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# SAFETY GUIDELINES

FOR

# PONDS IN SCHOOL GROUNDS



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## **Safety Guidelines for Ponds in School Grounds**

The following guidelines relate to the design, location and management of ponds within school grounds. These guidelines must be applied *at the planning stage* of new developments, and must also be carefully considered for existing facilities. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that ponds are constructed safely, located in appropriate places and suitably managed.

### **Location**

1. If possible the pond should be located so that it is visible from nearby school buildings. This will ensure that someone who has an accident will be more likely to be seen or heard.
2. Trees and shrubs close to the line of sight must not be allowed to obscure the view.
3. A pond at the edge of a school's boundary, especially adjacent to public access, is open to vandalism and children falling in.
4. The location should also be away from regularly used paths and pitches.
5. Consideration must be given to the likelihood of authorised users and trespassers during the evening and school holidays or if the school grounds will be used as a shortcut to another place.

### **Design**

1. Ponds should be designed so that the edges of the pond are shallow, with the deeper zone positioned away from the edges, preferably in the centre or towards one end of the pond, where access is not possible.
2. The depth should be kept as shallow as possible but must not exceed one metre at its deepest point.
3. Ideally, the surrounding area of the pool should be flat. However, where this is not possible, the sides must slope gently to the edge.
4. Potholes or other tripping hazards must be eliminated from the surrounding area.
5. The banks of the pond must be adequately protected against possible erosion.
6. The edges of the pond must be clearly visible. This could be achieved by laying paving slabs around the perimeter. Paving slabs must not overhang the pond.
7. Suitable provision should be made at the water's edge so that groups can work safely. This is best provided by hard flat standing at all parts of the pond which are accessible. Where a pond is provided with a soft edge in part, for the development of wildlife, this edge *must* be inaccessible to people.
8. A suitable and safe means of access must be provided.
9. Electrical equipment near ponds is not encouraged. Pumps should be solar powered. In rare circumstances where electrical equipment is required this must be specified and installed by competent electricians.
10. Ponds in primary schools *must* be fenced to prevent inadvertent approach. The fencing may be around an area containing the pond or directly around the pond itself if necessary. If the fencing has slats, those slats must be vertical, not horizontal, with no gaps large enough for a child to pass through. The fence must be a minimum of a metre in height, but can be higher, depending on risks. Any fence must not obscure visibility of the pond (See Location above). A lockable gate must be provided to deter unsupervised entry.
11. For all other schools with ponds the need for fencing should be determined as part of the risk assessment process. Where accidental approach is foreseeable then fencing should be provided as one of the control measures required to reduce the risk.
12. Excessive plant growth, deposits of silt, or mud should be removed on a regular basis.
13. Where the school is used in the evening the provision of illumination around the pond area should be considered as an additional control measure.
14. Appropriate warning signs must be posted, warning of the presence of a pond detailing safety rules for use. Signs must be used in addition to – not instead of – other control measures.

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### Management

1. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring safety is maintained in schools rests with the Head Teacher. They may delegate the management of performance and facilities, but will retain the responsibility.
2. The school must carry out risk assessments (Generic Risk Assessment at Annex A) in relation to the pond and activities involving the pond. All relevant information (ie the findings of the assessment and the control measures) must be relayed to staff and to others that may carry out activities involving the pond.

*NOTE: The Generic Risk Assessment at Annex A is a guide only. You must remember to make it specific to your own pond and location. See SCE Guide to SHEF Management or SCE – A Guide to Risk Assessment for further information.*

3. Classes or groups using the pond must be supervised at all times. The ratio of pupils to staff must allow full control.
4. The pond must be regularly maintained to ensure that the perimeter does not become obscured and that the area around the pond does not deteriorate.
5. The school must develop an emergency action plan for incidents associated with the pond/pool. At the very least this should cover;
  - how to rescue a person who has fallen in
  - resuscitation and first aid
  - how to call for assistance
  - what to do with other pupils during an emergency situation

Adequate instruction must be issued to pupils as to the risks, and how they should behave. This should include instruction not to drink the water.

All incidents involving falls into the pond must be reported on accident form SCE Form 2000.