

Health and Safety Bitesize

Landscaping



Tree inspection surveys by a trained arborist

Trees constantly change as they grow and can reach a considerable size and may become damaged by weather conditions or affected by vandalism, pests or diseases giving them the potential to cause harm. The legislation that places a duty on KCC and schools to manage risk so far as is reasonably practicable include:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

KCC has the responsibility for large numbers of trees on a variety of school council land sites and is required to Manage risk by ensuring a sustainable inspection survey is undertaken by a trained arborist every 18 months. Contact kenthelpdesk@skanska.co.uk to arrange if required.

Schools are responsible for the planning and completion of any issues identified by the inspection survey. Actions need to be prioritised with the most urgent actions completed quickly e.g. if there is a structural fault that presents a high risk. Medium and low risk actions must also be reviewed and should be planned in for the works to be completed. A trained arborist must complete all tree works however this does not necessarily mean you need to use the contractor who completed the survey. A record of all actions taken should be recorded.



Visual inspections of trees by school employees

In addition to scheduled tree inspection surveys by a trained arborist, schools should also carry out frequent visual checks of their trees. This will highlight if there are any obvious signs of damage, defect or movement, this is especially important after high winds or stormy weather. No specific competence is required, and the following should be checked:

- Evidence of fungus.
- Cracks in the trunk or large branches.
- Visible evidence of the tree leaning.
- Larger detached branches that may be trapped in the tree and is at a risk of falling.
- Dead branches which can be identified by:
 - A lack of foliage or bark in summer months.
 - A lack of buds or smaller growing twigs (showing living branches) in winter/spring.



Where any concerns are identified the area must be secured with appropriate signage to prevent access until further professional advice is obtained, and any remedial action required has been taken to make the tree(s) safe.

Premises health and safety inspections (including landscaping and grounds)

All schools should be undertaking and recording premises health and safety inspections:

- Using a comprehensive checklist.
- Putting in place a clear and concise action plan capturing any issues identified.
- Prioritising, planning and completion of all actions and recording works undertaken.

Where any serious concerns are identified, the area must be secured to prevent access until further professional advice is obtained, and any remedial action has been taken to make the area(s) safe.

KCC's Voluntary Controlled and Community schools are expected to carry out recorded inspections 3 times a year using the example checklist and guidance on KELSI. It is recommended to involve different members of staff to carry out these inspections, this promotes health and safety awareness and provides a 'new pair of eyes' to spot any issues.

Gardening and grounds maintenance by school employees

A general risk assessment must be in place if school employees are expected to carry out any tasks for gardening and grounds maintenance e.g. mowing, hedge cutting, basic pruning. The risk assessment should be suitable and sufficient and include:

- Information, instruction and training on using, handling and storing equipment or machinery.
- COSHH awareness training if using, handling and storing hazardous substances e.g. petrol.
- Visual user check of equipment before use to ensure in good repair/working order and are suitable for the task.
- Documented inspection/maintenance/service of powered equipment (as recommended in manufacturers guidelines). The Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 require equipment to meet basic safety standards, and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) state work equipment should be maintained in a safe working condition.
- Weather conditions.
- Lone working and personal safety.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) e.g. ear defenders, gloves, goggles

Risk assessments are also required for specific tasks e.g. grass cutting where hazards to consider include:

- Manual handling, use of grass cutting equipment and contact with moving parts of machinery.
- Ejection of debris from machinery while cutting
- Handling of sharp items of litter and items with biohazard risks.
- Noise from machinery operations, storage of fuel
- Repetitive strain injuries from strimming and hover-mowing.

Appropriate control measures to mitigate the risk of harm must be implemented before any activities commence. Risk assessments should be reviewed annually or earlier if there is an incident.

Questions or advice and support

For any further questions or advice and support please contact:

KCC's Health and Safety Advice Line
03000 418456 / healthandsafety@kent.gov.uk

KCC's Health and safety guidance and information:
[KELSI health and safety](#)

For any incidents - Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools should complete:
[KCC's online reporting form](#)