Playground Supervision

Guidance

2024-2025

Our vision is to enable all to flourish



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| 1.*Safety Health and Environment (SHE)*Helpsheet HSxxx | Introduction |
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|  | The following guidance has been prepared to assist schools in assessing the adequacy of supervision arrangements during break times. It is based on guidance from the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Unit at Gloucestershire County Council. Also included is some guidance on pupils leaving the school site during lunch breaks, supervision before and after school and managing absconding pupils. |
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| **2.** | **Risk Assessment** |
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|  | A risk assessment for break times will need to cover various factors. The [risk assessment checklists](#appendices) attached will help Primary, Infant and Junior schools determine the appropriate level of supervision. These have been split into the different areas that schools are likely to need to supervise.  |
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|  | The risk assessment will need to be undertaken by the headteacher, H&S Coordinator or other person as designated by the headteacher or responsible person.  |
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| **3.**  | **Ratios** |
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|  | There is no legal minimum ratio. The ratio of adults to children in the playground is a matter which falls within the duty of care for pupils that every school has. The translation of that duty into practice is the responsibility of the headteacher, who must consider all the relevant factors, for example:  |
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|  | * how old are the children?
* how many of them are there?
* what is their behaviour pattern and record?
* what risks are present in this location?
* what rules are in place to regulate conduct?
* how competent are the supervising adults?
* what back-up exists to cope with an emergency?
* the size, shape, and layout of the playground area.
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| **4.** | **Competence of supervisors** |
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|  | As with all staff, Mid-Day Supervisors require training in order to effectively meet the demands of the job. Those taking on this role need to be viewed as competent and, in order to be viewed as such; they should receive training, both at induction and, on regular occasions thereafter, on the following:  |
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|  | * what is acceptable physical intervention with pupils and when they may use this intervention;
* what to do in the case of unruly behaviour or accidents;
* effective supervision such as patrolling the area rather than being static;
* who to report these issues to and how to record them;
* training on first aid and medical techniques, if required and Mid-day Supervisors volunteer to undertake the duties;
* instruction and practice on other emergency procedures, e.g., fire evacuation;
* the identity of any pupils who need close supervision, e.g., who may be prone to run away or have a particular medical need;
* the areas to be supervised and cover arrangements, should one of their colleagues be involved in an incident;
* any specific areas requiring particular attention e.g., play equipment, and any rules associated with the use of the area or equipment;
* the above are only a sample of aspects on which Mid-day Supervisor need to have received instruction or training. Each school will need to establish its own list of training requirements.
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| **5.**  | **Emergency arrangements** |
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|  | The identification and implementation of emergency arrangements is also recommended. Once you have identified appropriate levels of supervision you will then need to consider what steps could be taken if these levels are unable to be met, e.g., due to staff absence. Some suggested emergency provisions are indicated in [part 4](#emergency) of the checklist.  |
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| **6.** | **Review** |
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|  | The school should review the staffing levels regularly, in order to ensure that they are effective and in light of any incidents which involve pupils: |
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|  | * leaving site without permission;
* being in locations where they are not allowed to be;
* using materials or equipment they should not.
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| **7.** | **Pupils leaving site during lunch break** |
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|  | A parent may take charge of their child during lunch breaks without the school's consent - except for detentions.  It is helpful if parents advise the school in advance that they intend to do so, but the school may not prevent them taking charge of the child unless there is a safeguarding concern |
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|  | The school should have a process in place which explains what will happen if pupils leave site without parental consent in terms of unauthorised absence and absconding. |
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| **8.** | **Supervision of playgrounds before and after school** |
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|  | There is an expectation that schools will supervise pupils on school premises and in playgrounds for a reasonable period before and after school to safeguard pupils’ health and safety. Failure to do so could result in claims for negligence in the event of an accident to a pupil. |
