

The Inspection and Maintenance of Gymnastics, Sports Hall, Fixed Play, Fitness and Sports Equipment

This guidance has been produced by The Association for Physical Education (afPE) to support schools in ensuring appropriate standards are met when Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity (PESSPA) equipment is inspected and maintained.

Do schools have to annually inspect and maintain their PESSPA equipment?

Maintaining PESSPA equipment prolongs its life, use and helps to ensure that safe standards are met.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

(<http://goo.gl/JjdaTM>) requires employers to provide safe plant and equipment for employees and other visitors (e.g. students, community use, lettings), and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) (<http://goo.gl/Oy1nml>) require that all equipment should be subject to **systematic and regular inspection** to identify any signs of damage or wear and tear that may cause injury.

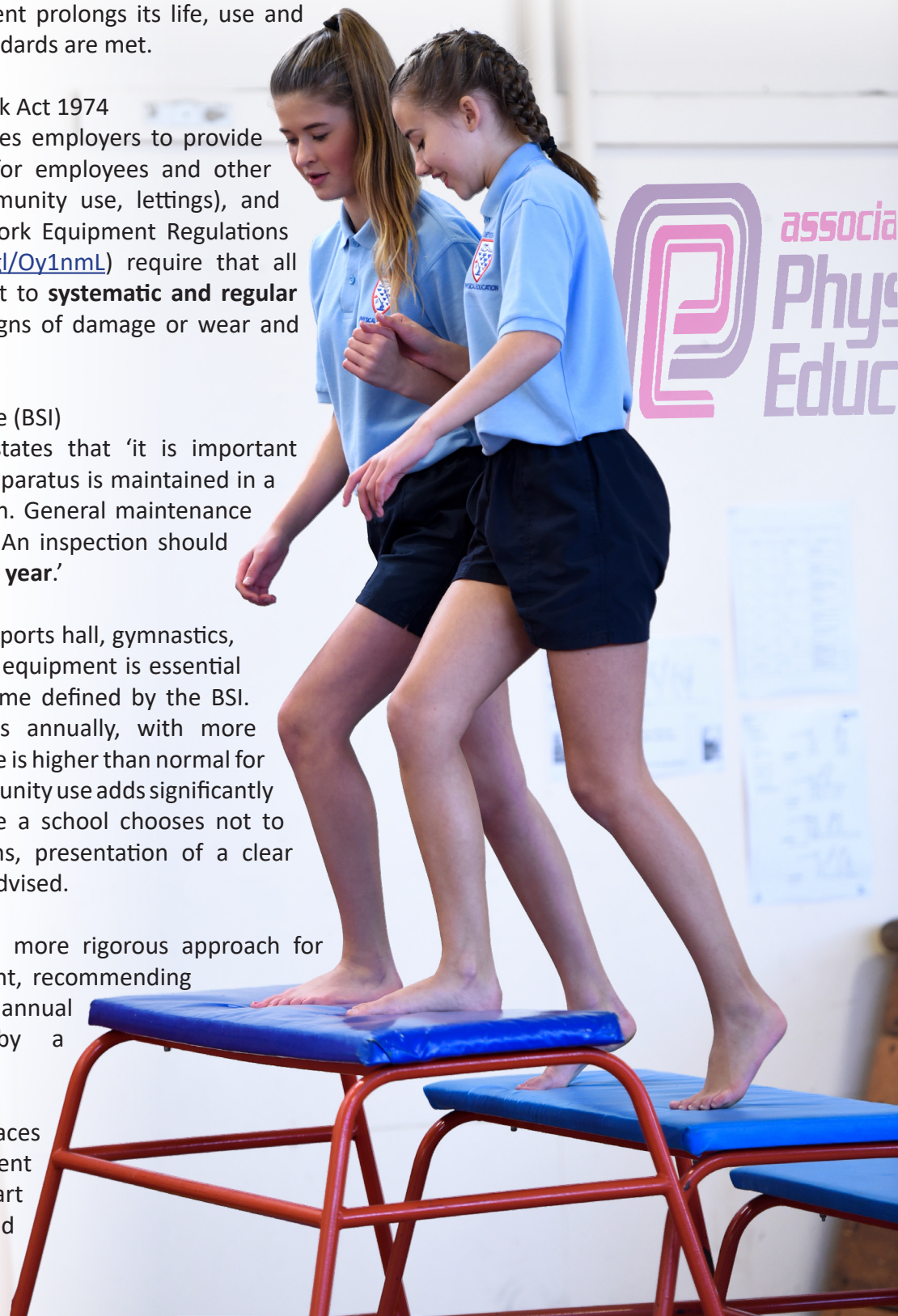
The British Standards Institute (BSI)

