



API

Supporting the
UK Play Industry

Telltale signs your playground and outdoor facilities need updating

In the busy rush of everyday school life, it can be difficult for your staff, facilities management or senior management team to find a minute to assess whether you're getting the most from your playground and outdoor facilities. Look carefully and you'll find some sure signs that it might be time to make some improvements.

Here are our top 5 telltale signs that your playground and outdoor facilities need updating:

1. Children aren't as active as they could be

Children NEED to get active. As well as the obvious health benefits, it's also important to keep them attentive and open to learning. Increasing opportunities for active outdoor play (85.7%) and physical activity (68.5%) are the top reasons why schools approach API members for advice on improving their outdoor facilities. 68.5% of members surveyed recently said schools report an increase in children's physical activity after improving their outdoor facilities.

2. Children wandering around at break times or reluctant to go outside

Play often requires a stimulus. While any well-designed playground should include space for socialising, small group play and quiet reflection or reading, a large number of children wandering aimlessly at break times suggests a lack of stimulating, challenging or interesting facilities. 'Can I stay in the classroom at break time?' is a question that should set alarm bells ringing. It suggests that indoor activities are more exciting than those outside.

3. Classroom behaviour is declining

Children with little or nothing to do at break times can become bored and disruptive in the classroom. Anti-social behaviour and bullying can increase too. With a well-designed playground and outdoor facilities, schools can create plenty of opportunities for children to be physically active throughout the school day which brings wide-ranging benefits. In recent API research, nearly half (45.7%) of our members said their school customers report better behaviour and 28.5% report more positive attitudes to learning as a result of improving their outdoor facilities.

4. Teachers want more opportunity to take the curriculum outside

There's lots of evidence about the benefits of outdoor learning to child development. If your teaching staff are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to take the curriculum outside, investing in some sheltered space or an outdoor classroom is a great solution.

5. Equipment or facilities are in poor condition

The last point may seem obvious but it's important...Play equipment and facilities that are old, lack play value, or have been poorly repaired and maintained soon lose their appeal to children and can become unsafe. Introduce a rigorous inspection and maintenance programme to keep your facilities safe, and observe how, if and how often equipment is being used.

For more expert advice on school play and outdoor facilities, visit www.api-play.org

Association of Play Industries

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