

# Cockington's ARK Play Area

## Background History

The Play area was the brainchild of FOSNEC founder Ann Williams. As a grandmother of a special needs child, she realised that play equipment was not normally suitable for disabled children or tended to be unattractive to able-bodied youngsters. The ideal was to provide play equipment suitable for all children, where they can play together and grow up with a better understanding of each other.

This follows on from the Fair Play campaign. The Herald Express, with Ann Williams, led the Fair Play campaign for a change in the law on play areas to ensure disabled children can use them alongside their able-bodied friends and siblings.

Cockington Court was the area chosen for the innovative Play Area. With Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust and FOSNEC working together Ann's brainchild finally became a reality in July 2004 and FOSNEC's tireless fundraising efforts came to fruition.

## The Play Equipment

- Wheelchair seesaw - designed so that wheelchair users can get a similar effect to that of a See-saw.  
The see-saw motion is generated by driving to and fro, or by corresponding body movement while walking. The mutual action, the stimulation of playing together and the requirement for co-operation are the valuable elements of this equipment.
- Turning Stone - a huge turning stone that spins slowly on a steel rod axis. This tactile equipment fascinates children young and old who are able to turn several tonnes of stone with their own strength (apparently you can turn it with your little finger!)
- Spinning Plate - this rotating plate is profiled to allow wheelchair access but is popular with many able-bodied children too.
- Basket Swing - the swing has proved to be very popular with disabled and able-bodied children alike. It is suitable for one child to use or several at once.
- The Water Fountain - a water play feature where the water jet intensity depends on the activity of the participants. 'Geysers' with a height of up to 8m can be produced by two children energetically see-sawing the pump. The see-saw pump can be operated by hand or by standing on it - the water then flows through a series of channels and a water wheel before draining away.
- Slide & Tower Structure – a wide slide, which will allow two children or a carer and child to slide together. There is also a bench by the slide to assist wheelchair users in accessing the slide with the maximum of independence.
- Three items of sensory equipment - a turning circle that shows sand flow; an outdoor kaleidoscope; and an integrated xylophone. These are included in the hexagonal tower structure, attached to the slide by a ramp



Wheelchair Seesaw



Basket Swing



Slide & Tower Structure