

Letter to all schools and children's centres

9 November 2017

Dear Headteacher/ Business Manager, Children's Centre Manager,

Urgent Alert re: Accident caused by collapse of gate in Primary School

I wish to bring to your attention an accident which occurred on Friday 3 November 2017 at a primary school in North Yorkshire where a 6 year old pupil and a teaching assistant were both injured by a 1.8 metre green weldmesh gate which fell due to sudden failure of a lower hinge. The pupil suffered a head bump and the teaching assistant a suspected chipped bone in her left arm. Clearly these injuries could have been more serious. Our investigation is still ongoing but to date we believe the main cause of the sudden sheering of the eyebolt on the lower hinge was due to the presence of 2 metal stops or lugs welded on to the hinge (designed to prevent finger trapping if the gate over closes). With daily use, the metal stops put additional pressure on the eyebolt causing the stem of the bolt to bend and eventually fracture (see photos below). There was evidence of bending of eyebolt stems on three other gates at the same school. These gates also had similar metal stops in situ adjacent to the eye bolt AND were accessed readily by pupils.

Action Required

1. Arrange for an urgent inspection of all your gates by a member of staff to determine if metal stops are fitted to the hinges of the gate AND have an eyebolt fitting. Please note these gates could be green weldmesh or some other design.
2. If your gates have **no metal stops fitted to the hinge** then ensure that gates are safely kept in a shut position or secured in an open position (e.g. with use of an attachment into the ground).
3. If you have one or more gates **with metal stops fitted** please inspect the eye bolt stem for any bending and **if any are found** please take the gate out of operation. You should arrange for the eyebolt to be replaced and metal stops removed before re use. The company who installed the gate, if known, may be able to assist with this. If your school is in in full MASS please contact the maintenance officer for your school. If the eyebolt appears in good condition then try and ensure that the gate is maintained in an open or closed position and is not allowed to be over extended thereby causing additional pressure on the eyebolt.

If you require advice or further information please get in touch with the health & safety office health&safety@northyorks.gov.uk or telephone 01609 53 2589

Thank you for your co-operation.

Regards

Robin Smith
Health & Safety Risk Manager

Photographs Attached



Photo 1: Gate post with 2 metal stops on lower hinge and part



Photo 2: Bent stem of eye bolt (at same school)



Photo 3: Gate involved in accident