

PLAY AREA SAFETY INSPECTION REPORT

Char Valley Parish Council

October 2016

Park Name: Whitchurch Canonicorum
Location: Village Hall Lower St. DT6 6RF

This report is an independent safety assessment of the playground and its equipment produced by;

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REPORT NOTES

The British Standard for Play Equipment Manufacture, Installation & Maintenance is UKEN 1176:2008. It supersedes 1176:1998 which was withdrawn on 31 May 2009. The standard for Safety Surfacing is BSEN 1177.

Operators and providers are advised that equipment conforming to EN 1176 requires regular maintenance. Guidance on this and appropriate inspection, maintenance and operation schedules are contained within BS EN 1176-7:2008.

National standards have been published by BSI on children's playground equipment since BS 3178 was first issued in 1959, this standard concentrated on specifications for specific types of equipment. It was replaced in 1979 by BS 5696 which switched focus to a design and safety approach.

Playground equipment not complying with this revision should not automatically be considered as being unsafe or to require replacement.

The report will, where appropriate show conformance to BSEN15312 (sports areas) and BSEN14974 (wheeled sports). It will also use Sport England's Guidelines on MUGA's. Sport England has produced these guidelines in partnership with the Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA) for the design and construction of multi-games areas (MUGAs) and including multi-sport Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs).

A risk assessment by competent persons is used to determine what action, if any, is necessary. Therefore, this report will recommend actions where appropriate and includes the matrix used for risk determination.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations

Operators of play areas are required to ensure that their provision meets the statutory legal requirements of The Health & Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.2.

This report will examine, but is not limited to;

The general environment surrounding the play area/equipment and the approach(es) to the equipment, detailing any issues that may affect the operator's duty of care under HSWA.

The condition and nature of the safety surfacing (if any) and its compliance with BSEN 1177 detailing any issues that require the operators attention also detailing any issues that may affect the operators duty of care under HSWA.

The condition of the equipment and its compliance with the standards and guidelines shown above detailing any issues that require the operators' attention also detailing any issues that may affect the operator's duty of care under HSWA.

The installation of the play equipment and its compliance with the standards and guidelines above also detailing any issues that may affect the operators' duty of care under HSWA.

An inspection of previous reports (where available) and any actions taken as a result of those reports or that remain outstanding at the date of this inspection.

The general compliance of the equipment with the standards and guidelines above including verification of manufacturers certification where provided.

The report is a non-dismantling report and elements will only be examined insofar as this is possible without dismantling.

ANCILLARIES & EQUIPMENT RISK RATING

Ancillaries					
No.	Item	Condition	Risk/Risk Level	Action Required	By When
1	Picket Fencing	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
2	Post & Rail Fencing	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
3	Picnic Table	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
4	Bench Seat	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
5	Signage	Poor	6 /Low	Remove excess and re-position	3 months
6	Pea Gravel Surfacing	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
7	Wooden Barrier	Poor	6 /Low	Remove/Repair	2 months
Overall Risk For Ancillary Items at time of inspection				Minimal	3

Equipment					
No.	Item	Condition	Risk/Risk Level	Action Required	By When
8	Playquest Junior Swing Frame	Satisfactory	6 /Low	Replace Seats	3 months
9	Playquest Toddler Swing Frame	Satisfactory	6 /Low	Replace Seats	6 months
10	Playquest All-Play Unit	Satisfactory	6 /Low	Replace Roman Rings	N/A
11	Playquest Activity Tower -Slide Unit	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
12	Ledon Spring Horse 410	Satisfactory	2 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
13	Fawns Play Train	Satisfactory	4 /Minimal	No further action required	N/A
Overall Risk For Equipment at time of inspection				Minimal	4

OVERVIEW

This is a small play area with a mixed range of equipment. It is located behind the Village Hall and is adjacent to a small car park. The presence and location of the play area is clearly indicated and the play area is separated from the car park by adequate barriers. The target age group is indicated as being under 12. Although the local pre-school group meet in the adjacent village hall they make very little use of the play area since most of the equipment is inaccessible to toddlers with the lowest access point being absent to restrict access to higher areas. This is most noticeable on the slide unit. Consequently, the equipment meets the needs of a very limited age range being insufficiently challenging or stimulating for older children and inaccessible to younger children.

