

Trampolining in Schools

'Safe Practice in Physical Education and School Sports 2008' states in its introduction to this activity:

'Trampolining can offer a challenging and developmental gymnastic experience to pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs (SEN). Trampolines and trampettes, however, have proved to be unforgiving pieces of equipment in the absence of adequate control of body movement...'

This article identifies and confirms a range of practical safety procedures which afPE recommends in mitigating the extent of potential injury to the bouncer in those rare circumstances when things do not go as planned.

Although these procedures tend to focus upon what can be done around the trampoline itself, it needs to be stated that the majority of trampolining injuries are sustained on the bed itself. Consequently, the preparation of the performer remains paramount – it is essential that bouncers follow structured progressions that build upon well-practised and confident routines.

In those situations where the bouncer makes an error of judgement, and finds himself/herself descending outside the frame, what then should be in place to reduce the obvious discomfort of the inevitable, and possibly damaging, high impact landing?

Drawing upon regulations recently put forward by The National Trampoline Technical Committee (NTTC) within British Gymnastics (BG), within the context of representational and club trampolining, the following is seen as appropriate for safeguarding trampolining in schools. Additionally, in line with BG time scales it is anticipated that schools begin to implement these recommendations over the course of 2010.

N.B. This advice is directed at curricular/extra curricular school trampolining which could include where appropriate rotational 360 degree feet to feet movement (basic somersaulting). For high bouncers, additional provision is required in line with BG recommendations for club training.

The use of end decks and matting:

The use of end decks and mat surrounds is inter-related to the new spotting code of practice.

afPE strongly recommends the use of end decks, particularly where staff wish to develop rotational feet to feet 360 degree movement.

BG Risk Assessment (Feb 2007) concluded:

'...falls arising from performers projecting from the sides of trampolines were relatively rare and that much greater risk arose from performers projecting from the ends.'

Matting should be used down the sides of trampolines offering protection to a width of 2m and 20-25mm thickness.

It is acceptable for trampolines to be placed side-to-side or end-to end provided the intervening metalwork and springs are suitably protected.

Spotters:

With the provision of end decks and mat surrounds spotting is no longer seen as essential. Injuries to spotters in the past have contributed towards this thinking. However, providing spotters have been suitably trained and are physically capable they can operate as an additional line of defence. Using pupils in this way can add to their sense of responsibility and involvement. There should be no more than 2 spotters down each side of the trampoline.

References:

'Provision of matting around trampolines' (RV4): British Gymnastics 2008

'Trampoline Code of Practice': British Gymnastics

'Safe Practice in PE and School Sport -2008': afPE Chapter 23; pp187-193

Glen Beaumont

afPE Health and Safety Officer (Sept 2009)