

# Play for All

## Universal Inclusion in Playgrounds



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# Equity in Access to Inclusive Playgrounds

The social connectedness of playing together in public playgrounds is an asset in equity and inclusion agendas. Since public playgrounds are for all citizens, planners should consider whether all can use them.



Ed. Jeanette Fich Jespersen  
KOMPAN Play Institute

## The ethos of inclusive playgrounds

All children have the right to play. They need play for their well-being and healthy development. Play unites children across nationalities, genders, ages, and abilities. The playground is where many children meet peers and behaviors of all kinds. It is where they experiment, experience, and learn to accept differences.

Playgrounds are critical social infrastructure in modern cities as some of the few places where children can roam and play freely and securely.

This is why all children—including children with disabilities—should be considered when great playgrounds are designed.

## Who should be considered in inclusive playgrounds?

Children and families with disabilities often have few opportunities to enjoy public playgrounds on an equal footing with everyone else. The inaccessibility of playgrounds for wheelchairs or walkers makes visiting impossible for some families. For many families dealing with Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder, (AD(H)D), or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) many otherwise lovely playgrounds are simply too overwhelming due to their lack of quiet, rest, and relaxation areas. Considering the rapidly growing number of people diagnosed with AD(H)D and ASD, there is good reason to consider playground accessibility in terms of more than just wheelchair access.

This publication will present the newest science on user needs and policies to consider in playground planning. Additionally, you will find a

research-based inclusive playground checklist, design inspiration, good local practices, and cases.

The aim is to assist you in making your community's playground, or your next playground project, inclusive and playful for all.

Enjoy!

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**The playground is where many children meet peers and behaviors of all kinds.**

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Universal design means usability of equipment for the widest possible user group across abilities and disabilities.

# Playgrounds for All Children

## Inclusion of Invisible and Visible Disabilities

Inclusive playground planning has had its ups and downs, especially regarding differences in opinion on best practices. One difference is whether children with disabilities should have special equipment in public playgrounds or whether that would be stigmatizing. Another point of discussion is whether or not children with disabilities should have equal access to the playground's centerpiece of play.

### Invisible Disabilities

With the scientific research of the last decade, not only has the focus on neurodiversity grown, but so has the documented knowledge of which design approaches are valuable when

it comes to playground design and play equipment encompassing a wide variety of user needs.

We still see an enormous need to ensure inclusive playgrounds that allow children and parents with disabilities to access and use playgrounds. A universal design approach is one of the desired ways to achieve this.

### Universal Design Principles

The universal design principles were developed in the 1990s by design practitioners\*. The principles have become widely acknowledged as a way of working with facilities that everybody can use to the widest possible extent.

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**The latest World Health Organization update on the categorization of disabilities, for one, will make it considerably easier for practitioners to understand what to consider when designing inclusive play environments and playgrounds.**

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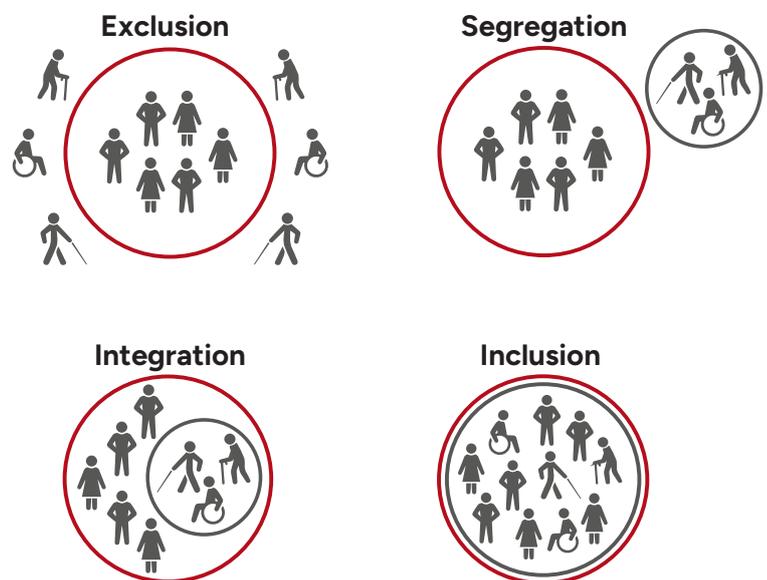


'We still see an enormous need to ensure inclusive playgrounds that allow children and parents with disabilities to access and use playgrounds.'

Ed. Jeanette Fich Jespersen  
KOMPAN Play Institute

The term inclusion is based on what people can do and not what they cannot do. Figure 1, based on the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, says it all.

Figure 1



1. Equitable use
2. Flexibility in use
3. Simple and intuitive to use
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort
7. Size and space for approach and use

\* Seven Principles of Universal Design  
(Ron Mace et al, 1997)

### Inclusion Explained

Inclusion focuses on what people of all abilities can contribute instead of what they cannot do; the environment is disabling, not the people, if access is not possible. People of

all abilities should have access, be included, and be invited to play in public playgrounds, see fig.1.

In a playground context, principle 6, low physical effort, is less relevant. A high physical thrill level often involves physical effort and is one of the very motivations of great playgrounds.

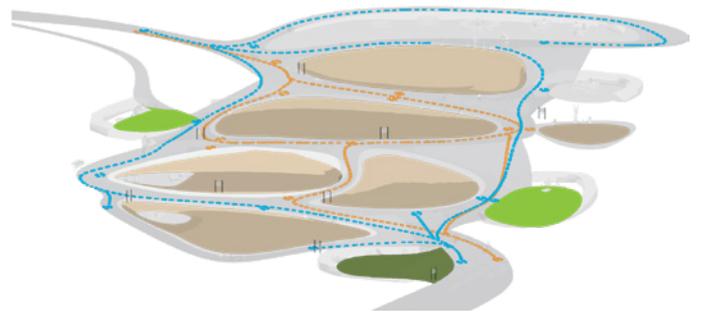
# The Universal Playground Design



Large Playground

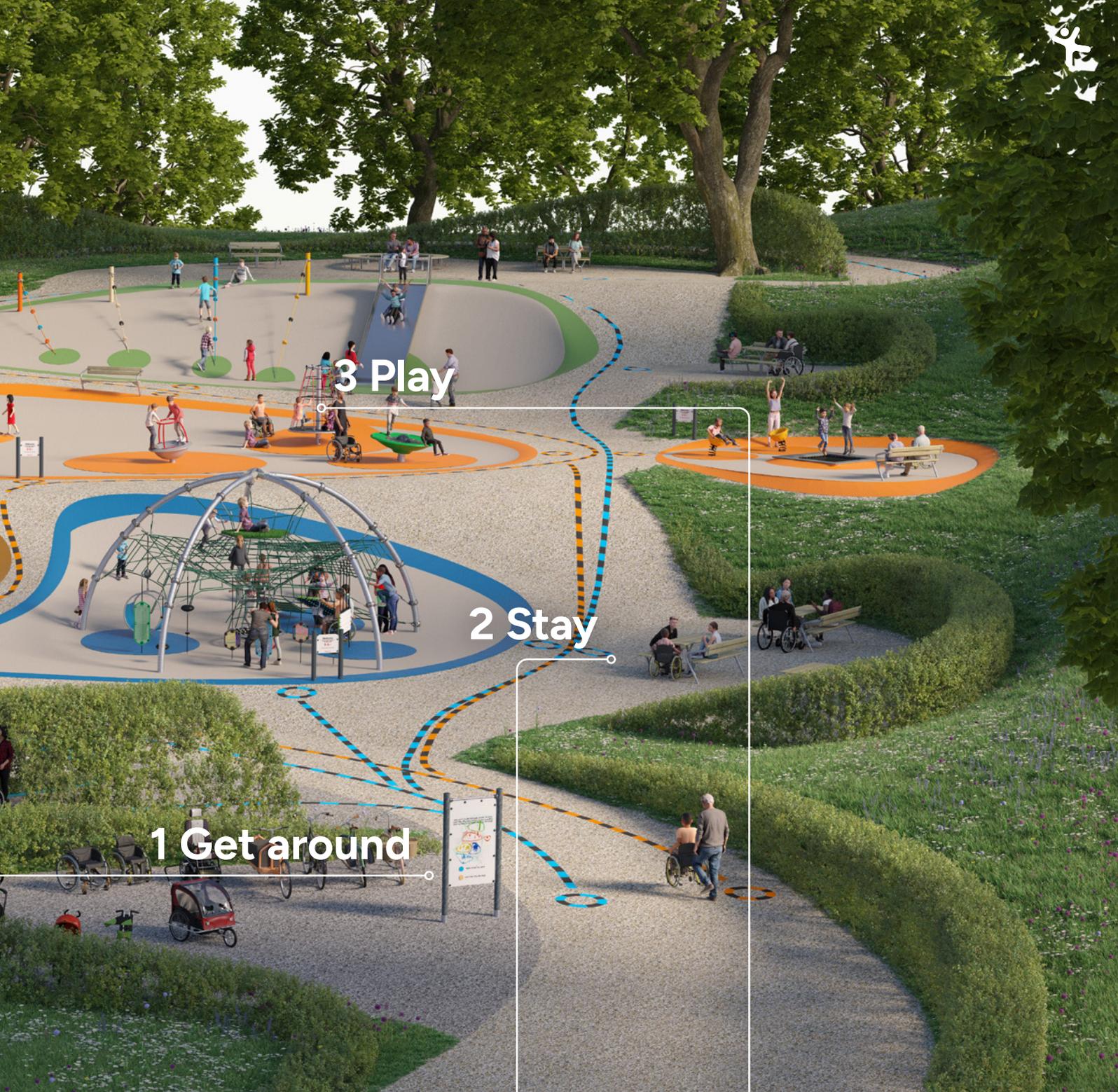
## Can I get around? Can I stay? Can I play?