(<http://shop.bsigroup.com>) states that 'it is important that all physical education apparatus is maintained in a first class, fully safe condition. General maintenance should take place **regularly**. An inspection should be carried out **at least once a year**.'

The regular maintenance of sports hall, gymnastics, fixed play, fitness and sports equipment is essential for safety. '**Regular**' is not time defined by the BSI. However, it typically means annually, with more frequent inspection where use is higher than normal for a school (such as where community use adds significantly to equipment usage). Where a school chooses not to undertake annual inspections, presentation of a clear rationale for this is strongly advised.

BS EN 1176 recommends a more rigorous approach for outdoor fixed play equipment, recommending recorded visual, periodic and annual engineering inspections by a competent person.

BS EN 1177 covers safety surfaces around fixed play equipment that should be checked as part of the inspection of the fixed play equipment.



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An annual inspection of school PESSPA equipment should include, as appropriate:

- gymnastics equipment
- trampolines and trampettes
- fitness equipment – multi-gyms and free weights
- indoor and outdoor adventure play equipment
- indoor and outdoor sports posts, nets, goals and tables
- indoor and outdoor cricket nets
- high-jump landing modules
- parkour equipment
- adventure activities facilities – climbing towers, climbing walls
- fixed play equipment and safety surfaces
- ball courts.



An **‘inspection’** – contractors check the equipment and produce a report indicating all the minor and major work that is identified as being needed.

A **‘maintenance inspection’** – contractors will check and carry out minor repairs at the time of the inspection, plus provide a report on more extensive and expensive repairs that are advised. ‘Same day’ minor works to bring slightly faulty equipment up to an acceptable standard may be negotiated within the basic contract or costed separately.

Most schools combine inspection arrangements with maintenance provision into one contract for convenience. Some prefer, as a quality-assurance method, to separate the inspection and maintenance and the remedial work/report is tendered. A list of contractors is available from afPE.

Planning a PESSPA equipment inspection

Academies, free schools and other non-LA schools are responsible for making their own contractual arrangements for PESSPA equipment inspections, and are advised to put in place procedures for ensuring that it is organised annually, or in accordance with the arrangements expected by their employers and insurers. Where the LA is the employer, it *sometimes* makes central contractual arrangements for its schools’ annual PESSPA equipment inspection. However, if the LA does not organise the central contractual arrangements, LA schools should make their own arrangements.

afPE offer a list companies who have a known reputation for competent inspection and maintenance using fully trained personnel (see back page for further details).

In order to achieve appropriate safe-practice standards for PESSPA equipment and facility maintenance, **inspection contracts should include reference to the scope of the work, the quality and standards of work, the identification of hazards and risks to be managed, and the maintenance tasks to be carried out.**

The school leadership team has a responsibility to ensure agreed maintenance requirements are achieved.

The inspection schedule should include all necessary timber repairs, cleaning and re-covering of plastic and leather surfaces, checking metal items for wear, lubrication of moving parts, inspection of wall and roof fittings, replacement of worn parts and items including those on trampolines, multi-gyms, and sports and play equipment.

