

Outdoor Play Equipment Management Training

To become an expert in managing **outdoor play equipment and school grounds**, you must transition from seeing the playground as a "break-time zone" to viewing it as a **statutory asset** requiring rigorous management.

Based on the **HSG65** framework and the **2025 School Estate Management Standards**, here is your 4-week specialised learning schedule.

Week 1: Strategic Planning & The Legal Framework

Goal: Understand the "Plan" phase and the high-level legal duties governing outdoor spaces.

- **Day 1: The Duty of Care.** Study the **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974** and how it applies to "non-employees" (pupils) in outdoor settings.
- **Day 2: Management Systems.** Master the **Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA)** cycle as defined in **HSG65**. Learn how to apply "Plan" to create a specific Outdoor Area Policy.
- **Day 3: GEMS Baseline Requirements.** Review the **Level 1 Baseline** standards for school estates. Focus on the requirement for an **Asset Register** that includes every piece of fixed play equipment.
- **Day 4: Governance & Funding.** Understand the role of Governors in overseeing estate health. Learn how to link playground maintenance to the school's 3–5 year **Estate Strategy**.
- **Day 5: Defining "Reasonably Practicable."** Learn how to balance the benefit of risky play against the cost and trouble of control measures.

Week 2: Technical Standards & Risk Profiling

Goal: Master the "Do" phase by learning the technical requirements for different outdoor assets.

- **Day 1: Playground Equipment (BS EN 1176).** Study the core safety requirements for climbing frames, swings, and slides, focusing on head and finger entrapment hazards.
- **Day 2: Impact Attenuating Surfacing (BS EN 1177).** Understand the "Critical Fall Height" (CFH) concept and how to verify that your rubber mulch or wet-pour meets the requirements for your equipment.
- **Day 3: Specialised Areas (MUGAs & Fitness).** Learn the distinct standards for Multi-Use Games Areas (**BS EN 15312**) and Outdoor Fitness Equipment (**BS EN 16630**).
- **Day 4: Risk Profiling the Grounds.** Use **HSG65** to "profile" your outdoor risks. Identify high-priority hazards like decaying timber, worn safety surfacing, or loose bolts.
- **Day 5: Hazardous Substances (COSHH).** Review **L5** to manage chemicals used outdoors, such as weedkillers or wood preservatives. Ensure they are stored in a locked, ventilated area with a usage log.

Week 3: Operational Safety & Safeguarding Integration

Goal: Learn how to manage the "Do" and "Check" phases through daily operations and child protection.

- **Day 1: The Tiered Inspection Regime.** Create a workflow for **Routine Visual Checks** (daily), **Operational Checks** (monthly/quarterly), and the statutory **Annual Specialist Inspection**.
- **Day 2: Perimeter Security & KCSIE.** Integrate site safety with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)**. Check that gates are secure, self-closing, and that "blind spots" are identified.
- **Day 3: Site Separation.** Verify that pedestrian and vehicle routes are clearly marked and that parking areas are strictly separated from play zones.
- **Day 4: Natural Hazards.** Learn the requirements for routine **tree inspections** and monitoring radon gas if applicable to your geography.
- **Day 5: Contractor Management.** Learn how to vet contractors for outdoor repairs. Ensure they receive a site induction and are aware of the school's **Asbestos Register** if they are working near building footprints.

Week 4: Performance Review & Continuous Improvement

Goal: Master the "Check" and "Act" phases to ensure long-term estate health.

- **Day 1: Accident Investigation.** Study **HSG245** to learn how to investigate playground falls. Look for "root causes," such as a failure in the inspection regime or poor equipment design.
- **Day 2: RIDDOR Reporting.** Use **INDG453** to identify when an outdoor injury must be reported to the HSE (e.g., if a pupil is taken to hospital for a specified injury).
- **Day 3: Reviewing the Risk Register.** Review your outdoor risk assessments annually. Check if control measures are still effective or if equipment usage has changed.
- **Day 4: Strategic Asset Review.** Move towards **Level 3 (Fully Effective)** by using data from condition surveys to prioritise long-term playground refurbishments.
- **Day 5: The "Act" Phase.** Present an annual report to the Board of Governors. Use the findings from your inspections to update the **Estate Strategy** and secure funding for the next cycle.