



Maintaining your shade sails and softfall

Children in early learning centres spend a great deal of time outside enjoying the playground. It's therefore imperative that centres place great effort in maintaining those playgrounds. Not only will this make them safer for the children, it will also lengthen the lifespan of the playground equipment.

Shade sails and softfall are materials within a playground which can suffer damage through wear and tear when they aren't maintained overtime. Below are useful tips for inspecting and maintaining these two areas.

General tips

- > Follow the manufacturer instructions for any repair, service and cleaning.
- > Keep a record of inspections done and any repairs needed and carried out.
- > Carry out inspections following any significant event, such as a storm or vandalism, which may have caused damage within the playground.

Shade sails

- > Minor damage to shade sails, such as if they're wearing thin or fraying, is usually repairable when addressed early. Be sure to not allow the busyness of running an early learning centre become a distraction from getting onto the required maintenance before it is too late.
- > When undertaking inspections, check the shade sails supports and attachments to be sure they're still sturdy, working correctly and keeping the sail pulled tight.
- > Shade sails are great at catching falling leaves, however these leaves can cause damage when left there for too long. Damp piles of leaves following rain can lead to mould forming which in turn can cause shade sails to rot. Be sure to regularly have leaves and other debris removed from shade sails.
- > When cleaning a shade sail, don't use harsh chemicals or high pressure hoses as these will potentially lead to a very clean, yet very damaged, shade sail. Shade sails need to be treated carefully during cleaning.
- > If a major storm or cyclone is being predicted for your location, shade sails

should be taken down as it's very likely they'll suffer significant and possibly irreparable damage. Minor storms shouldn't cause damage if the shade sail has been well maintained. The shade sail manufacturer or installer may be needed to take the sail down.

Softfall

- > Whilst softfall is generally low maintenance, it still needs to be regularly checked to ensure it's in good condition and not creating any hazards.
- > Keep the softfall clean by sweeping away debris.
- > Stitching and joins between pieces of softfall can fray and come apart. Be sure to regularly check these joins as they are repairable when detected early. Not only will this assist with the longevity of the material, it will also eliminate tripping hazards from the centre.
- > Holes can form in softfall due to deterioration or unfortunately sometimes vandalism. Again, be sure to check the softfall regularly for any holes and organise repairs immediately.



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