The contract content needs to be sufficiently detailed to ensure that all PESSPA equipment requested is checked and repaired/reported on. It should not be assumed that any equipment outside the agreement will be checked without extra cost.

The 'employer' should read thoroughly the contract and promotional information that is provided by any equipment inspection company, and clarify any uncertainties before committing to the contract. Any company should be audited to the ISO 9001:2008 level of quality assurance checked through references.

Employers should check that the work will be carried out in compliance with BSI 1892 (1986) with some period of guarantee. In addition, employers should check the following:

- The equipment inspection
- Appropriate **insurance** is held by the contractor and made available for scrutiny if necessary – typically, public and product liability insurance and employer's liability insurance for £10million for each.
- The company has sufficient workers, tools and materials to fulfil the agreed schedule of work (e.g. there should be at least two operatives where heavy trampolines need to be opened for inspection; appropriate access equipment might need to be carried if the contract requires that high-level apparatus, such as ropes, is inspected at the installation points rather than visually from the floor).
- All company personnel carry suitable **ID cards**.

The maintenance and inspection work should seek to disrupt teaching as little as possible but be open to observation and monitoring. Agreeing the time and date for an inspection will ensure access to the facilities and items involved, which in turn, should prevent complicated arrangements and wasted time caused by inspection team visits outside school hours. It is good practice to arrange the work during school time as a staff member, preferably the PE subject leader, should be involved in the inspection process for at least part of the time. They should be given the opportunity to identify any equipment or apparatus concerns prior to the inspection/maintenance work commencing and discuss the inspection report and remedial works to be undertaken.

The inspection company should provide a dated, written report, describing the condition of equipment checked, the separate costs of all recommended repairs and any recommendations for prioritising repairs.