A playground is only ever as good as the individual child's experience of the play possibilities. The playground can encourage or inhibit play through its location, design, and equipment. Children of all abilities report that the physical thrill and the social connectedness in play are the main attractions. All children are different, and yet the vast majority of them are united in an inherent urge to play. Some, however, cannot access play as easily due to disabilities or deficits. These illustrations show the layers of planning:



### 1 Get around

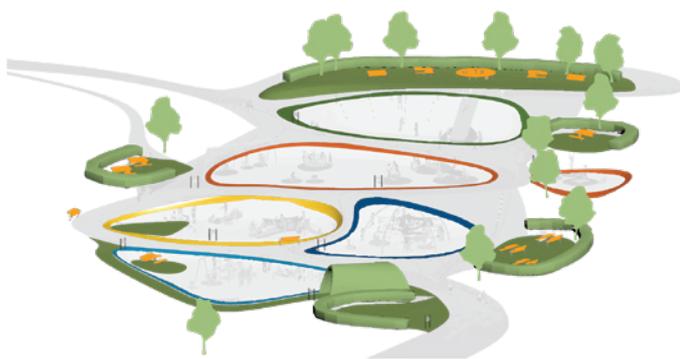
Paths with guidance to make it possible to get to and around equipment and navigate the overall playground.



### 1 Get around

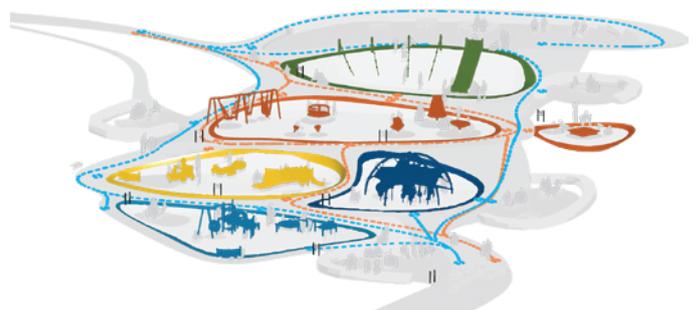
### 2 Stay

### 3 Play



#### 2 Stay

Make staying for all with clear marking of functionality and respite areas.



#### 3 Play

Make play possible by offering varied play options with clearly marked functionalities.



The medium-sized playground should present thrilling play, quieter play, group and individual play, respites, and guidance. It should follow the same guidelines for getting around, staying and playing as the big playground.

# Invisible Inclusion for All

Can people get there, can people stay, can people play?

The layers of truly inclusive playground design center around three questions\*: Can users get around there? Can they stay? Can they play? In the playground case (page 6), the three layers of planning show what to consider.

## Getting Around: Access and Wayfinding

Accessible paths and safety surfacing are mandatory for access. In our example playground (p.6), paths wide enough to make space for assistants lead to play zones, and the safety surfacing is accessible for all, including wheelchair users. Users can get all the way to and all the way around play equipment.

## Neurodiversity-friendly Navigation

Accessibility as a neurodiversity-friendly asset means help with wayfinding in the playground. Maps, signs, and play-zone guidance will help many users, especially those with difficulties navigating many sensory impressions at a time, including many users with AD(H)D or ASD. Good maps for wayfinding at the entrance and an entrance that offers seating will help. Recognizable markers of routes to wilder and quieter play areas and respite areas are helpful. In the case of page 6 and the small- and medium-sized playground examples on this page, orange lines lead to wilder active play, and blue lines lead to quieter play zones.

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**The rise in neurodiversity diagnoses, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), attention deficit disorder (ADD) or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), calls for additional measures to be considered.**

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## Staying in the Playground

The inclusive design focuses on retention and extended stays, which means considering users' needs for variation, zones of diverse play, and points for breaks. If these points are relatively close to the playground, children need not fear that the break is the end of play.

Benches generously spread for breaks at the play zones make it possible for users with walking problems to stay longer in the playground, whether young or old.

### Neurodiversity-friendly Stays

When designing neurodiversity-friendly playgrounds, edges of functionality should be signaled. Using color and texture contrasts around play zones and signaling changes in types of play activities will help guide users in seeking out or avoiding certain activities. Responsive play activities, such as swings, rotating equipment, or slides, can be marked out with contrasting color dots in the surfacing under them to assist users. For users with vision impairment, the textures of the ground and contrasting colors around play zones can help with wayfinding and functionality indications; for example, explanatory signs that aid communication will help many.

### Sensory Play

Sensory play areas and paths can be a wonderful asset. Sensory tunnels or paths, sand areas, and various sensory inputs offer the possibility of quieter or deeper play.

## Variation in the Playground

Variation in play activities is mandatory for inclusive playground success—the seven principles for good playground design state what to look for when selecting suitable play activities. Thrill activities should never be underwhelming in the thrill or activity level since thrill is a success factor for all children across abilities. But play equipment should appeal to more than the daredevils only. Respect the

desire for social play for smaller and bigger groups of children and the need for individual play, for instance at play panels or on single-use active play equipment, is essential.

A good, inclusive playground design applies the realistic rule of thumb that all users cannot do everything, but all users should be offered something, preferably as much as possible, that they can play on or with.

## Medium and Small-sized Playgrounds

For the smaller playgrounds, the same design principles apply as for the destination playground. The orange area (see pictures) with spinning and swinging activities has individual and group play options for wilder or milder activity, as some users enjoy the stimulation of wild play and others prefer complete control of equipment movement. Slower and faster spinning equipment will provide variety for group play or individual use.

Some children prefer to avoid physical contact but would still like to play with others. This is possible when two spinners are placed close to each other. Avoiding direct contact is also possible on seesaws and swing sets.

**Responsive play activities, such as swings, rotating equipment, or slides, can be marked out with contrasting color.**

### Individual Play

Please note the possibilities around this playground for individual play at all play zones, with play panels that can be played on at the outskirts of the zone for children who prefer to play individually for longer or shorter periods.

### Rope Play

For net play equipment, a wide range of intriguing ground-level play options should be part of the design. In the example playground on page 8, the Sensory Dome holds various opportunities to lay in a net on ground level and feel the movement of others. Different visual, tactile, and creative play options provide rich play options on the ground level. The nets allow for conversations and eye contact across the unit.

\* Everyone Can Play: The New South Wales Guideline to Create Inclusive Playgrounds. (2019)

The smaller playground needs varied play activities, respites, and clear markings of functionalities.



**Small-sized Playground**



# Inclusive Playground Checklist

## Can people get around, can people stay, can people play?\*

There are scientifically validated and practitioner-supported design insights to help make the playground equitable in its offerings and universally playable. As a rule of thumb, what's vital for some is often valuable for all.

A playground is only ever as good as the individual child's experience of being seen, heard, and included. The playground can encourage or inhibit play with its location, design, and play equipment.

Children of all abilities report that the physical thrill and the social connectedness in play are the main attractions.

All children are different, yet most of them are united in an inherent urge to play.

Since 40% of children with disabilities are estimated to have more than one disability, inclusive playground planning calls for universal design thinking: Solutions should not be too specialized but should allow all to access, stay, and play.

Play activities should not be underwhelming in activity level but should, on the other hand, appeal to more than the daredevils only.

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**The playground can encourage or inhibit play with its location, design, and play equipment.**

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\* Everyone Can Play: The New South Wales Guideline to Create Inclusive Playgrounds. (2019)



# CAN USERS GET AROUND IN THE PLAYGROUND?

Scan for the following playground design features:

Yes No

## Gates OK for assisted access and assistive devices:

- Entrance wide enough to pass through with assistant?
- Opening handle placed within reaching distance?


