

Playground equipment



Description: The installation of creative and challenging **structures in the playground**, ranging from climbing frames and traversing walls to outdoor gym equipment.

Reach

- Potentially all students are exposed to the new structures, but **not all students can use them at the same time**.
- The new playground facilities can be used by students (and others) outside of school hours, in addition to during break times and lunchtimes.

Equality

- This may not be usable by disabled students (depending on disability)
- Our CASE advisory groups raised concerns that certain student groups might dominate the equipment.

Acceptability

- Qualitative evidence suggests that a lack of things “to do” at break times and poor equipment is a barrier to being active at school. Introducing better playground equipment is one option to overcome this.
- **Safety** was raised as a concern by both students and teachers in our CASE advisory group. Teachers felt that these could be overcome with appropriate risk assessments. Students suggested that if it is *too* safe it would be **boring for older adolescents**
- An example project is **Camden Active Spaces**, which introduced new playground equipment in primary **and secondary schools**. Here, acceptability has been **very high** (from school staff and students).

Feasibility

- Requires the identification of an appropriate location within the school grounds.
- Once built, this would require **relatively little maintenance**.

Effectiveness

- There is little robust evidence about the effect of changing the playground environment on physical activity levels in children (even less in **adolescents**).

- Evidence, mostly from primary schools, suggests that the presence of permanent (fixed) play facilities is associated with more physical activity.
- Emerging data suggests that a **positive perception** of the school play environment is associated with higher levels of **physical activity** during break time in **primary schools**.
- There is positive anecdotal evidence for the **Camden Active Spaces** project (which includes two secondary schools) that this project increased **physical activity** during break times and improves **concentration** during the school day.
- One study examined the impact of a 'major' playground reconstruction (primary schools). It showed that it **increased physical activity** and **reduced sedentary time** during the school day.

Cost

The cost of playground equipment is highly variable depending on what is installed and the nature of the existing school environment. Some examples include:

- Large climbing/adventure tower (11m x 15m); **£26,500**
- Medium climbing/adventure tower (12m x 9m) **£10,000**
- Small climbing/adventure tower (8m x 8m); **£3800**
- Traversing wall, approximately **£500 - £1,500** per 5m
- Fitness trail, 35 to 50 meters, **£4,500 - £7,400**

In addition, this intervention is also likely to require some form of **safety surface** which could cost up to **£100** per square metre.