Playground and outdoor learning area safety

Play is important for a child’s learning and development. Children must be able to play in a safe environment, without the risk of being hurt by faulty or broken equipment.

Along with the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Education Standards Board (ESB), Kidsafe SA takes child safety seriously. We must balance the benefits of children engaging in play that is challenging with providing a hazard free physical environment.

We urge all sites to observe the following and consider how this aligns with local incident reporting requirements:

**First aid response**
Medical assistance must be considered when responding to playground or outdoor learning area incidents. An ambulance must be called in all situations where the site is unsure if an ambulance is required. Parent/guardian permission is not required to call an ambulance.

In addition, children who sustain a fall from heights of 2 metres or above must seek immediate and urgent medical attention and ensure parents are notified as soon as possible that emergency services have been contacted.

**Supervision**
Children must be adequately supervised during play activities and when using playgrounds, with a clear line of sight of children less than 10 years of age. This includes accounting for potential hazards such as sustaining an injury from play equipment, for example falling from a swing.

**Routine playground inspections**
Current voluntary Australian Standards indicate playgrounds should be routinely inspected to ensure they are safe and free of potential dangers. Sites are required to conduct daily visual inspections of their play equipment and surrounding space, as well as undertake 1 to 3 monthly and annual inspections.

**Annual playground inspections**
The annual inspection is more in depth and intended to determine the overall safety and condition of the playground. This should be carried out by an appropriately qualified inspector. There are a range of agencies that provide this service for a fee.

**Monitoring appropriate clothing and play**
Those supervising children at play should consider adequate supervision levels in play areas and monitor the clothing worn by children on play equipment to ensure it is appropriate. Clothing options should align with the school dress code with consideration to the health, safety and thermal comfort of all students. Children shouldn’t wear loose items of clothing or accessories that may be inappropriate for play or carry objects that protrude from their pockets. Examples of clothing that may cause a potentially dangerous situation and be inappropriate for play areas are: scarfs, necklaces and hoodie style tops or jumpers with cords.
The **DECD Outdoor learning environments standard** outlines the requirement for all sites to maintain a register of playground equipment details and nature play spaces. In addition, the ‘Workplace Inspection procedure’ provides mandatory checklists for daily, quarterly and 6 monthly inspections.

Kidsafe SA is a leading provider of playground safety training and inspections, and shares a strong partnership with DECD. Kidsafe SA and DECD are in the process of implementing a service agreement to improve the management of outdoor learning environments at schools and preschools. We look forward to sharing details once the agreement has been finalised.

Please ensure this advice is made available to the relevant staff to ensure the safety of all children when using playground and outdoor learning areas.