## Features incorporated to aid spatial orientation, communication, and guidance

### Transparency in design enabling easy overview and navigation of the playground

### Easy access to and around all play equipment

### Edges in contrasting textures and colors to aid visually impaired users

### Height of slopes used with consideration for assistive mobility devices, e.g. wheelchairs

### Accessible seating options along paths, seating and table options at the entrance and near play equipment

### Enough space for assistants and wheelchairs to pass each other, on paths, and around play equipment


# CAN USERS STAY IN THE PLAYGROUND?

Check for a playground that offers:

Yes No

## Restrooms and drinking water close by

### Shading

### Accessible seating and table options

### Color contrasts on surfaces to assist guidance:

- Contrasting colors on surfaces at play transitions or play-zone changes
- Contrasting colors on surfaces around moving play equipment, e.g. rotating or swinging equipment
- Color schemes with consideration for visual impairments, e.g. colorblind users


### Signage that aids communication

### List of play ideas, how-to-use guides

### Social play areas—things to do together regardless of ability or age

### Solitary play areas, e.g. play panels or individual rotation pieces

### Quiet areas to withdraw to

### Natural elements, e.g. plants with a clear scent, to help wayfinding and orientation


# CAN USERS PLAY IN THE PLAYGROUND?

Check if equipment is designed with:

Yes No

## Ground-level accessibility and usability

### Play from all sides (360-degree design)

### Transparency and clear design signals

### Spaciousness to support diverse body sizes, abilities, and positions

### Multifunctionality: more ways of use, access, and egress

### Independent use for all, including:

- Elevated activities, e.g. raised sandboxes
- Wheel-on play equipment, e.g. carousels or ramps to relevant elevated play activities


### Variation in play functions:

- Solitary play
- Social play in smaller and bigger groups


### Accessible themed play equipment

### Sensory play variation:

- Tactile
- Visual
- Auditive
- Proprioceptive


### Thrilling play functions; e.g. speed, height

### Users involved in design


Scan the QR code to access the Inclusive Playground Design Checklist and read the research behind it.



# Acorn Park Sen School for Children with ASD

**CASE STUDY:** Acorn Park School is part of the Outcomes First Group, which runs around 40 Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools, colleges, and homes for municipalities across the UK. Acorn Park School is for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to an extent that makes it too demanding for them to join their local school.



The varied climbing and meeting options combined with the possibility of individual breaks at the top of the Explorer Dome makes this a versatile inclusive play structure.

Acorn Park School's commitment is to Care, Grow, Strive, and Thrive. There are two school rules: Always be kind and always do your best. With 30 acres of school land, shaped as a farm village with colorful cottages for living, therapy, and school classes, students, teachers, and caregivers can walk the outdoor grounds and playgrounds securely, enjoying a holistic approach to schooling, with care for vegetable gardens and farm animals as part of their everyday life.

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**The various movements help children not only build body awareness but also regulate feelings.**

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The outdoor playground update took place in 2023. The school's specialists were part of a collaboration with KOMPAN UK to plan the grounds, taking into consideration not only the varied ASD symptoms of the children but also their diversity in age, sizes, needs, and ability.

The playground design is varied and transparent; it is easy to get an overview of the playground thanks to the thoughtful lightness in the design of the play structures, including the tall ones that might otherwise have blocked the view. Each zone and play equipment selection has guiding signs explaining wilder or more soothingly moving play equipment, where there is body awareness or auditive and visually stimulating equipment. The signage helps children, but also

caregivers and therapists, who do not necessarily know how play equipment can benefit the sensory development of the students. They will know where to find wilder or more soothing moving play equipment for play in groups or on their own.

The students need to swing, climb, spin, and move in various ways, repeatedly, over a long period of time, to build up the age-typical sensory skills. The various movements help children not only build body awareness but also regulate feelings.

Peter Marshall, Head of Services, expresses how the new playground and equipment help children cope with different emotional states. In a sulky state, a child may climb high up into a net one morning to be alone. "The focus for us is that the young person can have their needs for solitude and thrill met in a safe way, with the right safety surfacing, and enjoy the time alone until they are ready to re-engage with the group and in learning." Peter Marshall continues: "The impact of the playground has been quite easy to measure. Due to the fact that

The Giants for thrilling heights and sliding

The MUSA and climbing area for the oldest children

Play markings for play and learning games

The adjacent Explorer Dome for climbs and breaks



“The focus for us is that the young person can have their needs for solitude and thrill met in a safe way, with the right safety surfacing, and enjoy the time alone until they are ready to re-engage in the group and in learning.”

**Peter Marshall**  
Head of Services, Acorn Park School



The swaying Loop enables the need for playing on your own close to peers, to avoid the feeling of exclusion.

we now have that sort of space to deal with that emotional space, our rates of restraint have fallen by nearly 90%.”

“The ability to have a wide variety of play equipment broadens our ability to offer the right curriculum to the children,” says Head Teacher Philippa Whipp.

“All our students have difficulties with their sensory needs, and they need support to express their feelings.

They can use the equipment to regulate or calm down, or they can use it for stimulation. They find out what to do where through the signage,” continues Selina Wightman, Therapy and Wellbeing.

“The signs and the play equipment extend their ability to express and regulate their emotions. This makes it easier for them to concentrate when they are back in the classroom,” she says.

The students take pride and pleasure in their new playground. In the words of a secondary-school student: “When I saw this, I thought that this is the best thing that I have ever seen. It’s amazing.”



“Children with and without disabilities like playful challenges and simply want to play with their friends. By playing together, children develop their physical skills and learn naturally; from the beginning, diversity is normal.”

Christina Marx  
Member of the Management Board, Aktion Mensch



A rich variation in play activities with wilder and quieter play available aids inclusion.

Accessible age-appropriate play equipment with a variety of functions.

The transparent MUSA invites ball games for all.



The inclusive playground is valuable for the whole community as all can play together.

# Timmeler Meer Recreation Centre

**CASE STUDY: Stück zum Glück one of 50 inclusive playgrounds in Germany, by Aktion Mensch, Procter & Gamble and REWE.**

After five years of fundraising for and making inclusive playgrounds in Germany, 50 truly inclusive new play areas have arisen nationwide. Aktion Mensch, the largest private fund organization in the social sector in Germany are funding the project Stück zum Glück (Piece of Happiness) together with Procter & Gamble and REWE. The organization arose because children with disabilities in Germany rarely have access to playgrounds with the idea of showing good examples of playgrounds for all children.

The 50 playgrounds from Stück zum Glück are special, as less than 2.2% of German playgrounds have inclusive and accessible play equipment. 80% of German playgrounds do not provide space for play interaction between children with and without disabilities. This is the conclusion of the study "Inclusion in German Playgrounds" made by the FIBS Research Institute of Inclusion through Physical Activity and Sport and Aktion Mensch.

Based on the study, Aktion Mensch has published a set of playground recommendations. The main points are\*:

- The playground and play equipment should be independently usable for all children, regardless of whether they have a disability or not.
- There should be varied play equipment so that all users can find something to play with—unassisted if desired—and so that everyone has the opportunity to play together.
- The playground location and layout should consider all users, e.g. in terms of parking, toilets, and rest points in close proximity.
- From the start, people with disabilities should be involved in the development and implementation of the playground.

Christina Marx, a member of the management board of Aktion Mensch, says:

"Children with and without disabilities like playful challenges and simply

want to play with their friends. By playing together, children develop their physical skills and learn naturally; from the beginning, diversity is normal."

An example of a brilliant Stück zum Glück playground is the Timmeler Lake inclusive playground. The regional mayor, Silke Bergmann, says that the effects of the playground are not solely beneficial for users with physical and other disabilities but valuable for the whole community as all can play together. The social glue in the fact that everyone is welcome and has access to fun play possibilities is one of the most welcome outcomes of the Timmeler Lake playground.

\* Inklusion auf Spielplätzen in Studie untersucht | Aktion Mensch ([aktion-mensch.de](http://aktion-mensch.de))



Access to centerpieces of play is a foundation of equity in play.

# Buccaneer Bay, Central Park Dartford Borough Council

**CASE STUDY:** Central Park in Dartford lives up to the city's mission of having a facility that appeals to all children, including children with various disabilities. Jeremy Kite, MBE, Dartford Borough Council's leader, says:

"Our playground in Central Park was worn down. The aim was to establish a new play environment with a distinctive, immersive playground that would benefit the borough's children for years to come."

