

**IVER PARISH COUNCIL
PLAY POLICY
NOVEMBER 2006**

“The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation and society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right.”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.

The parish council employs a detached youth worker to work with young people who congregate at the parish council owned play and recreation areas as well as elsewhere within the community.

Policy Aim

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

To achieve a balanced approach to the benefits of play (including risk-taking) and safety, with the ultimate goal of overall child welfare.

“Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk, so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.” (Play Safety Forum(PSF) 2002)²

Policy Objectives

To install playgrounds and other equipment which are fun and adventurous for young people.

Young people will be offered stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities.

The levels of risk will be managed so that young people are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

¹ United Nations convention of the rights of the child.

² The PSF members include the Association of Play Industries, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, the Children’s Play Copuncil, the Health & Safety Executive, the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, Kidsactive, th Local Government Association, the National Early Years Network, the National Playing Fields Association, the National Family and Parenting Institute, the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Playlink and RoSPA.

To ensure parish play facilities comply with all the appropriate British and European Standards.

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

To carry out routine daily recorded inspections of all play areas in addition to fully documented certified 6 – 12 monthly inspections and risk assessments by an independent inspector.

To monitor safety by keeping a central record of all reported injuries and serious incidents on parish council owned playgrounds.

To consider the implications for access to, and experience of, environmental play opportunities when commenting on planning applications relating to new developments.

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

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

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

To ensure that all playgrounds within the parish are 'dog free areas' and to keep recreation grounds as clear of dog faeces as is practicable. A duty under part IV of the Environmental Act 1990.

To maintain a site register for each playground. 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 departmental responsibility
- Details of reported accidents and serious incidents

Background Information supporting the policy aims and objectives

Government and HSE injury data show that the level of risk on playgrounds is small. Playgrounds are, and have been, safer than many other places children frequent. There is growing concern that children get too little exercise, so contributing to obesity and ill-health. A policy implication is that more place facilities should be provided. Although children will be injured there, they will overall be safer and healthier.

HSE Statement on Paddling Pools (6 January 2005). “Sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them. HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures whenever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognize the benefits to children’s development of play, which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn’t be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.”

Therefore, the risk of the activity must be weighed against the benefit of the activity. Safety is not paramount. Accidents cannot be eradicated.

The number of injuries arising from playground accidents appears to have hardly changed since measurements began. A HSE sponsored report in 2002 provides evidence that despite a huge investment over 20 years in play safety the injury rate is unchanged (ref. www.hse.gov.uk/research/noframes/crr/425-449.htm).

Causes of accidents:³

- Lowest – surface type
- Followed by – equipment height
- Followed by - body-orientation in falls to the ground (irrespective of surface)
- Highest – child behaviour

Risk Management

The following principles of risk management are taken from an HSE document August 2006.

Sensible risk management is about:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequence.
- Enabling innovation and learning not stifling them.
- Ensuring that those that create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action.
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Sensible risk management is not about:

- Creating a totally risk free society
- Generating useless paperwork mountains
- Scaring people by exaggerating or publicizing trivial risks
- Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed.
- Reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering.

The parish council maintenance employees will undertake visual inspections at least 4 times a week to ensure that play equipment is in working order and free of obvious

³ Centre for Decision Analysis and Risk Management, Middlesex University

dangers such as broken glass. A written report will be given to the clerk. All broken glass and other sharp objects will be cleared along with general litter. Any repairs necessary to keep equipment in working order and compliant with legislation will be carried out as soon as possible. In the event that repairs to make safe cannot be carried out immediately then the equipment concerned will be taken out of service or the playground closed.

The parish council will employ RoSPA to undertake risk assessments once a year on all play equipment and will carry out the necessary work to eliminate high risk issues. The council will take a balanced view on areas of medium and low risk, weighing up the cost and ease of making the necessary changes against the benefit of the equipment to the users.

The parish council insurers (Zurich Municipal) will undertake engineering inspections once a year and report to the council its findings. The parish council will carry out the necessary work to eliminate high risk issues. The council will take a balanced view on areas of medium and low risk, weighing up the cost and ease of making the necessary changes against the benefit of the equipment to the users.

Action Plan

Ensure that dog-proof fencing with self-closing gates is maintained around all playgrounds in the parish.

Display signs on playgrounds informing dog owners that dogs are not permitted inside the play areas.

To ensure the provision of sufficient dog bins on areas of land owned by the parish council and to ensure that the District Council empties them regularly.

Install signs, in prominent positions, advising that owners should clean up after their dogs and use the bins provided on all land owned by the parish council.

Recognise the expected 'life' of existing equipment and create a replacement plan with earmarked funds.

Ensure that all new equipment purchased is stimulating, adventurous and fun for the children it serves by consulting with the children, parents and schools.

Ensure that there is equipment/facilities available for a variety of age ranges and abilities.

To ensure that grounds maintenance staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safety of play equipment and recreation grounds.

To ensure that all councillors are aware of the play policy.

To make the play policy available to the public and to other agencies such as District and County Councils and parish council insurers.

Clerk is to ensure that all inspections and risk assessments are carried out as detailed in the policy.

To ensure that the Planning Committee takes account of the Policy when commenting on planning applications for new developments of housing.

Appendix 1

Play Facilities owned by Iver Parish Council November 2006

St Leonard's Mound – environmental area – 1 acre of trees with some open space – surrounded by roads. Young people use this as an environmental play area and frequently make earth mounds to ride bikes over.

Iver Recreation Ground – 2 football pitches, 4 mini soccer pitches, scout HQ, allotments off to one side, one unuseable changing room, one small changing room with showers that do not work, teenage shelter, goal end with tarmac surface, relax roundabout, fitpoint, buddy swing, children's playground with 5 pieces of equipment and dog-proof fencing and self-closing gate, BMX track (earth).

Trewarden PlayGround – one piece of multi use equipment. Dog proof fencing and self closing gate.

Iver Heath Recreation Ground – 1 football pitch, 2 smaller football pitches, 3 tennis courts (club), pavilion catering for tennis and football social areas and changing facilities, children's playground with dog-proof fencing and self closing gate, a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), a BMX mound (earth), a bowls club. Both the bowls club and tennis club have a commitment to allow public use of the facilities.

Hardings Row Millennium Nature Reserve – a natural area of ponds and walkways with some open areas and trees. The parish council encourages use by local residents and schools.

Iver Heath Fields – 40 acres of fields with a small stream and some trees. A natural area for use by local residents. Motor bikes are forbidden. Part of the fields is an area where wildlife is encouraged by leaving the grass long until wild flowers have seeded and a swathe is left near the hedgerows to encourage wildlife. Young people use the fields as an environmental play area.