



**Operation and Maintenance Manual for The Natural Grass
Pitch for School and Community use**

**This replaces the current Condition 15 planning reference
17/05583/DP**

27th April 2026

Introduction

The purpose of this Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Manual will be to provide clear guidelines for the maintenance and use of the natural grass sports pitch at The Stonehenge School, in accordance with Condition 15 of planning reference 17/05583/DP.

This manual will set out the operational and maintenance procedures for periods when the pitch is used solely by The Stonehenge School, as well as any additional requirements that will apply should community use take place. Additional measures will be clearly identified by the phrase **“when in community use only.”**

All guidelines contained within this manual will be implemented and managed by The Stonehenge School in partnership with its appointed grounds contractor, who will be fully conversant with site-specific drainage characteristics and soil conditions.

The sequencing of ground care operations alongside sporting use will be carefully managed to ensure the durability and performance of the pitch are maintained, thereby minimising deterioration of the playing surface.

School Duties

When play commences, the school will undertake specific responsibilities, including making informed decisions regarding whether conditions are suitable for play, and determining the appropriate timing and sequencing of maintenance and husbandry works.

The school, in partnership with its appointed grounds contractor, will take responsibility for the delivery of this O&M Manual and will ensure familiarity with modern machinery, techniques, and best practices required to manage and maintain a natural grass sports playing surface.

Natural Grass Maintenance Operations

Mowing

Mowing will be carried out at regular intervals and only under appropriate ground and weather conditions.

During normal conditions, grass arisings from unboxed mowing will be evenly dispersed, with no accumulation or heaps left on the surface. Mowing equipment will be correctly adjusted to ensure a clean, even cut without tearing. All cuts will overlap, and the finished surface will be free from ribbing, skids, ruts, excessive tyre marking, tufting, or divots.

Overcutting at reduced heights will be avoided, particularly during late spring and summer, to prevent undue stress on the sward. Where possible, mowing will be undertaken in transverse directions to encourage uniform growth and reduce directional bias.

Cut and Collect (when in community use only)

During peak growing season (June to August), grass clippings will be collected and removed where dispersion is insufficient. Clippings will not be left on the surface, as this may damage the grass or encourage disease.

Fertilising (when in community use only)

Appropriate fertiliser applications will be undertaken, particularly during spring and autumn, to maintain nutrient levels. Applications will be carried out at half rates in transverse directions to ensure even coverage.

All fertiliser use will be carefully considered to meet the cultural requirements of the sward. Where necessary, a suitably qualified sports turf agronomist will be commissioned to determine precise nutrient requirements. Appropriate precautions will be taken at all times due to the live school environment.

Over Seeding

Over seeding will be carried out during spring and autumn using a direct drill at recommended rates to maintain a dense and healthy sward.

Harrowing

Harrowing will be undertaken using approved equipment to discourage thatch build-up and promote the penetration of air and moisture into the turf.

Aeration/Spiking

Regular aeration through spiking or slitting will be undertaken throughout the playing season to promote root development and aid surface water dispersal. This will be carried out to an approximate depth of 150mm using appropriate machinery.

Deep Aeration / Verti-Draining / Earthquake (when in community use only)

Deep aeration will be carried out following periods of heavy use to improve drainage and soil structure. Where necessary, suitable sand dressings will be applied to enhance soil performance. A qualified agronomist will be consulted if specific requirements need to be determined.

Rolling

Rolling will be undertaken under suitable conditions to maintain an even playing surface. Equipment used will be appropriate in size and weight, and operations will not exceed a speed of 10 km/h to prevent surface damage.

Weed Control

The pitch will be regularly monitored for weed species. Where necessary, approved selective herbicides will be applied under suitable conditions to prevent suppression of the grass sward.

Water / Irrigation (when in community use only)

Irrigation will be applied during dry periods where necessary to prevent soil cracking, settlement, or damage to drainage systems. In extreme conditions, irrigation may be limited due to local restrictions such as hosepipe bans.

Top Dressing (when in community use only)

At the end of the playing season, top dressing using suitable root zone material or sand will be applied at appropriate rates and worked into the surface to maintain soil structure.

Topping Up Settlement (when in community use only)

During prolonged dry periods, settlement in cracks or drainage lines will be rectified using appropriate root zone materials. This will include reseeding where necessary, particularly in clay-based soils.

Pesticide Application (when in community use only)

Pesticides will be applied in accordance with manufacturer recommendations using approved equipment. Where required, mechanical agitation will be used during application.

If necessary, a qualified sports turf agronomist will be consulted to determine appropriate treatment strategies. Alternatively, manual weed removal will be undertaken where appropriate.