“The themed equipment encourages imaginative play, which is commonly popular with younger children as well as many children with learning disabilities, who often show the play behaviors of younger children.”

Jeremy A Kite MBE  
Councillor



Ground-play elements cater for social as well as solitary play.



Themed play equipment spurs imagination. A 360-degree design includes children with assistive devices.

With a pirate theme as the central narrative, told through a series of individual state-of-the-art play equipment designs that tie nicely together thematically, the council could specify a playground that appealed to a wide age span and abilities with many varied activities. Since variation is one of the main success criteria in truly inclusive playgrounds, all children can use the Buccaneer Bay playground in Central Park on their own terms.

The council selected inclusive play equipment to complement these key themed elements: pirate ships, whales and light towers, to provide stimulating, thrilling, and challenging

activities for children of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

A calm zone (or respite area) was established with sensory play equipment to cater to children with neurodiverse challenges, allowing them a respite when the playground's

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**A calm zone (or respite area) was established with sensory play equipment to cater to children with neurodiverse challenges.**

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tumble becomes overwhelming. The area is also a choice for children who prefer to play in smaller groups or individually.

The themed equipment encourages imaginative play, which is commonly popular with younger children as well as with many children with learning disabilities, who often show the play behaviors of younger children.

The final outcome has now had more than 140,000 views on YouTube since the opening. Families also travel to Dartford from afar to enjoy the play opportunities of this premier destination playground.



# Universal Play Equipment Design Points

## Invisible Inclusion

For each play equipment design, accessibility is one thing. Getting to the play equipment or being offered accessible play options in the equipment is important. However, accessibility is not everything; usability, which allows children to play something relevant and fun once they have accessed the play equipment, is

the main feature. This requires great variety in the choice of play equipment. The seven universal inclusive play equipment principles will help guide the playground design process.

## Usability is Playability

The play equipment should be universally usable. This implies that as many children as possible, with and without

disabilities, and in the relevant play-age range, should be able to use the equipment. Not all children may be able to enter independently, but once they have reached the equipment, they should be able to use it independently. There should be room around and sometimes even in equipment for adult assistants to support and guide when necessary.



Sensory play: vision, touch, and auditory equipment aids inclusive play.

- 1 Ground-level Accessibility and Usability**
  - Interesting activity offered at ground level or from ground-level access point
  - Playground centerpieces' accessibility
- 2 Responsive or Thrilling**
  - Physical: responsive and/or exhilarating, e.g. spinning, sliding, swaying, bouncing
  - Social-emotional: motivates and facilitates social thrill or interaction
  - Cognitive-creative: manipulative elements, sound, tactile, or visual variety, explorative play items
- 3 Play from All Sides: 360-degree Design**
  - Equipment can be played with from all sides
  - More than one entrance and exit
- 4 Explorative and Dramatic Play**
  - Equipment offers options for play exploration
  - Equipment has recognizable themes
  - Play panels offer activities that can be used from both sides if desired. This enhances and motivates social interaction.
- 5 Transparency in Design**
  - Clear color and design signals. This supports orientation for a range of users .
  - Transparent to the widest possible extent. This facilitates communication through, in, and around equipment.
- 6 Multifunctional Whenever Possible**
  - Offer space for varied body positions
  - Offer individual and group usage
  - Offer independent use whenever possible
- 7 Sensory Play**
  - Ensure sensory play variation, e.g. tactile, visual, auditive, and proprioceptive play variation

### Play Equipment Design Principles

On the following pages, a wide selection of different play equipment types meets various requirements of inclusive play. Some can be accessed and used independently, such as the Inclusive Carousel; some are explicitly designed for assistance to play equipment for users with

mobility disabilities. But the design is also made for independent use once assisted to, e.g. the ramped slides, the Tipi Carousel or the Inclusive Net Twister. Other designs are designed primarily for ground-level use, such as many of the dramatic play pieces, e.g. playhouses or ships.

The seven principles open up for inclusive design thinking for playgrounds that makes inclusion for all universal.

# Spin

Spinning and rotation train the sense of balance and children’s proprioception: their sense of the force and adjustment of body movements needed, for instance when clapping, pouring, or walking stairs without looking down. The sense of balance is essential in governing the motor system, helping children walk, run, ride a bicycle, and eventually sit still on a chair without falling.

For children on the autism spectrum as well as for children with a range of physical disabilities or impairments, training the sense of balance helps their ability to function more independently. Some prefer slow and easily stoppable rotation; for instance, many children with hypersensitivity feel easily overstimulated.

Others are invigorated by wilder spinning; for example, many children with hyposensitivity feel easily understimulated. This selection of play equipment allows for wilder and milder rides for unassisted and assisted use.

## Inclusive Net Twister COR20330

Transparency in Design



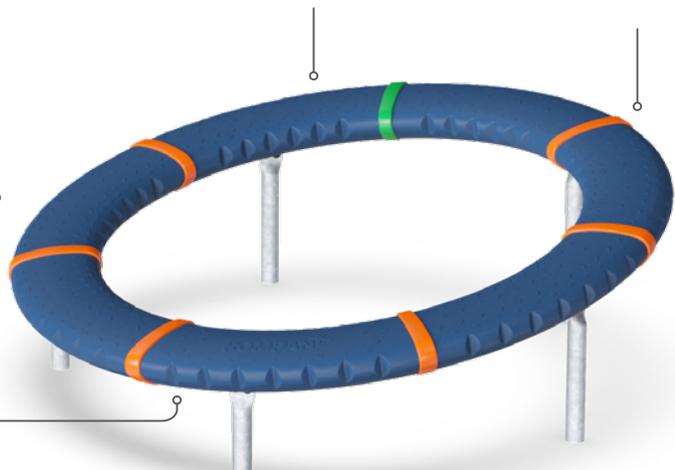
## Supernova GXY960

### Multifunctional

- Children can play pushing or being pushed, lying, seated, standing, alone, together, and at different ages and abilities
- Assistance and supervision are easy, from both sides
- Easy to get on and off

The division into ring sections designates personal space for users who need that

The grooves support grip



The round shape allows for assistance from all sides

The low and high ends being below 2 feet allow users of all abilities to access and use

## Spica 1 GXY8014

Standing or seated spinning—possibility to stop rotation with feet in seated position



## Scooter Carousel PCM160



## Spinner Bowl ELE400024

### Multifunctional

- Can be turned through own body movements or with help from friends or caregivers pushing
- Can also be pushed from a wheelchair position

Supportive sides when seated support a wide spectrum of mobility impairments due to the height

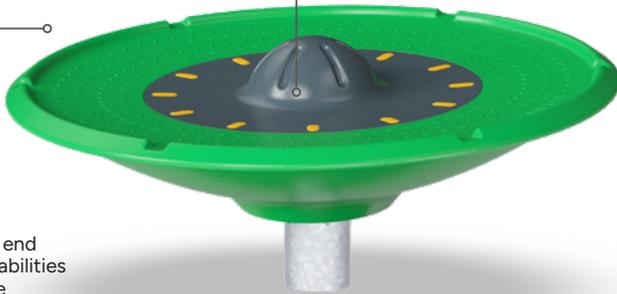
The open design allows room for assistants





The round shape allows for assistance from all sides

The bump in the middle adds a support point



The low and high end allow users of all abilities to access and use

### Spinner Disc GXY959

#### Responsive and Thrilling

- Children can play pushing or being pushed, lying, seated, standing, alone, or together across different ages and abilities
- Assistance and supervision made easy
- Easy access and egress

### Tipi Carousel with Top Brace ELE400065

#### 360-degree Design—Play from All Sides

### 3-Seater Carousel PCM154



Top frame adds good support for standing, rising, holding tight, and back support

Side supports ensure good grip for pushing, pulling, or holding tight



Spacious platform with sides allows for various body positions, seated, lying, standing, and for multiple users