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|  | What is reasonable is a matter for the headteacher to determine, having regard to the particular circumstances of the school. Generally, it is advised that supervision should be for no more than 15 minutes before and 10 minutes after the school day – this should be communicated to parents so that there is a clear understanding. The school will need to consider any contractual requirement that transport providers may have around arrival and departure times.  |
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|  | In the event of an accident to a pupil before or after school, allegedly due to lack of supervision, the onus would be on the organisation to demonstrate that it had acted ‘reasonably’. |
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|  | Parents/carers should be made aware of their responsibility to supervise their own child/ children and keep them safe, for example by keeping them off play equipment if necessary. |
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|  | The headteacher, is responsible for ensuring that supervision is adequate, and, within directed time, all teachers can be required under their conditions of employment to assist with this supervision. Headteachers should ensure that parents, staff, and pupils are all aware of - and periodically reminded about - the established supervision arrangements. If, thereafter, a child arrives early or departs late and has an accident, it is unlikely in most circumstances that the lack of supervision would be held to constitute negligence. |
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| **9.** | **Home time** |
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|  | It is for a school to decide on its pupil collection policy and procedures. Typically, where younger children are ordinarily escorted to and from school by their parents or some other responsible adult, staff should not release pupils until a parent/adult has collected the child. The school may want to request notification from the parent/carer if someone different will be collecting their child, otherwise staff should ensure that the child is familiar with the person collecting them. |
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|  | Difficulties occasionally occur when a parent/adult does not arrive to collect his/her child at the end of the afternoon session. Where this happens, it will be important for the school to act “reasonably”. Responsibility for deciding what to do in any particular circumstances rests with the headteacher. However, where children are normally met after school, it would generally be held to be unreasonable to send them home unaccompanied.  |
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|  | Where it appears that the child has been forgotten or abandoned, every effort should be made to contact one of the child’s parents/carers or other emergency contacts. As a last resort it may exceptionally be necessary to contact Social Services for example. |
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|  | The school should also consider whether older siblings can collect younger pupils. |
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| **10.** | **Pupils absconding from school premises** |
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|  | The following measures will minimise the risk of pupils absconding from school. Guidance from the school’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in education should be followed at all times. |
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|  | * names of children who are at risk of absconding from school (plus any relevant details) should be made available to all staff, including temporary and supply teachers and voluntary helpers;
* the headteacher or senior member of staff should be informed as early as possible if there are particular circumstances which increase the risk of absconding;
* registers to be taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Pupils leaving the school for any reason during the day must be signed out by a parent/carer;
* support should be offered to any child identified as at risk of absconding and their family to reduce the likelihood as far as possible;
* it is important that any security arrangements put in place to prevent young children absconding do not impede emergency evacuation arrangements, i.e., avoid locking devices on doors / gates that require the use of a key.
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|  | As soon as it is suspected that a child has left the premises it must be reported to the headteacher or the senior member of staff.  A discussion should take place immediately and it should be agreed who will be responsible for searching for the child. The number of staff involved, and the scale of the search will be determined by: |
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|  | * the age of the child;
* the mood of the child;
* the time of day; and
* the adults’ knowledge of the child.
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|  | A thorough search of the school and grounds should take place. Staff directed to search off the school premises, either on foot or by car, should carry a mobile phone and follow the directions of the headteacher or senior staff. They should report back to school any further information e.g., sightings. The school shall determine when to call the police in line with the school’s child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.  |
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|  | All incidents of a child leaving or attempting to leave the premises should be recorded and reported to parents/carers as soon as possible. A follow-up meeting should generally take place to discuss appropriate support that can be given at home and at school to minimise future risk. |

