

Playground Stepping Stones Risk Assessment

On Wednesday 26 June, 2024, Cheryl Sexton, Julie Vear and I visited the play area at Goulburn Green to undertake a risk assessment in respect of the wooden stepping stones. It was noted that, with the exception of one stepping stone, the stones have bedded into the ground well and there is very minimal movement. The stepping stone which appeared to have a slight wobble has since been dug into the ground and secured.

Whilst undertaking the risk assessment there were some children playing on the play equipment and we had the opportunity to discuss the matter with some of the local parents. In addition, a practitioner from the Betchworth and Buckland Children's Nursery was also present. The Practitioner stated that the stepping stones were very good for the children's development. The parents also commented how well received the stepping stones have been.

Additionally, in a virtual poll among the parents with children attending the Betchworth and Buckland Children's Nursery, the parents were asked whether, given that the stepping stones are not secured down, they would rather the stones: A) be removed; B) be anchored down; or C) remain in place but accept that there is an element of risk associated with them. The parents voted unanimously for option C.

Following the risk assessment, it would appear that the following options are available to the Parish Council:

Option 1 - Remove the stepping stones entirely;

Option 2 - Investigate ways in which to anchor down the stepping stones and assess whether such options are feasible; or

Option 3 - Leave the stepping stones in place and update the information sign by the play equipment to state that users use the play equipment at their own risk. If this option is pursued, it should be noted that Mole Valley will assess the safety of the stepping stones as part of its annual playground inspection. Additionally, the stepping stones would be checked frequently as part of the weekly Parish Council play equipment inspection. If over time any stepping stones did need replacing or digging in, this could be arranged.