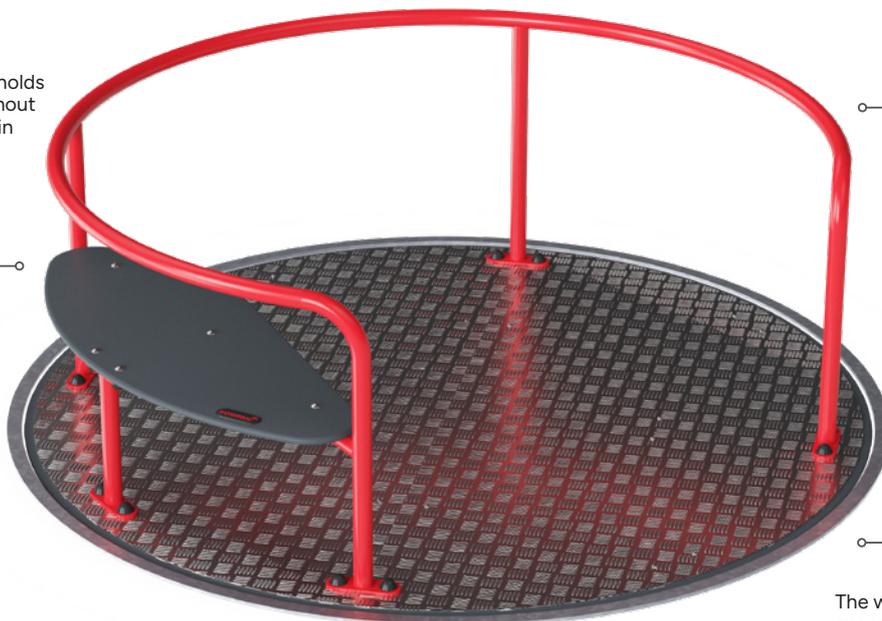
Shallow entry supports easy on-and-off for children with physical impairments

### Universal Carousel PCM157

#### 360-degree Design— Play from All Sides

The spacious platform holds many users with or without assistive devices, to spin and play together

The bench is placed to ease entry/exit



Handrails and side poles - make pushing and pulling easier - support standing or sitting

The wide entrance allows space for assistive devices and wheelchairs

# Rock, Sway, Bounce, and Slide

Any responsive play equipment will train children’s understanding of cause and effect and essential motor skills such as proprioception (the force and adjustment of movements needed, for example, to jump higher or lower on a membrane). Bouncing, jumping, sliding, swaying, and rocking train spatial awareness, combining visual eye tracking with body movement—this is fundamental for all children to function well and move confidently through space.

The following selection of play equipment offers wilder and milder movement across age ranges and physical ability levels. Users with physical disabilities, e.g. walking impairments, may need assistance to get onto the play equipment; however, the spaciousness enables assisted support once using the play equipment.

**Mini Hammock**  
PCM804



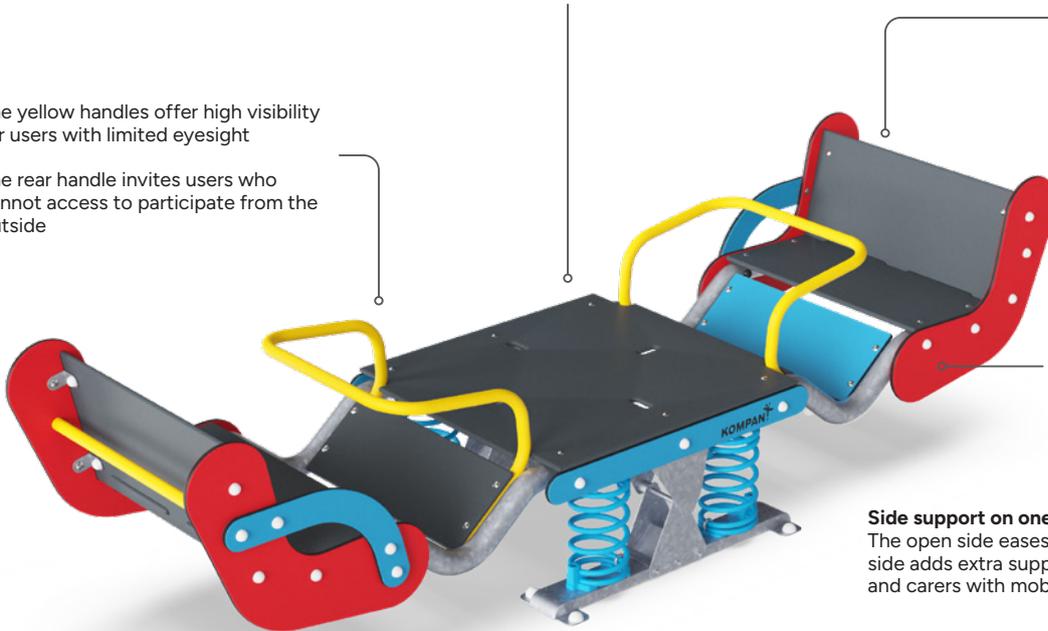
**Inclusive Multi Seesaw**  
PCM162

Rocking movement adds to spatial awareness and sense of balance

The broad spacious platform in the middle supports a range of body positions, lying, seated, or standing

The wide footrest and back support allow for independent rocking

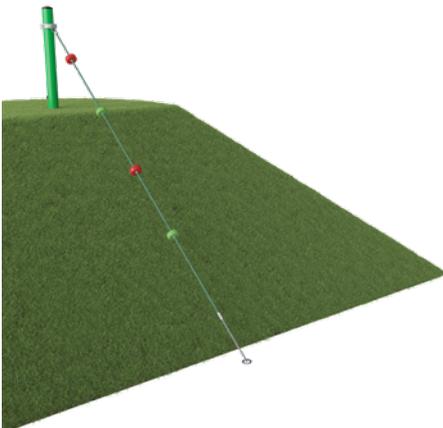
- The yellow handles offer high visibility for users with limited eyesight
- The rear handle invites users who cannot access to participate from the outside



The consistent contrasting color use eases understanding of use, navigation, and understanding of functions

**Side support on one side, open opposite side:**  
The open side eases access while the other side adds extra support and grip to children and carers with mobility difficulties

**Hill Climber Rope with EPDM**  
CRP630301



**Embankment Slide, 5 ft high, 5 ft wide**  
KSL30303





**Hammock with Galvanized Posts**  
PCM805



**WeHopper**  
PCM159



**Springer Bowl with Footrest**  
ELE400067

**Responsive and Thrilling**

- Can be rocked through own body movements or by friends or caregivers helping
- Can also be pushed from a wheelchair position

The open design allows room for assistants

Supportive high sides ensure a secure seated position for various users

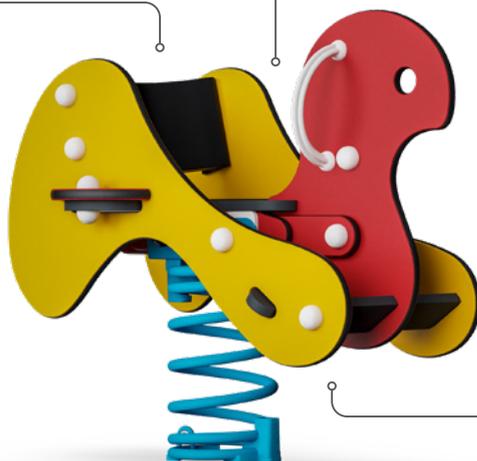


**Gander**  
M106

The soft back rest has been developed to add soft, extra back support

The vertical handgrips ensure a firm grip at different heights

The closed sides ensure side support where the child is seated



The broad foot and calf support works for children with walking disabilities, as well as for all other children

Low sides in front facilitate transfer in and out of the Gander

# Climbing Combinations and Ramp Structures

Ground-level accessibility, usability, and playability are success criteria for any climbing event or higher structure. These are often centerpieces of the playground, and a common challenge is that they are hard to use for children or parents with mobility disabilities, especially those who cannot get out of their wheelchairs. As height is a main thrill for children in playgrounds, it is a challenge to balance the needs of both user groups. Not everybody can do everything in the playground, but everybody should have a chance to play with something, preferably with friends. Transparency in the playground will help children navigate and stay in sight, ensuring that all children and caregivers can communicate across heights.

Ramps or embankments are the best solution for children and caregivers who cannot function outside their wheelchairs, as they provide access to higher platforms. For children and caregivers who can, well-thought-out handles, support steps, and accessible stairways can do the job. This category offers a variety of climbing and height options for diverse groups of users.