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| **For more SHE advice and guidance:** |
| **** | **01452 425350** |
| **** | **she@gloucestershire.gov.uk** |
|  | **www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/she** |

**Appendix A - *Risk Assessment Checklists***

**Break/Lunch time Supervision at Key Stages 1 & 2**

* [External Play Space](#external_playspace)
* [Halls](#halls)
* [Classrooms](#classrooms)
* [Emergency Arrangements](#emergency)

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| **1 –** **External Play Space**(This will include the playground, playing field and any play equipment located externally) |
| 1.1 -For playground duty, do you provide levels of supervision that meet, or are better than the following:  |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 75 junior pupils | Yes/No |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 30 infant pupils | Yes/No |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 20 nursery pupils | Yes/No |
| 1.2 - If you have answered Yes to 1.1 go to 1.3. If you answered No go to 1.4 |  |
| 1.3 - The provision is felt to be generally acceptable. There could be reasons, i.e., the layout of the play space, which means that additional supervision might be required. The following should indicate where additional supervisors are required:  |  |
| 1.3.1 - Are there any parts of the play space, which cannot be seen by staff in other parts of the play space?  | Yes/No |
| 1.3.2 - If you answered yes to 1.3.1 above are these areas put out of bounds?  | Yes/No(If you answered no to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 1.3.3 – Do staff patrol their areas to provide effective supervision? | Yes/No |
| 1.3.4 - If a member of the supervisory staff is called away to deal with an incident, e.g., an accident to a pupil would all parts of the playground still be under observation? | Yes/No |
| 1.3.5 - Is there any play equipment in use during play times which requires close supervision?  | Yes/No(If you answered Yes to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 1.4 - If you answered no, to any part of 1.1, indicate below what level of supervision you have. |  |
| Mid-day Supervisors per number of junior pupils | \_\_\_:\_\_\_ |
| Mid-day Supervisors per number of infant pupils | \_\_\_:\_\_\_ |
| Mid-day Supervisors per number of nursery pupils | \_\_\_:\_\_\_ |
| 1.4.1 - All areas of the play space are able to be seen from any part of the playground. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 1.4.2 - No play equipment, requiring closer supervision, is used during break times. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 1.4.3 - Other staff are present, and will support Mid-day Supervisors, in the event of accidents. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 1.4.4 - The staff are viewed as being particularly competent, having experience and authority with pupils. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 1.4.5 - Add any other point that might justify the lower levels  |  |

*NB the levels indicated in 1.1 above are generally felt to be the minimum that should be provided. If exceeded, then this should only be in the margin and must be justified by positive statements made in 1.4. If you have indicated any negative answers, it is unlikely that the level of supervision would be justified.*

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| **2 -** **Halls**(Halls can be used in two ways during lunch breaks. This either being for eating lunch as normal or as spaces to be for extreme weather play situations) |

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|  **2.1 Use of Hall at Lunchtime**  |  |
| 2.1.1 - For lunch duty in the hall or halls do you provide levels of supervision that meet or are better than the following: |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 75 junior pupils | Yes/No |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 30 infant pupils | Yes/No |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 20 nursery pupils | Yes/No |
| 2.1.2 - If you have answered Yes to 2.1.1 go to 2.1.3, if you answered No go to 2.1.4 |  |
| 2.1.3 - The provision is felt to be generally acceptable. There could be reasons, i.e., the layout of the hall, which means that additional supervision might be required. The following should indicate where additional supervisors are required:  |  |
| 2.1.3.1 - Are there any parts of the hall, which cannot be seen by staff in other parts of the hall? | Yes/No |
| 2.1.3.2 - If you answered yes to 2.1.3.1 above are these areas put out of bounds? | Yes/No(If you answered no to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 2.1.4 - If you answered no, to any part of 2.1.1, indicate below what level of supervision you have. |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 75 junior pupils |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 30 infant pupils |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 20 nursery pupils |  |
| These levels are below those recommended and must be able to be justified. You will need to able to demonstrate why they have been arrived at. |  |
| 2.1.4.1 - Other staff are present who will assist with supervision if required. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 2.1.4.2 - Add any other point that might justify the lower levels.  |  |

