



OPAL GUIDANCE + RISK-BENEFIT ASSESSMENT



Information taken below from OPAL's Risk Benefit Advice:

“Health and safety law in Great Britain has an enduring principle – that those who create risks are best placed to control them, and that they should do so in a reasonable and sensible way.”

Judith Hackitt H&SE Chair 2015

The purpose of Risk-Benefit Assessments are to enable you to provide challenge, progression, excitement, creativity and fun in your play environment.

They cannot and will not provide complete ‘safety’ and this is not their purpose.

They can help you to think about, predict, and manage the most serious and most likely potential causes of harm.

OPAL's approach follows best practice advice from the Health and Safety Executive, The Play Safety Forum, Zurich Municipal Insurance, and Local Authority Health and Safety Advisory Teams.

OPAL have developed the five-part R.A.P.I.D. Response to managing risk and therefore our school takes the following approach:

1. Risk-Benefit Assessment - means you should look at your usual environment and practices at least annually, and also when significant changes take place, and keep a written record of the areas in the table below using the risk-benefit template provided. Your assessments should cover hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury.
2. Assemblies - OPAL Play Assemblies as described in guidance Doc 3.10. These should be held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play.
3. Policy - a play policy approved by the governing body and leadership is essential and should form the basis for all staff understanding and decision making about managing risk in play.
4. Dynamic Risk Management - means that staff should be aware of the changing nature of the play taking place. They should support children to assess and manage risk as much as possible for themselves, but they should also be vigilant and take action if they think that risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by staff when required should balance the reduction of likelihood or severity or harm whilst preserving as much of the benefit of the play as possible and empowering the children to manage future risk as much as possible. Dynamic risk management in playwork requires that staff maintain ‘relaxed vigilance’. This means that the quality of play will suffer if the adult's attitude is one of hovering, anxious over-attention. There should be an assumption that most play is not dangerous

Assessed by	Date of Initial Assessment:	Review Dates:	Comments
Charley Tilbury (SBM)	26th February 2024	07th April 2024	Football goals moved so as to not disrupt those in loose parts & digging area
		15th April 2024	Moveable football goals removed and football timetabled to specific times only
		25th May 2024	Amount and type of wheels reduced to ensure reduced risk of collisions
		24th June 2024	Introduction of additional tyres

Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date
Level of adult supervision in children's play. Play policy principles are adhered to in developing and enhancing play.	Children are able to follow the play principles that are described in our play policy. Except for pupils with specific needs the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial.	The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision Direct, Remote and Ranging. Our play supervision will take remote and ranging models, so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. Staff are situated across our site and move around designated areas, engaging with play, carrying out dynamic risk assessments and supporting the schools values.	Opal Lead	Already in place

		This level of supervision means that staff focus on the 'sensible and proportionate control of real risks' (Health and Safety Executive – Play Policy) and are readily available to react to incidents as well as respond to children's invitations to play and opportunities to extend play values • Areas chosen for: Varied play environment during lunchtime and playtimes, Ease of non-invasive supervision • Area prepared by: Sourcing relevant equipment to nurture varied play experiences • Risks managed by: Play team introduction and discussion of all areas and specific risks, OPAL team regular updates (at least once a term), • OPAL staff are identified to check equipment regularly. Large loose parts checked weekly for safety and noted in risk folder for caretaker to undertake remedial works or disposal		
Pupils playing on field which is uneven. Slopes, high mounds and drops into digging area &, sandpit	Future benefit of physical play (rolling, scrambling and jumping) on different levels. Also elevated flat area for play	Slopes and mounds are clear in nature. Drops into digging and sandpit edged by tyres. Play Team use dynamic risk management and guides children in movement. Significant trip hazards identified during standard school safety walks.	Play Lead Play Team Caretaker	Review September 2024 when new areas installed
Pupils playing in different environment with new potential dangers e.g. loose parts: There is an increased risk of minor injury to pupils who may require immediate first aid.	Increased freedom to play will foster more creative play and ensure pupils learn to manage risks more effectively themselves.	Staff on duty will continue to carry their own 1st aid bag and 1st aid records - one for each playground and one for field. Pupils with minor injuries (scratches and minor abrasions) will be treated in situ.	Play Team	ongoing

(See separate equipment risks below)		More serious injuries will be referred to office staff and school first aid protocols will be followed for example, if the injury requires parental contact or needs reviewing by a paediatric first aider.	All staff	
Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date
Children may use the loose parts equipment in an inappropriate way and injuries may result in misuse.	Enabling children to play with the loose parts play enables children to develop their creative play. Play policy deems what is appropriate and inappropriate play.	Children are encouraged to develop imaginative, creative play. Regular assemblies are held to ensure that all children are aware of their responsibilities at break times to play Play Team use positive language to show children how they can make their play safe. Unsocial or Antisocial behaviour should be recorded in line with the school's behaviour policy and procedures.	Play Team Opal Lead All Staff	ongoing
Large loose parts Falling on children Crushing injuries Heavy lifting Splinters or cuts Could involve players or bystanders	All those listed in play policy plus – core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment. Pupils able to lift and move heavy play parts and use in a safe, creative way, maximising their play.	Pupils briefed in assemblies about safe holding, moving and stacking. "Ready, steady, lift" – bent knees and straight back. Agree stacking heights in play assembly. No double size pallets Large dens only in supervised den zone Large loose parts checked weekly for safety and noted in risk folder for caretaker to undertake remedial works or disposal	OPAL lead Play Team & Caretaker	ongoing

	Improved strength and agility by using materials to assist ascent of slopes			
Use of crates are stacked too highly and children are injured. Main risk for this will be from unstable stacks, or from toppling of pallets when balanced on their edge.	Play policy deems what is appropriate and inappropriate play.	Children are aware of the rules for stacking any crates and pallets. This has been communicated clearly to the children. Play team remains vigilant in the areas where pallets/crates are in play. Regular equipment checks for broken crates	Play Team Play lead	ongoing
Tree Stumps Risk of using tree stumps as stepping stones or being piled up on each other.	Enabling children to play with the loose parts play enables children to develop their creative play.	Children are made aware themselves to be able to identify broken pieces of loose parts and to highlight this to different adults. Play team remain vigilant in the areas where stumps are in play.	Play Team	ongoing
Bikes/Trikes/buggies/scooters	Increased balance and improvement of gross motor skills. Fitness and core strength improved with use.	Access to wheels are introduced slowly- first balance bikes, trikes and buggies, followed by bikes and scooters. Children are shown possible pitfalls of falling off bikes, crashing into others with bikes and injury while pushing others on bikes. Staff to make sure all bikes and scooters have proper rubber handles or taped off Caretaker to check the bikes annually.	Play Team Caretaker	ongoing

Children using sticks to play: risk of injury by using sticks inappropriately.	Play Policy Playing with sticks ignites children's imaginations. Branches and large sticks can build strength and muscles as children lift, drag, or carry them. Teamwork happens when a stick is too large for just one child to move.	Children shown how to play appropriately with sticks. Regular reminders during Play Assemblies. Children drag longer sticks when moving around the field. Dynamic risk assessments to be made by play team.	Opal Lead Play team	ongoing
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