

Mugginton Church of England Primary School

Playground Surface

The condition of the playground surface has been a regular feature of the Premises Committee agenda for some time. Although there are no reports in the injury book because of slipping even contact with the surface results in stained clothing. Neither is desirable.

Over the winter months the surface never has a chance to dry out and is more slippery than at other times of the year. The area on the southern end, especially near the gate is worse than the northern part.

The cause of the slipperiness is not known precisely but it would appear that the small cavities in the surface get filled with dirt, dust and debris making for a smooth surface. This is compounded by the growth of mosses in these cavities. Weather conditions during the winter of 2015-16 and summer of 2016 have not helped as there were no extended periods of very cold weather in the winter nor extended periods of dry, warm weather in the summer so the moss has experienced ideal growing conditions. A quick look at domestic driveways in the area shows that moss growth is extraordinarily prolific at the moment.

Novasport's, (who laid the Softplay), recommendation for maintaining the Softplay© surface is a deep-clean each year. However, this costs £800 per treatment.

The playground was last deep-cleaned in 2014 and a willing group of parents did a splendid job with a power pressure-hose clean in the autumn of 2015. They identified the moss growth as a problem since it was difficult to remove with domestic-strength power-washers.

The playground was sprayed with a moss killer during the summer of 2016 and the entrance area was sprayed again during the autumn break. Moss killers are only effective when used in dry conditions so a re-spray is problematic during the winter months.

The hedge along the southern boundary has also been trimmed to the height of the fence to allow more light onto the playground surface to try to reduce moss growth.

This is all a lengthy way of saying that the school is acutely aware of the problem but has yet to find a satisfactory outcome despite trying a variety of treatments.

Representatives from Novasport and a company supplying AstroTurf visited the school playground early in November 2016 to give their opinions.

The Novasport rep said that the surface was twelve years old and, while it would benefit from another deep-clean, nothing was going to restore the surface to its original state. (Those who visit the play area at Carsington water will be aware that similar problems are developing on that surface which was laid much more recently than the playground.) Relaying the Softplay is estimated to cost in excess of £20,000.

The AstroTurf rep provided an estimate of around £35,000 to lay AstroTurf on the playground.

There would not, therefore, seem to be any simple or reasonably cost-effective solution to the problem.

In the interim, Governors have approved the expenditure of £800 to deep-clean the surface again (during the Easter holidays) and this should improve the quality of the surface in the short-term.

Mr Green will investigate the possibility of someone local being engaged to sweep the playground regularly – if you know anyone who might be interested – please inform Mr Green

The subject remains under review and any suggestions to mitigate this rather intractable problem will be most welcome.