**Crooked Den**  
NRC200101



**Pathfinder**  
PCE305121

Ramp allows access for all and offers varied play at turn areas

Sand-play corner adds tactile and explorative play options

Double slide allows for caregiver assistance and social play

Curly climber supports the seated position and grip when rotating downwards



**Robinia Ramp Structure**  
CUSTOM (NRO896841)

Sand play supports manipulative play, cognitive stimulation, and play with peers for all abilities

Access via ramp with hand-holds that offer two support heights



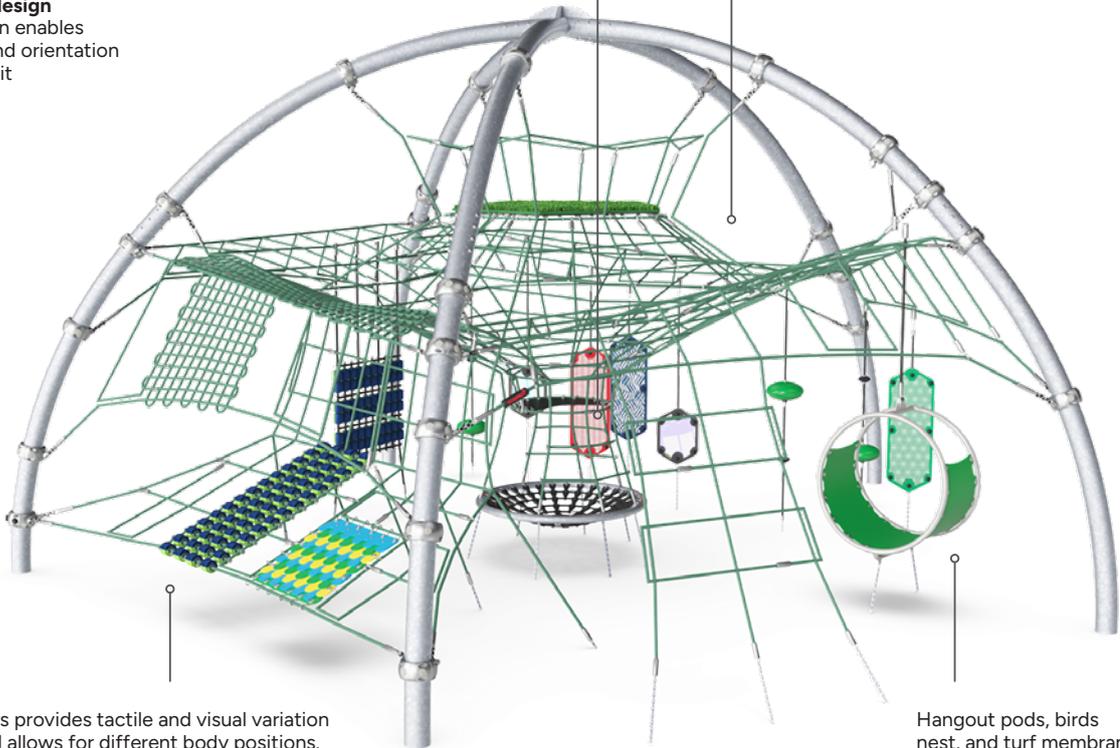


**Sensory Dome**  
CRP812001

**Transparency in design**  
Transparent design enables communication and orientation across the play unit

The dichroic and moiré optic panels add visual variation and stimulation

Rich variation of play elements, play movements, and body positions

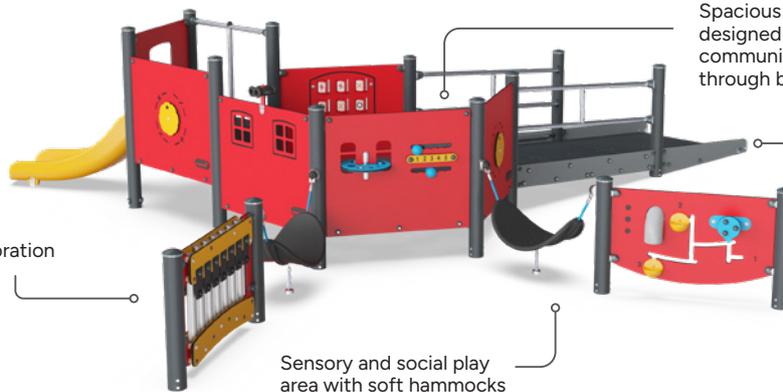


The net with rollers provides tactile and visual variation and feedback, and allows for different body positions. The children can feel the movement of their peers climbing and be part of play when staying here

Hangout pods, birds nest, and turf membrane add varied tactile and movement response

**Play Tower with Ramp**  
PCM103031

Play panel for exploration and music panel



Spacious turning space designed for breaks and playful communication with the outside through binoculars and turn disc

Access via ramp with hand-holds that offer two support heights

Sensory and social play area with soft hammocks

**Play Tower**  
PCM101031



**Double Mega Deck**  
PCM200432



## Dramatic and Explorative Play

Themed play—playhouses, trucks, and boats inspire make-believe play for all children. Pretend play is a universal play category and appeals to most children, including many children with learning deficits or other cognitive or neurodiversity diagnoses. Dramatic play, or make-believe, is an amazing source for developing communication and language skills and social-emotional skills such as empathy.

Manipulating movable play elements in play equipment or playing with sand and water are explorative and creative play activities that support curiosity and creativity. They are wonderful sources of deep play and social play. The sensory effect in this type of play greatly benefits children’s understanding of materials and their characteristics; for instance, sand is different when wet than when dry. This selection of play equipment spans a wide range of motivational elements for dramatic, creative, and social play.

**Sand Desk with Sand Hoist**  
NRO571



**Waterfall with Sand Table**  
PCM505

**Ground-level Accessibility**

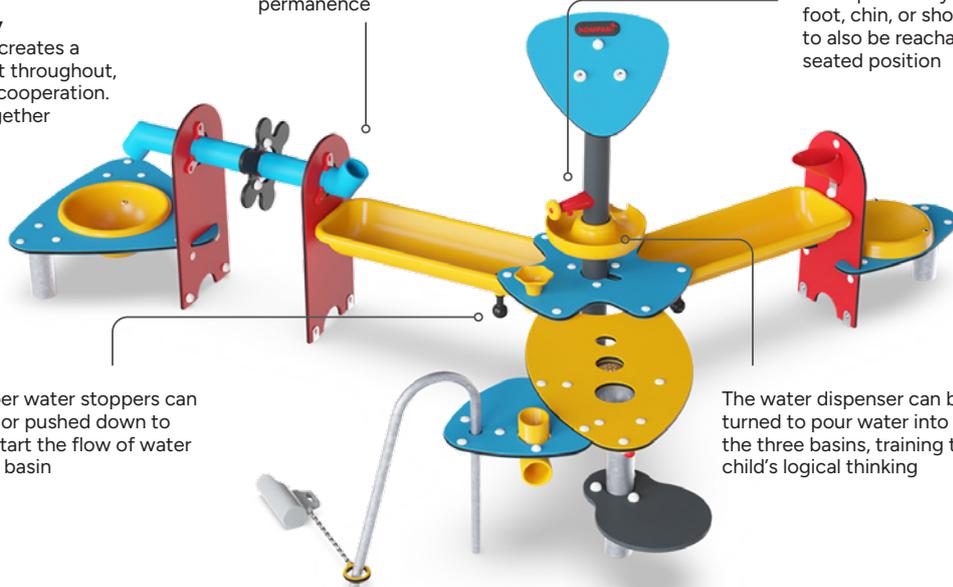
The star-shaped structure creates a frame enabling eye contact throughout, facilitating social play and cooperation. Room for Many to Play Together

The blue tube is a fun place to shift water through, training the understanding of object permanence

The water fountain opens when pushed by hand, elbow, foot, chin, or shoulder. Placed to also be reachable from a seated position

The rubber water stoppers can be lifted or pushed down to stop or start the flow of water from the basin

The water dispenser can be turned to pour water into the three basins, training the child’s logical thinking



**Forest Lake Boat without Floor**  
NRO520



**Unitruck**  
NRO560





## Home & Garden

MSV601

### 360-degree Design—Play from All Sides

The theme of home and garden is easy to relate to and spurs conversations and imaginative play

Varied tactile, visual, and auditory details allow for exploration for all abilities

The open design makes it possible for all to access, communicate, and navigate across the play unit



## Water Channel with Splash Table

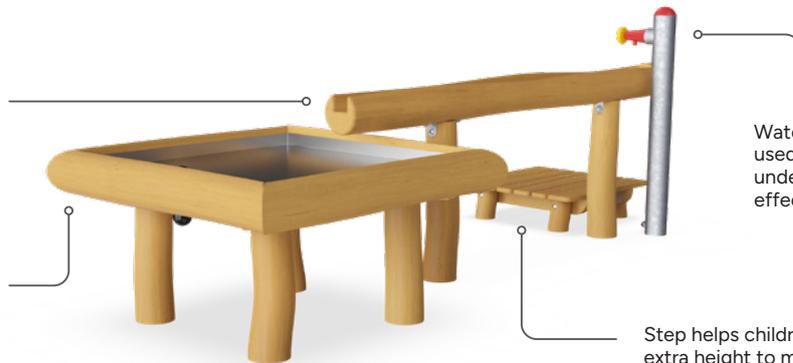
NRO508

Water channel leads the water, which is great for cooperation and communication between the children

Splash table plug can help easily regulate the amount of water in the basin and trains logical thinking and cooperation

Water tap push button can be used by all, allowing for the understanding of cause and effect and object permanence

