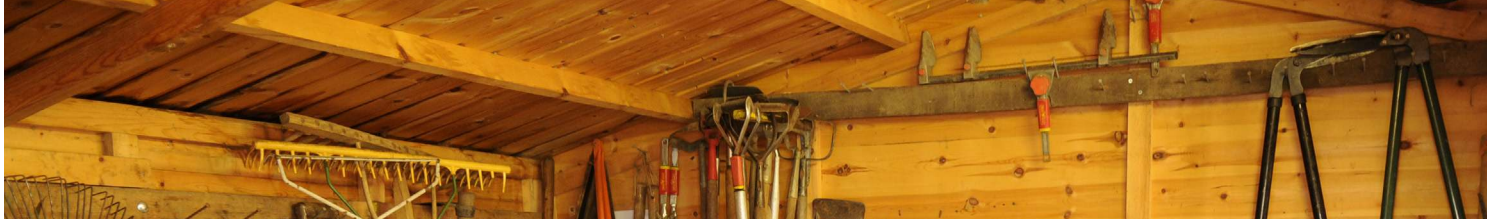

A15 Assessing and using sheds

It is important to check your new or inherited shed before using. This is an opportunity to fix any problems or improve the design before moving in your tools, materials and workbenches. Detailed assessment criteria follow for a typical structure.

Resources

- Clipboard and pen

Activity

1. Using the assessment criteria for sheds on the next page, review your shed with the group, making a note of opportunities for use and any necessary improvements. Consult the school's site manager for advice.
2. Discuss proposed changes and uses with the group. Develop and implement an improvement plan.
3. Complete a Risk Assessment (see A5 and T4).

Extended activities

1. Tell people about your plans, including those who may be interested in helping or sponsoring improvements.
2. Design and make your own shed.

Health & Safety	Be careful when assessing sheds, especially if unsure of the structural stability and there are damaged sections. Seek advice as required from the school's site manager. *See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section B3.3)*
Further information	A4 Health and Safety Audit T4 Garden Risk Assessment B4.9 Sheds and tool storage B3.2 Using garden tools

Assessment criteria for sheds

Step by step guidance

1 *Roof*

Check construction; the roof shouldn't sag or flex if pushed from the centre or one of the panels. Repair or replace torn/degraded felt to prevent leaks and damage to the shed contents.

2 *Headroom*

You should be able to stand comfortably (including adult helpers); pointed roofs have more headroom. Check the need for warning signs for low headroom.

3 *Gutters*

These are not a standard fitting, but easy to add. They can extend the shed's life by keeping the walls ('cladding') dry. Can also connect gutters to a water butt to store rain water.

4 *Windows*

Check opening windows fit well. Add locks if required.

5 *Doors*

Check door construction is solid with rust-free and well-oiled hinges. Should be wide enough to allow easy access for wheelbarrows and wheelchairs.

6 *Cladding (ie walls)*

Usually wooden. Inspect the sides and ends for holes and cracks; no daylight should be visible through the boards when standing inside.

7 *Base*

Sheds should be lifted above the soil on a concrete base or wooden 'bearers' (5cm^2). This helps keep shed timber dry so it lasts longer.

8 *Floor*

Should be firm and without holes; replace any broken or rotten sections.

9 *Eaves (roof edges)*

Should overhang sides and ends of the shed by at least 5cm to help keep the inside dry.

10 *Shelves*

Check that any existing shelves are secure and whether more shelving would help, eg for storing pots and equipment.

11 *Hooks and brackets*

Useful for hanging up tools with handles. Discuss how best to organise them with the group.

12 *Box storage*

Useful for storing smaller tools. Use lockable metal cabinets for more valuable items.