

RISK INFORMATION – SCHOOLS YARD SUPERVISION

The Risk Information contained in this paper provides input into the design of effective school yard supervision processes.

Duty of care requires:

- Provision of suitable and safe premises
- Provision of an adequate system of supervision.

Adequate supervision is required during official school open hours.

Parents should be advised of the times that school yards are supervised.

There is no Australian standard defining “adequate” supervision in terms of staff to student ratios for primary and secondary education. If a school has a stated policy that contains ratios they must be observed at all times. One court decision suggested that 2 teachers was the minimum number required for 135 students.

The Ontario Principals’ Council (Canada) suggest the following ratios:

- Kindergarten - 1 supervisor for 8-20 students
- Primary (elementary) - 1 supervisor for 50-100 students
- Secondary – 1 supervisor for 100-150 students

Supervisors need to stay on duty until either they are relieved by a replacement supervisor or the end of the break is indicated by the “bell”.

Where rostered teachers are unavailable to supervise, alternate supervisors must be provided. This also applies if supervisors need to absent themselves for some reason, e.g. a child is injured and needs first aid attention.

Suitable supervision coverage arrangements must be in place when alternative wet weather venues are used.

Students cannot be used to replace teacher supervisors.

The school needs to perform a risk assessment of the school yard. Appropriate control measures should be adopted for identified hazards.

There should be separation of younger students from older students.

Play structures or equipment require separate supervision.

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Training should include the following topics:

- Proper coverage of Yards
- Proper use of equipment
- How to respond to fighting
- How to respond to falls or other accidents

In establishing an effective supervisory regime, consider:

- The number and age of students
- Activities conducted during supervised times
- Special needs of students
- The different areas of the playground and whether they are visible to supervisors (i.e. “hidden” areas may require additional supervisors)
- Roster for supervision together with the procedure for when rostered teachers are unavailable. How is their absence covered?
- What happens when a child is injured and requires assistance? Adequate supervision must continue.
- Analysis of the incident register, to identify locations and causes that may require attention.
- Before and after school coverage.
- Special events coverage.
- Excursions and incursions.
- First aid supplies for supervisors.
- Communications for supervisors (radios etc.).
- Communication to parents in relation to hours of supervision.
- First aid training for teachers.
- Enforcement of hat policy in hot weather.
- Policies in relation to dangerous objects (risk analysis).
- Policy on unknown people in the yard.
- Specific policies in relation to playground equipment.
- Training of new and relief teachers in the policies.

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References:

Vero presentation by Gabrielle Hutton to Baptist Schools Insurance & Risk Management Workshop, 5 June 2013

Ontario Principal's Council, "Supervision standards for Ontario's Schools"

Dunn vs. State of Victoria, County Court of Victoria, 1997