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| **2.2 Use of Hall by Pupils during Extreme Situations**(It is accepted that some halls will not be usable for play if it has been used for dinners, at least until cleared of tables, chairs and food debris.) |
| 2.2.1 - For wet play situations do you provide levels of supervision that meet or are better than the following:  |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 75 junior pupils |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 30 infant pupils |  |
| 1 Mid-day Supervisor per 20 nursery pupils |  |
| 2.2.2 - If ‘yes’ to 2.2.1 above go to 2.2.3, if ‘no’ go to 2.2.4 |  |
| 2.2.3 - The provision is felt to be generally acceptable. There could be reasons, i.e., the layout of the hall, which means that additional supervision might be required. The following should indicate where additional supervisors are required: |  |
| 2.2.3.1 - Are there any parts of the hall, which cannot be seen by staff in other parts of the hall?  |  |
| 2.2.3.2 - If you answered yes to 2.1.3.1 above are these areas put out of bounds? | Yes/No(If you answered no to this question additional staff should be provided.) |
| 2.2.3.3 - Are there any activities allowed in the hall which might require close supervision, e.g., pupils using scissors? | Yes/No(If you answered no to this question additional staff should be provided.) |
| 2.2.3.4 - If a member of the supervisory staff is called away to deal with an incident, e.g., an accident to a pupil, would all parts of the hall still be under observation? | Yes/No(If you answered no to this question additional staff should be provided.) |
| 2.2.4 - If you answered ‘no’, to any part of 2.1.1, indicate below what level of supervision you have.  |  |
| Mid-day Supervisors per number of junior pupils | \_\_\_:\_\_\_ |
| Mid-day Supervisors per number of infant pupils | \_\_\_:\_\_\_ |
| Mid-day Supervisors per number of nursery pupils | \_\_\_:\_\_\_ |
| These levels are below those recommended and must be able to be justified. You will need to be able to demonstrate why they have been arrived at. |  |
| 2.2.4.1 - All areas of the play space are able to be seen from any part of the playground | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 2.2.4.2 - No activities requiring closer supervision are allowed. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 2.2.4.3 - Other staff are present, and will support Mid-day Supervisors, in the event of accidents. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 2.2.4.4 - The Mid-day Supervisors are viewed as being particularly competent, having experience and authority with pupils. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 2.2.4.5 - Add any other point that might justify the lower levels. |  |

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| **3 -** **CLASSROOMS** These can be used during wet/sunny break situations |
| 3.1 - Have you sufficient supervision to allow one person to supervise each class  | Yes/No |
| 3.2 - If you answered ‘Yes’ to 3.1 above, go to 3.3. If you answered No to 3.1 above, go to 3.4  |  |
| 3.3 - This level of supervision is generally deemed adequate, but you will need to ensure emergency arrangements are in place. See 4 below. |  |
| 3.4 - If you answered ‘No’, indicate how you are able to justify this |  |
| 3.4.1 - Individual classrooms have internal access doors or openings which allow one person to see in to both rooms. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 3.4.2 - The doors to two classrooms are next to each other thus allowing one-person good supervision into both rooms. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 3.4.3 - There is additional support from volunteers or other staff. | True/False(If you answered false to this question additional staff should be provided) |
| 3.4.4 - Add any other point that might justify the lower levels. |  |

*Having justified that your existing provision is adequate you should also try to identify some options, which will be available, should supervisory staff be absent. The following should be considered by the school in advance of a situation arising.*

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| **4 -** **EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS** (Arrangements to be implemented should Mid-day Supervisors not be available, e.g. due to sickness.) |
| In the event that supervisors do not turn up the following arrangements will be made |
| 1 - Volunteers will be asked to stand in. These will be people who are known to the school and know the procedures  |
| 2 - Other staff, e.g., teachers, nursery nurses, will be asked to assist in covering the lunch hour. (Although it is accepted that lunchtime supervision is not covered by the set hours of the teacher an accommodation may be reached in an emergency.)  |
| 3 - One will be used to supervise more than one classroom. This being possible because the doors to two classrooms are next to each other/screens or doors linking rooms can be opened.  |
| 4 - Play equipment or activities which require close supervision are put out of use to free up a supervisor  |
| 5 - The hall is used to accommodate several classes thus still ensuring the minimum level of supervision.  |
| 6 - In the event there is a serious short fall in the ability of staff to adequately supervise pupils then parents will be contacted to collect their children. (The only time this is envisaged would be in the event that large numbers of adults were off ill whilst children were unaffected. This is viewed as a last resort once the other possibilities have been considered. )  |

***NB*** *The school needs to identify which if any of the above are possible*.