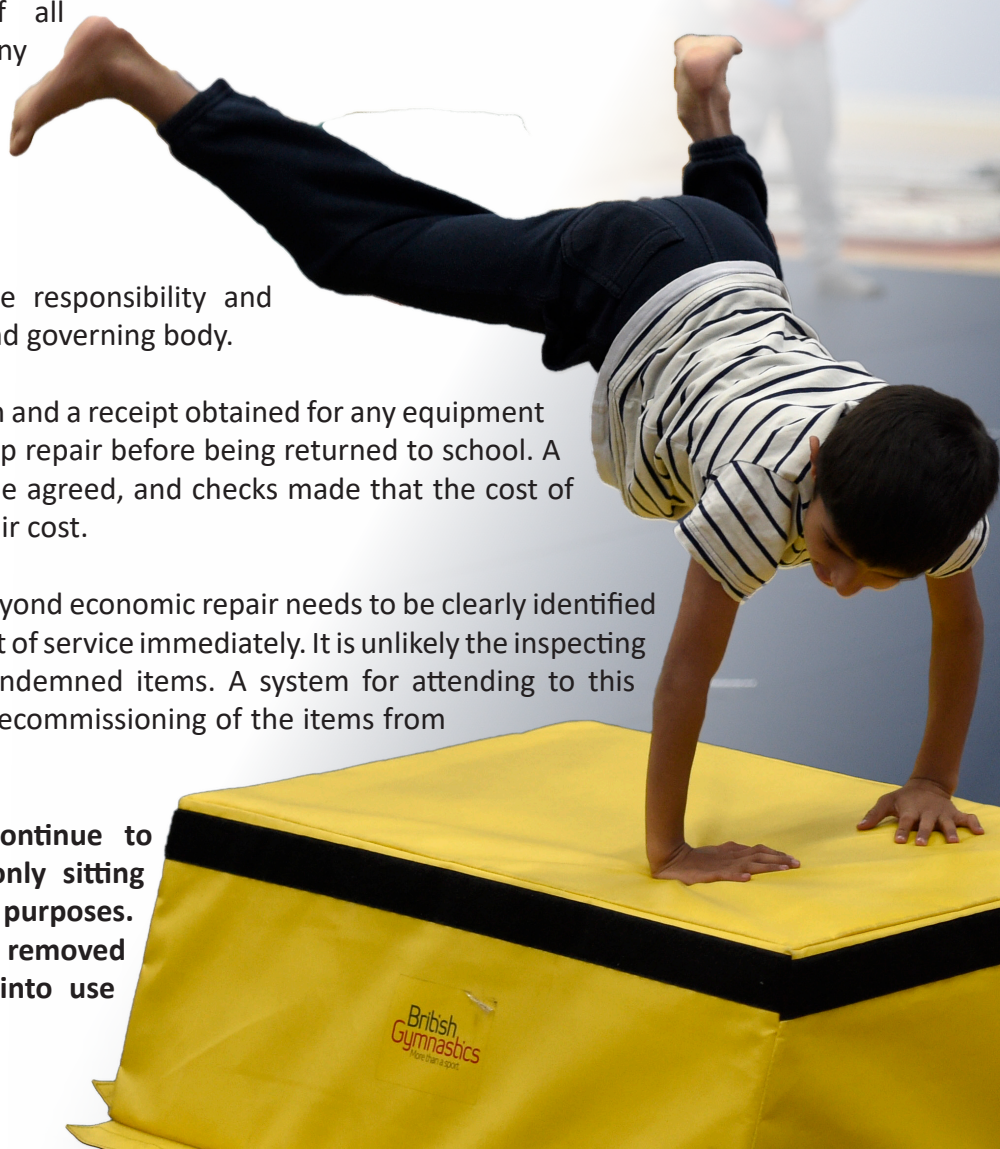
After the inspection

Action based on the report is the responsibility and decision of the head teacher (HT) and governing body.

Signed authorisation should be given and a receipt obtained for any equipment needing to be removed for workshop repair before being returned to school. A return time for equipment should be agreed, and checks made that the cost of return is included in the overall repair cost.

Any item judged to be unsafe and beyond economic repair needs to be clearly identified as condemned and must be taken out of service immediately. It is unlikely the inspecting company will physically remove condemned items. A system for attending to this needs to be clear, and removal or decommissioning of the items from use guaranteed.

Condemned items should not continue to be used even for limited (e.g. 'only sitting on') or non-physical education purposes. All condemned items need to be removed so that they cannot come back into use 'inadvertently'.



Condemned equipment needs to be clearly identified by the inspecting company in order that teachers do not continue to use it in ignorance of the unsafe situation.

Agreement is needed between the employer and the inspecting company that equipment needing repair is shown to a nominated member of the school staff, preferably the PE subject leader and a senior manager, and the situation explained. Clarification as to whether any such equipment can continue in use, until it can be repaired, needs to be agreed before the inspection concludes.

Any report subsequent to an equipment inspection is like an 'MOT' in that it comments on the state of the equipment at the time of the inspection and does not guarantee condition and safe use at a later date.

A specialist PESSPA equipment inspection does not negate the obligation on teachers to inspect all equipment visually prior to each use and afPE strongly recommend that students learn to take increasing responsibility for checking PESSPA equipment before and during use. (Chapter 3/Section 8: Equipment in the Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity publication 2016 provides further information).

If your school is not a member of afPE and you are interested in joining this national association, please call 0905855584 for further details. Articles like this feature in our termly members' journal, members' website pages and are useful for not only keeping you up to date but keeping at the fore front of health and safety information and compliance and ensuring good practice in physical education, school sport and physical activity. School Membership starts from as low as £61.



Association for Physical Education **Who we are & What we do**

The Association for Physical Education (afPE) is a registered charity and is the **only** Physical Education Subject Association in the UK.

We are committed to being the representative organisation of choice for people and organisations delivering or supporting the delivery of physical education in schools and in the wider community. We provide quality assured services, resources, and valuable professional support for our members and the physical education, school sport and physical activity sector.



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