

Ponteland Primary School Risk-benefit advice and record sheet

OPAL's RAPID approach to risk is an essential part of the OPAL Primary Programme
No school should offer the kinds of play that OPAL promotes without a robust and continually updated RAPID plan.

"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."

Dame Judith Hackitt HSE Chair 2015

- R: Risk-benefit assessment
- A: Assemblies focused on playtime
- P: Policy for play ratified by your governors or equivalent
- I: Inspections carried out regularly
- D: Dynamic risk management embraced by all staff

Risk-benefit assessment date: September 2024

Assessed by: SDinning, JOgden, AWhittaker, CSmith, MPeacock & CJohnson

The Play Team will carry out daily, ongoing risk assessment and pass on any potential hazards to a member of SLT

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	Review Date
Pupils playing in a different environment with new potential dangers: 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.	Pupils with minor injuries (scratches and minor abrasions) will be treated by nominated First Aiders. More serious injuries will be referred to a member of SLT if the injury requires parental contact or hospital treatment.	Play team: SDinning JOGden AWhittaker, CSmith MPeacock AWright	September 2024	Ongoing
Fixed equipment - Use of fixed climbing equipment in wet weather: potential risk of slipping and falling on slippery surface.	Benefit of strengthening muscle flexibility and active 'cardio' play. Pupils can also develop the skill of making informed spatial judgements based on personal capabilities when using large apparatus.	Pupils briefed to self-assess the risk of slippery surfaces/bars and how to change behaviour/use of apparatus when there is a change in the climate.	Play Team	September 2024	Ongoing
Large loose parts - Falling on children Crushing injuries from tyres, pallets, crates Heavy lifting 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.	*Encourage safe holding, moving and stacking. "Ready, steady, lift" – bent knees and straight back – children to be regularly reminded of this in assemblies. *Staff apply principles of dynamic risk assessment and guide children in movement and use of heavier play parts. *All pallets to be checked daily. *Do no stack higher than your waist *Make a den in a space *No double size pallets *Large dens only in supervised den zone *Whilst tidying, check for broken parts	OPAL lead Monitored by Play Team	September 2024	Ongoing

		*Pupils briefed in assemblies about safe holding, moving and stacking.			
Digging area use of real spades: Chopping feet Accidental blows Use as weapon Risk to players and bystanders	All those in play policy – plus Upper body strength Creativity Core strength Enjoyment	*Tools not toys training in play assembly *Only diggers in the digging zone *Child friendly equipment *Boots or wellies required	OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team	October 2024	Ongoing
Sports Zone: Tripping Hurt with equipment Running into someone	Develop social play, fine and gross motor, hand/eye coordination, core strength, fitness, cooperation	*Rules of each activity/game/sport shared and displayed *Sufficient space coned out *Only Sports equipment to be used for sports/marketing out areas *Show children and role model sensible play with balls - alert children to risk of injury and make sure they are aware of how to keep games contained so they don't impact on whole school play *Sports rotated to allow all children to enjoy the space	Teachers OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team	September 2024	Ongoing
Dressing up: Pupils have access to dressing up clothes, such as scarves, handbags, etc. Potential for neck injury and strangulation if used incorrectly.	Benefit of exploring imaginative and creative play through role-play.	All members of the Play Team to be vigilant in their supervision of pupils' use of dressing-up equipment, fabric and cushions. Play Team to carry scissors for cutting, if necessary.	OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team	July 2024	Ongoing
Mud Kitchen: Equipment used as weapons Risk to players and bystanders	All those in play policy – plus coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment	Staff to monitor use tools for their intended purpose	OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team	October 2024	Ongoing

<p>Zen Zone: Trips/injuries from steps Injuries from bean bag zips Danger of younger children ingesting lego</p>	<p>All those in play policy – plus opportunity to re-regulate, play quietly and calmly, relax Sensory and exploratory play - Children to be introduced to the space as a quiet/sensory space with bean bags and books</p>	<p>*Quiet space of contemplation. *Children to be shown responsible management of plans within the space. *Regular reminders from staff and play leaders about how to use the area.</p>	<p>OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team</p>	<p>July 2024</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Sand Play: Pupils using sandpit: potential for sand in eyes; sand can become infested without proper aeration; risk of toxoplasmosis from animal faeces; risk of consumption of sand; allergies on skin.</p>	<p>Sand provides a natural resource for children’s play and can develop: language play, social skills, problem solving and communication, fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, creativity and imagination.</p>	<p>*Sand to be aerated (dug over) and raked weekly * Cover to be removed and sandpit checked for contamination daily. *Cover to be pulled over at the end of each session. *Children to wash hands on re-entry to school. *Longsleeved tops advised for sensitive skin. *Weather conditions to be assessed before sandpit is opened. *Monitor and regulate the number of children in the sandpit if necessary. Discuss risks with children – model phrase “the sand stays low, or out you go”, “No doggy digging” to avoid sand in eyes. *Play Team to rake over sand before use in very hot weather, to avoid children burning themselves on hot sand.</p>	<p>OPAL Lead Caretaker Monitored by Play Team</p>	<p>September 2024</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Pupils playing on field: Supervision can be difficult Risk of injury whilst playing football.	Benefit of physical play on grass surface (ball skills, rolling, scrambling.	*Pupils briefed about varying ranges of supervision from the Play Team. *Play Team wearing high-viz jackets for quick identification.	OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team	July 2024	Ongoing
Den building area: Sticks/den building poles Children using sticks to play: risk of injury by using sticks inappropriately Injury from crates/pallets/tarps	Playing with sticks, pallets and tyres not only ignites children's imaginations, but also has other therapeutic benefits. Large den building equipment can build strength and muscles as children lift, drag, or carry them to and from places outdoors. Teamwork happens when an object is too large for just one child to move.	*Children shown how to play appropriately with resources *Regular reminders during Play Assemblies *Children drag larger items or move in pairs when moving around the den building area *Equipment to stay in the den building area.	OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team	July 2024	Ongoing
Loose Skips: Skipping ropes Scoop and balls hoops stilts	Benefit of improving coordination, cooperation and creativity	*Staff monitor the safe use of the equipment	OPAL Lead Monitored by Play Team		

