace* – *Medium Risk*

Branches overgrowing – *Cut back* – *Low Risk*

3 rotten planks in walkway – *Replace* – *Low Risk*

Walkway planks slightly loose – *Secure* – *Low Risk*

High area “closed for maintenance” (purpose of the area uncertain) – *Consider removal and barrier off correctly*

Item 2	**Tango Swing**

Condition OK

Surfacing – Bark

Low – *Top up – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 3	**Double Scales**	**Richter**

CONDITION: Worn bottom links (hidden inside seats) – *Replace – Medium Risk*

Splits in horizontal beams appear to be getting worse – *Monitor carefully and test vigorously*

Wear in top links *(M)*

Seats are too low and a couple bump ground – *Remove links to give 230mm clearance under seats – Low/Medium Risk*

Splits in supports – *Chamfer edges – Low Risk*

SURFACING: Bark

CONDITION: *Rake regularly to maintain levels – Low/Medium Risk*

Appendix D

Operational Inspection - Example Adventure Playground

Date: ……..… *(1st one after annual)* Inspection by: ……..……

Ancillary Items

General Surface	Grass ✓
Picnic Table	~~Rot in support – *Replace – Medium Risk*~~ *OK*
	~~*Diagonal bracing desirable to stop sideways sway*~~
	~~Black seat loose (exposed nails) – *Secure – Medium Risk*~~
Wood Store	*Tidy up* ✓
Cleanliness	Bits of wood lying around ~~some with protruding nails~~ – *Tidy up ~~before permitting usage of the area~~ – ~~Medium/High~~* *Low* Risk

Item 1	Main Structure Section 1: 2 Towers (starting at building end)

Gaps between steps give head entrapment potential – *Infill to reduce to max. 89mm – Low/Medium Risk (does not apply when distance to deck is less than 600mm).* ✓

Severe rot at 4 supports – *Replace or fit slaves – Medium Risk* *still needs doing*

Loose deck plank - Secure - Low/Medium Risk

Surfacing – Wood Chip/Carpet

Carpet *may lift* ~~lifting giving trip points – *Re-bury edges – Low/Medium Risk*~~ *Monitor*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 2: Up Long Ramp to Middle Deck (anti-clockwise)

~~Loose plank at yellow steps – *Make secure – Low/Medium Risk*~~

Remove dead leaves/moss from corner of decks as they encourage rot ✓

4 missing uprights ~~and missing section between climb wall and ramp~~ – *Replace ~~planks~~* *uprights* – *Low/Medium Risk*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 3: Long Rope Bridge

~~Fall arrest net holed at near end – *Repair – Medium Risk* (Ropes have been fixed to indicate that the bridge it is out of use. It is, however, easy to get past these ropes and the bridge is an obvious inducement for children, therefore the net should be repaired with some urgency.)~~

delete photo

Vertical rope at far end is breaking/fraying – *Replace – Low/Medium Risk* *still needs doing*

Ropes and net are showing signs of wear and UV degradation *(M)* ✓

Ropes have stretched – *It is desirable to tighten them a little to reduce sway* ✓

Item 1	Main Structure Section 4: Top Deck

Rot in steps plank – *Replace – Low Risk* ✓

~~Missing uprights at barrier (has temp. plastic barrier) – *Replace – Medium Risk*~~

Branches *significantly* overgrowing – *Cut back – Low/Medium Risk*

3 rotten planks in walkway – *Replace – Low Risk* ✓

Walkway planks slightly loose – *Secure – Low Risk* ✓

High area "closed for maintenance" (purpose of the area uncertain) – *Consider removal and barrier off correctly* *decision still needed*

Barrier crosspiece beginning to rot - Monitor

Item 2	Tango Swing

Condition OK ✓

Surfacing – Bark

Low – *Top up – Low/Medium Risk* ✓

Item 3	Double Scales	Richter
CONDITION:	Worn bottom links (hidden inside seats) – *Replace – Medium /High Risk* still needs doing	
	Splits in horizontal beams appear to be getting worse – *Monitor carefully and test vigorously* ✓	
	Wear in top links *(M)* ✓	
	Seats are too low and a couple bump ground – *Remove links to give 230mm clearance under seats – Low/Medium Risk* still needs doing	
	Splits in supports – *Chamfer edges – Low Risk* ✓	
SURFACING:	Bark	
CONDITION:	*Rake regularly to maintain levels – Low/Medium Risk* ✓	

Appendix E

Operational Inspection - Example Adventure Playground

Date: ……..… *(2nd one after annual)* Inspection by: ……..……

Ancillary Items

General Surface	Grass OK
Picnic Table	OK
Wood Store	*Tidy up*
Cleanliness	Bits of wood lying around – *Tidy up – Low Risk*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 1: 2 Towers (starting at building end)**

