

Information Sheet Number 20

Fencing for Children's Play Areas

Provision of Fencing

Not all fence types are suitable for play areas. RoSPA recommend the provision of good quality fencing to contain play areas. There may be constraints concerning the design or type proposed. For example, where a piece of land on which a play area has been provided is deemed to be "common land" it may not be possible to contain the play area.

The location of the play area (e.g. rural wooded) may restrict the use of metal fencing and conversely heavy vandalism may preclude the use of timber. Similarly, a temporary play area may also determine the quality of fencing provided.

In all cases the fencing should not contain any safety hazards and RoSPA make use of the control recommendations contained in EN 1176 (the play equipment standard) when assessing fences.

Functions of Fencing

Fences can serve three functions:

- To contain children within the relative safety of the play area
- Allied with good gates, to keep dogs off the play area
- To give children a sense that it is their area and separate from the surroundings

Design and Specification Considerations

Fences should be constructed and erected in accordance with the appropriate part of BS 1722, with a minimum height of 1.0m recommended.

The suitability of other proprietary fence systems for the intended use should be examined prior to placing orders.

Some considerations are as follows:-

- § rigid panels may not be suitable for sloped sites
- § the security of proprietary caps and edgings
- § child entrapments within the fence
- § sharp and projecting fittings
- § the durability of materials appropriate for any anticipated vandalism and likely usage
- § the types of preservative treatment, e.g. the pressure impregnation of timber and hot dip galvanising etc. of steel
- § As a general rule, the best quality/largest sections of robust material(s) that can possibly be afforded at the outset should be considered thereby minimising the necessity for frequent repairs and maintenance.

Areas where problems do occur are:-

- § breakage due to inadequate wire mesh diameter or supporting wire strength
 - § Lack of top board or rail to protect upper edge of fence from damage due to climbing
 - § the use of nails alone for the assembly of timber fences and their hazardous exposure following vandalism
 - § the use of spiked railings, barbed wire and fleur-de-lys split fence pales
 - § the dismantling of fences assembled with conventional fixings
 - § inadequate posts, rails and distance between centres
 - § incorrect installation
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