Step helps children who need extra height to maneuver the tap and water channel



## Gas Station with 2 Pumps

NRO513



## Theater & Music Cottage

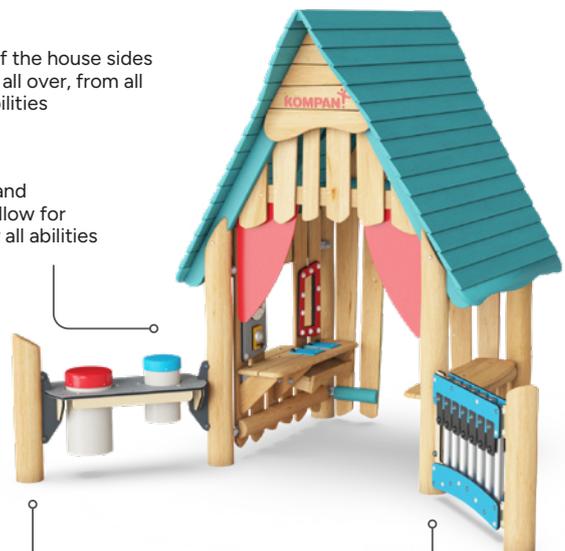
NRO606

### Dramatic Play

Open design of the house sides allows for play all over, from all sides, for all abilities

Varied tactile and visual details allow for exploration for all abilities

Music panels allow for auditory as well as tactile variation and stimulation



# Play Panels and Sensory Play

Solitary play possibilities in playgrounds are for when children seek time to play alone for longer or shorter periods. To many children, this is a need. Play panels of varied types are welcome elements for all children. The most popular among children offer manipulative, tactile, and texture variation and cause-and-effect elements. Other sensory inputs such as sound, tonality, and visually intriguing elements are also highly stimulating for children, including children with neurodiverse challenges.

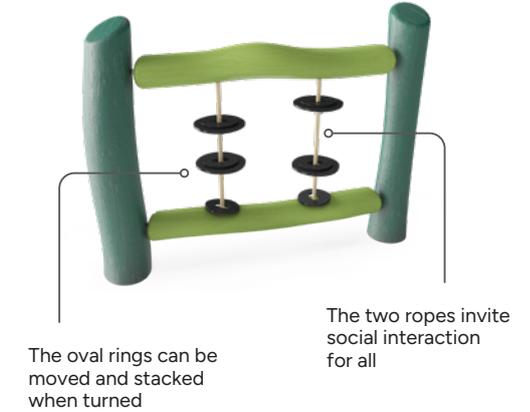
Sensory play equipment is a wide category that offers interesting seeing, hearing, and touching activities. The sense of touch is essential, as the tactile input is gathered in the entire body through the skin. Elements that children can lie on, feeling different tactile stimuli and movements, are often soothing, as seen in the category of Fun Points, but also in, for instance, hammocks or membranes (please see this category, page 22). This selection of play equipment offers various sensory stimuli for playing alone or in smaller groups.

## Stack & Turn Play Panel

NRC60101

### Sensory Play

Tactile variation and manipulative details



## Triple Wonder Play Panel

NRC60201

### Sensory Play

Tactile variation and manipulative details support sensory exploration and creative play

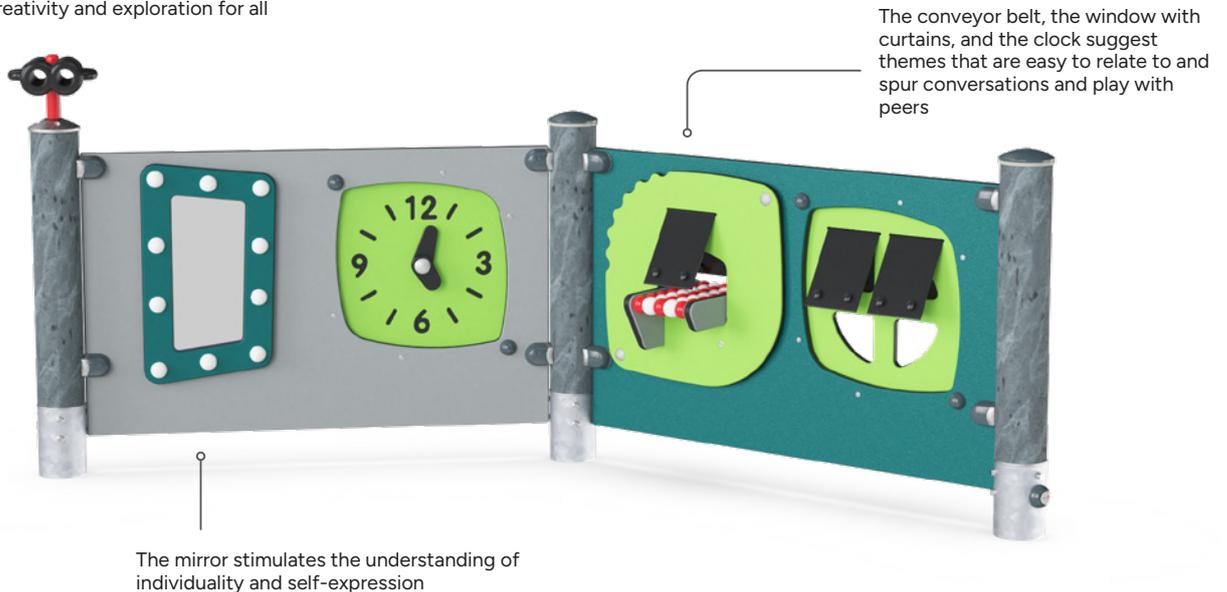


## Play Panel—Emotion

CUSTOM (PCM003221)

The two sides invite peers to cooperate and communicate

The variation of rich and responsive play textures supports creativity and exploration for all





## IN GENERAL FOR ALL PLAY PANELS

- Two-sided designs: Creates two individual zones for children who need their own space
- Feeling of security in own space facilitates change from individual to small group play

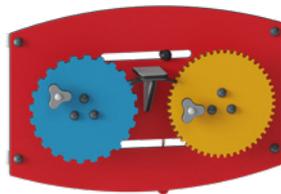
### Play Panel High 1-Maze PCM004221

- Building fine motor and gross motor skills and muscle control when spinning wheel
- Hitting the yellow, blue, or red circle gives a feeling of success for all



### Sound CP317900-01

- Rich sensory stimulation: sound, vibration, color
- Turn-taking, cooperation, and feeling of success
- Influencing output when adjusting spin intensity with friends for varied volume



### Make & Trade CP317800-99

- Great play starter
- Varied openings encourage social play across panel
- Explorative play and logical thinking from running items through varied openings



### Funpoint, Ultimate PCT802

**Transparency in Design**  
Transparent design makes it possible for all to communicate and navigate across the play unit

Varied auditory, visual, and tactile input stimulates exploration, creativity, and communication with friends



The swaying hammock and hangout pod provide gentle rocking and add physical and tactile variation

### Roller Ball Play Panel, Square Posts TPP280025



### Rattle Roller Wheel, Square Posts TPP280029



# Swings

Swinging trains spatial awareness as well as the sense of balance. These are important, for example when judging distances and force of movement. Swinging is a highly thrilling activity, whether children prefer a wilder or a gentler ride. Some children will need assistance to get onto the swings. Still, the vast majority will be able to operate one of these options independently, as there is an option for a self-starter function, suspended in four chains, with the Inclusive Swing Seat.

These swing seats have various seating and lying options, alone or with friends and caregivers. Not everyone will be able to use every swing seat, but the vast majority can use at least one.