The purpose of **risk-benefit assessments** is 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 has developed the five-part **R.A.P.I.D. response** (see above) to managing risk in your school approach to play, which should be followed alongside the guidance on managing loose parts and other more risky play outlined in pack 6 and 6A of your OPAL ePack.

1. Risk-benefit assessment (RBA)

All services supporting children undertake risk assessments. The recommended practice for supporting play provision – and all services where the activity is risky but has benefits – is to make the benefits explicit in the assessment process from the outset. This has been recommended practice for all play provision since 2012.

Your RBA is a judgement tool. It is based on your knowledge and professional judgement balanced with the potential for benefit. Your RBAs should be active documents. They should be reviewed regularly and all children and staff supervising play should be aware of their content and use them to guide their play and practice. Every time a new item or section of play is opened up they should be added to. All changes should be communicated with all children and staff.

Common areas that need standing RBAs are:

- boundaries to dangerous areas
- tree management and tree climbing
- fixed play equipment
- broken loose parts and heavy loose parts
- rope tying (especially at height)
- water use and water features
- use of sharp or heavy tools.

You should carry out a written RBA:

- as part of an annual team site walkabout for any agreed significant risks
- when changes are introduced that have a reasonable chance of significant harm
- when your concerns are raised by more than once by staff
- when you have had serious 'near-miss' incidents or very frequent low-level injuries.

2. Assemblies focused on playtime

OPAL play assemblies should be held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play. To start, hold assemblies every two weeks, settling to at least once every half term when the children and staff are confident in all aspects of their playtime opportunities and risks.

Assemblies should aim to:

- Celebrate your school's culture of play and children's creativity.
- Inform children of changes, rights, and agreements.
- Negotiate with children on issues such as risk, tidy-up and expected behaviours.
- Innovate around what children are currently playing to deepen children's engagement.

Play assemblies have dual purposes:

- To ensure that all children, staff and parents understand how much respect and regard your school has for the children's play.
- To ensure all children understand the risks and their responsibilities regarding the play opportunities, and that children and staff are involved in agreeing rules and ways of practice.

As part of your health and safety recording, a brief written log must be kept noting risks discussed and how they will be managed. (Log on record sheet template 4.7). Further guidance on play assemblies is outlined in guidance Doc 3.4 and in past #TeaWithOPAL events, which can be accessed via the OPAL schools Slack.

3. Policy for play, ratified by your governors or equivalent

A play policy approved by the governing body and leadership is essential and should form the basis for the understanding of all staff and their decision-making about managing risk in play. A template is included in pack three.

This should include formal adoption of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance (Doc 4.6) and your policy should include a statement on supervision styles (Doc 5.2 GUIDANCE Free range supervision).

4. Inspections carried out regularly

Engineered fixed equipment should have an annual technical inspection by a certified inspector. Ongoing visual inspections should be carried out by a member of staff and a record kept.

In addition, all play team members should be trained to constantly check for and remove hazards as part of their daily practice, with a clear knowledge of what and when to record, as well as appropriate responses.

5. Dynamic risk management and appropriate intervention styles are embraced by all staff

All staff in the playground and those with responsibility for children at play 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 the risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by staff when required should balance the reduction of likelihood or severity of harm while 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'. 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 and that children can develop a high degree of competence, given practice, over time. However, staff should also be vigilant, and they should be aware of the kinds of play and resources being used in their patch, who is playing and what the likely risks are.

All play team staff **must** be trained and reminded that active risk management is an essential part of their job using the OPAL online *Playwork Essentials for Primary Schools* course and training book. They should be observant, mobile and attentive at all times.

Most of the time they will not need to intervene but should be ready to:

- **stop the activity or manage the risk** if staff think that *serious harm* (meaning death, life-long debilitating injury or hospitalisation) is imminent or probable.
- **remain vigilant and consider negotiating how to manage the risk with the children** if they think that serious harm is possible but not probable.
- **continue ranging supervision** if serious harm is very unlikely.

It is important that new staff joining the play team are trained to the same level as existing staff.

Remember the law does not require you not to have accidents, but to understand the reasons for the risk you provide and to demonstrate the reasonable steps you have taken to manage those risks.