Gaps between steps give head entrapment potential – *Infill to reduce to max. 89mm – Low/Medium Risk (does not apply when distance to deck is less than 600mm).*

Severe rot at 4 supports – *Replace or fit slaves – Medium Risk* ***still needs doing***

Loose deck plank – *Secure – Low/Medium Risk*

Surfacing – Wood Chip/Carpet

Carpet may lift – *Monitor*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 2: Up Long Ramp to Middle Deck (anti-clockwise)**

Remove dead leaves/moss from corner of decks as they encourage rot

4 missing uprights – *Replace uprights – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 1	**Main Structure** **Section 3: Long Rope Bridge**

Vertical rope at far end is breaking/fraying – *Replace – Low/Medium Risk* ***still needs doing***

Ropes and net are showing signs of wear and UV degradation *(M)*

Ropes have stretched – *It is desirable to tighten them a little to reduce sway*

Item 1	Main Structure Section 4: Top Deck

Rot in steps plank – *Replace – Low Risk*

Branches significantly overgrowing – *Cut back – Low/Medium Risk*

3 rotten planks in walkway – *Replace – Low Risk*

Walkway planks slightly loose – *Secure – Low Risk*

High area “closed for maintenance” (purpose of the area uncertain) – *Consider removal and barrier off correctly* ***decision still needed***

Barrier crosspiece beginning to rot – *Monitor*

Item 2	Tango Swing

Condition OK

Surfacing – Bark

Low – *Top up – Low/Medium Risk*

Item 3	Double Scales	Richter

CONDITION:	Worn bottom links (hidden inside seats) – *Replace – Medium/High Risk* ***still needs doing***
	Splits in horizontal beams appear to be getting worse – *Monitor carefully and test vigorously*
	Wear in top links *(M)*
	Seats are too low and a couple bump ground – *Remove links to give 230mm clearance under seats – Low/Medium Risk* ***still needs doing***
	Splits in supports – *Chamfer edges – Low Risk*
SURFACING:	Bark
CONDITION:	*Rake regularly to maintain levels – Low/Medium Risk*

Appendix F

Levels of Risk

Adventure playgrounds allow children to "manage an acceptable level of risk without coming to harm". They are enclosed areas, supervised by playworkers, which are only available when the staff are present.

When the playground is operated following the guidance in "Risk and Safety in Play" then the risks may generally be deemed to be "acceptable" unless there is deterioration which creates additional risks. If an issue arises which is outside the scope of "Risk and Safety in Play", then a separate risk assessment should be carried out and, if appropriate, independent advice sought.

Guidance is given below to assist staff in prioritising remedial or control measures. Should their monitoring/inspections reveal a higher level of risk than that assessed then they should indicate this to their manger and devise and carry out appropriate measures to reduce risk. Where there are opportunities to carry out remedial or control measures more quickly than indicated below, without undue effect on the utility of the playground, this should be achieved.

Unacceptable Risk	Remedial or control measure should be taken IMMEDIATELY (the item put out of use)
High Risk	Remedial or control measure should be taken URGENTLY (same day or the day after)
Medium Risk	Remedial or control measure should be taken in the short term (within a few days)
Low/Medium Risk	Remedial or control measure should be programmed into maintenance/remedial work by a given date
Low Risk	Remedial or control measure should be undertaken along with other maintenance/remedial work
Monitor (M)	A problem which does not require any remedial work at present but may require some in the future if deterioration occurs
(F)	A problem which is sufficiently low risk that it is not "Reasonably Practicable" to remedy in the short term. It may be possible to remedy it when substantial other remedial works are being carried out.
Acceptable Risk	The item is in good condition and complies with the appropriate guidance ("Risk and Safety in Play" or BS EN 1176). There may be minor matters of non-compliance which it would not be "Reasonably Practicable" to modify.

"Reasonably Practicable" Approach – see next page

“Reasonably Practicable” is a term used in Health and Safety at Work legislation and indicates a common-sense approach to risk. For example, if there is a 6” nail sticking out at child’s eye level then that is very dangerous and costs little to remedy. The hazard should therefore be removed. If, on the other hand, impact absorbing surfacing is found to be marginally insufficient then the additional risk is very small and the cost of putting it right will be high. That therefore is not “Reasonably Practicable” and need not be addressed with any urgency. If the surfacing has significant repairs then the opportunity should be taken to remedy the deficiency.

There is a sliding scale between these 2 examples above and it is the job of inspectors to decide what risk to allocate. This is not a precise science and what experience has shown is that it is more important to make a judgement even if it might be slightly different to somebody else’s judgement than it is to make no judgement at all.