**Swing Seat, Stainless**  
SW990011



**Inclusive Seat, 8 ft H, 4-Chain**  
SW990207

4-chain self-starter function allows for pushing and pulling the seat into motion without assistance

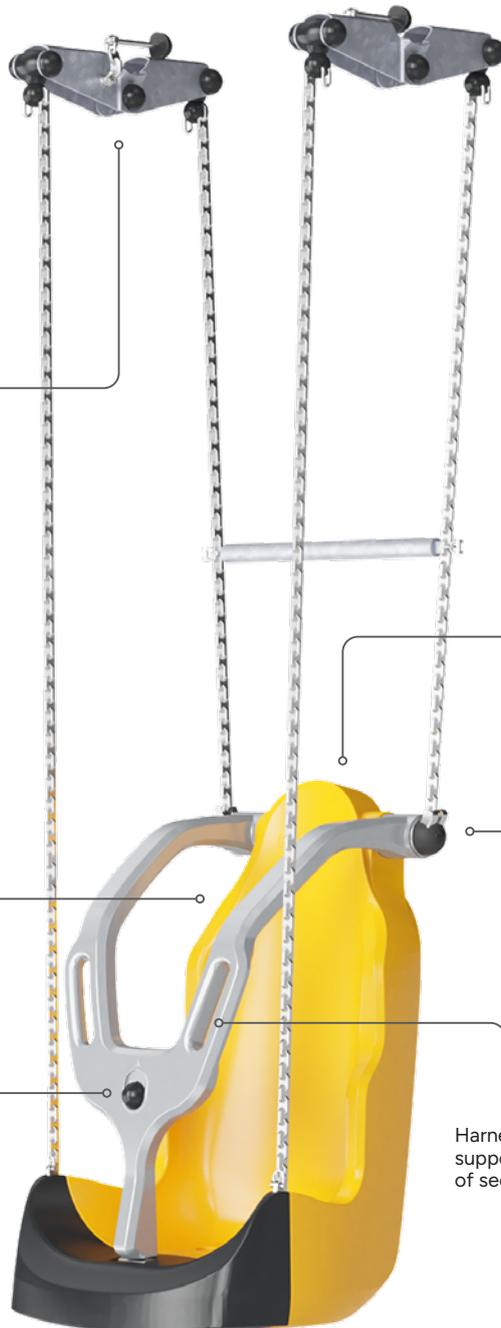
Upright position of the seat supports eye contact and communication between child and parent or caregiver

Harness can be operated with one hand and is clicked open and locked

Seat is shaped to support varied body sizes

Raised position of the harness allows for easy transfer in and out of the seat

Harness has several grip supports to ensure the feeling of security when swinging





**Toddler Swing Seat, 8 ft**  
SW990031



The self-starter function works when the child pushes and pulls the front chains

The opening facilitates lifting the child into and out of seat

**Baby Seat, 8 ft**  
SW990023



**You & Me Swing Seat**  
SW990131

The high sides support the child's seated position

Wide leg openings facilitate lifting the child in and out of the seat

Soft seat material ensures a comfortable seated position



**Shell Nest, 47 in wide, 8 ft**  
SW990091



**Cocowave Rope Pendulum**  
NRO915



## Benches, Meeting Points, and Signs

Amenities are often the playground elements that glue activities together. Signs that show the playground’s layout and amenities are essential to guide users, aid in wayfinding, and give an overview of activities. Signs that aid communication for those unable to express themselves in words are also helpful to expressing needs and wishes.

For legs tired of standing, benches and tables are a welcome sight. They should also be usable for users in wheelchairs. For neurodiverse users, e.g. children with ADHD or ASD, the ability to withdraw to a quiet area, with no stimuli, in the playground is decisive for the length of their stay. Offering secluded spaces and meeting points around the playground is important.

**Play Shell Climber**  
CRP201101



**Agora Picnic Table Set**  
PAR4170



**Agora Bench with Backrest**  
PAR4051



**Play Panel High 1, Communication**  
PCM003721



**Sign, Medium**  
PAR3003





# KOMPAN Play Institute Research

Ever since the 1990s, children of all ages and abilities have been included and heard in the research and development process with the KOMPAN Play Institute.

## Playgrounds Tested for Child Well-being

The KOMPAN Play Institute is KOMPAN's unit of play specialists, dedicated to researching, developing, and documenting trends in children's and families' play in playgrounds. The institute is essential to KOMPAN's child-centered play agenda and comprises trained scholars and researchers with certified course materials.

## Equity in Playground Access

Equity is a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal. It is a fundamental part of happier, healthier, and more sustainable communities.

However, not everyone is equal regarding access to leisure offerings and playgrounds.

Children with disabilities participate far less in active play and physical activity than their peers. Since active play is one of the main contributors to child health, the accessibility to and usability of public playgrounds for children of all abilities is fundamental for their physical and social-emotional well-being and health.

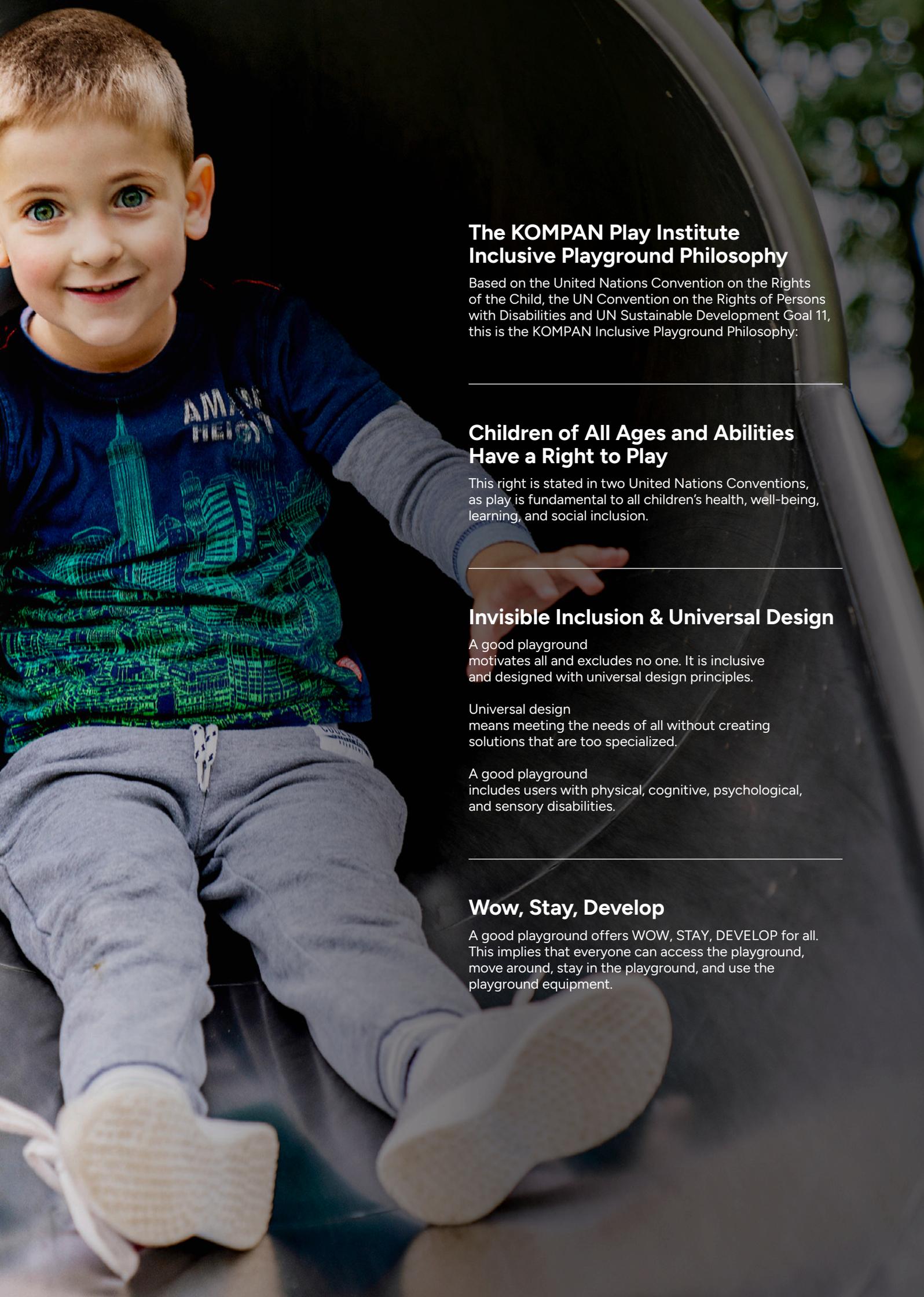
Read more about the KOMPAN Play Institute's public research in their whitepapers on [www.kompan.com](http://www.kompan.com).



Quiet and wild play activities are important in inclusive playgrounds.



Children of all ages and abilities participate in the development process at KOMPAN.



## **The KOMPAN Play Institute Inclusive Playground Philosophy**

Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UN Sustainable Development Goal 11, this is the KOMPAN Inclusive Playground Philosophy:

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### **Children of All Ages and Abilities Have a Right to Play**

This right is stated in two United Nations Conventions, as play is fundamental to all children's health, well-being, learning, and social inclusion.

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### **Invisible Inclusion & Universal Design**

A good playground motivates all and excludes no one. It is inclusive and designed with universal design principles.

Universal design means meeting the needs of all without creating solutions that are too specialized.

A good playground includes users with physical, cognitive, psychological, and sensory disabilities.

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### **Wow, Stay, Develop**

A good playground offers WOW, STAY, DEVELOP for all. This implies that everyone can access the playground, move around, stay in the playground, and use the playground equipment.



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