- The wooden play frames are manufactured by Playquest and typical of their age. The timbers are of standard landscaping pole rather than the ¼ Sawn or gluelam types seen in later models. The posts are all set directly into the ground rather than in post shoes which shortens the life expectancy of the units. Heartwood poles such as these tend to develop radial splits and need regular treatment with a safe preservative. When treatment is applied, the gravel should be raked back from the posts and the base of the posts should also be treated down to the concrete base.
- The slide unit uses simple round wood to provide an access ladder which is slippery when wet. These poles would benefit from either the application of grip tape or cross hatching the surface. The fitting of an additional horizontal lower down would be an acceptable modification to improve access.
- There is a small play train unit manufactured by Fawns. On the day of the inspection this was “parked” directly adjacent to the slide unit. The Playgroup leaders advised that they frequently moved it away from the unit as the toddlers would try to jump from the slide to the train but it keeps getting moved back by the slide. The most obvious siting is in front of the swings and placing it here probably leads to a concern that someone jumping from the swing could land on it and it is then moved back to the slide area. Given that it is too heavy to move easily it would be best to join the coaches and then anchor it to limit movement to a localised area such as the grass to the side of the swing frames. This would not reduce its play value but it would minimise its potential to increase risk.
- The swing seats are too high for use by any but the largest of users. It would appear from the chain length that the seats fitted on both frames may have been intended for a 2m rather than a 2.5m frame. The optimum height for a flat swing seat is 450mm. On the day of the inspection the seats were 730mm above the gravel, or chest height for a typical 7yr old. Cradle seats can be slightly higher to make it easier for lifting in and out. Again these were over 700mm clear of the gravel. This could also be due to the distribution of the pea gravel. Having installed it as a safety surface it should, like any other piece of equipment, be regularly maintained. This means raking it

to remove foreign objects and to distribute it more evenly. The chain length on both sets cannot be increased because there is no excess but the height could be corrected by building up the pea gravel below the swings.

- The swing seats are manufactured with a solid metal core overlaid with impact absorbent rubber. The rubber on all seats has degraded and no longer has the required impact absorbency. Because of this degradation a collision between a moving swing and a head could cause serious injury. These swing seats should be replaced.
- There is a barrier rail to prevent the area in front of the swing frames being used as a free play area. This rail is installed too close to the climbing frame and is within its safety zone. There are protruding nails on the top of the rail. A barrier rail is not necessary (there is none present at the other end of the frames or between the frames). A simple rail fixed horizontally to the outboard uprights of the frames would be sufficient to discourage running across the immediate area and would provide an effective replacement without compromising the safety zone of the adjoining equipment.
- The amount of signage is excessive. Although well intentioned when more than one or two advisory signs are present there impact is diminished and the appearance is cluttered and the tone becomes admonitory. A simple advisory sign is sufficient. The signs have been fixed to the picket fence suggesting that they are intended for small children to read.

The overall risk rating, on a scale of 1-25, for Whitchurch Canonicorum play area at the time of inspection in October 2016 was four which is rated as minimal.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Item	Issue	Recommendation
5 Signage	Cluttered and badly positioned	Reduce & Reposition
7 Barrier	Within fall area of climbing frame / Protruding nails	Remove from current location and reposition / fit new rail on frame ends
8 Flat Swings	Perished rubber	Replace seats
9 Cradle Seats	Perished Rubber	Replace Seats
10 Roman Rings	Fittings are rusted out	Remove / Replace

RISK MATRIX

Severity

1	Negligible
2	Minor
3	Serious
4	Major
5	Catastrophic

Probability

1	Very low
2	Low
3	Possible
4	Likely
5	Very likely

Risk = severity x probability

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PROBABILITY

	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	2	3	4	5
2	2	4	6	8	10
3	3	6	9	12	15
4	4	8	12	16	20
5	5	10	15	20	25

1 - 4	Minimal Risk		No further action			
5 - 10	Low Risk		Keep under review			
12 - 16	Medium Risk		Control measures must be in place and additional ones may need to be considered			
20 - 25	High Risk		Consider stopping the activity			