



# OPAL RAPID Risk-benefit



***“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 H&SE Chair 2015***

The purpose of **Risk-benefit Assessments** is to enable ST Mary of Charity to provide challenge, progression, excitement, creativity and fun in our play environment. They cannot and will not provide complete ‘safety’ and this is not their purpose. They can help us to think about, predict, and manage the most serious and most likely potential causes of harm.

- 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

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 box above) to managing risk in our school approach to play, which is followed alongside the guidance on managing loose parts set out in Doc 6A 0 – OPAL Loose Part Guidance.

Further guidance is available in Appendix 1.

**RISK-BENEFIT ASSESSMENT DATE: January 2025**



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**ASSESSED BY:** Rob Moorfield Opal Play Curriculum Lead

| 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                      |
|--|--|--|---|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Large loose parts</b><br/>           Falling on children / Crushing injuries<br/>           Heavy lifting<br/>           Could involve players or bystanders<br/>           The following loose parts are available;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pipes / guttering</li> <li>● Large sticks</li> <li>● Pallets</li> <li>● Cable reels</li> <li>● Tyres</li> <li>● Planks</li> <li>● Logs</li> <li>● Brooms</li> <li>● Water trays</li> <li>● Sand trays</li> </ul> | <p>Using loose parts provides children with opportunities for core strength development, coordination, cooperation, creativity.</p> <p>Items are essential to a rich play environment.</p>                                     | <p>Agree stacking heights in play assembly.<br/>           Large dens only in agreed areas of the grounds<br/>           No waving around of large parts<br/>           Agree sensible play “rules”<br/>           Pupils briefed in assemblies about safe holding, moving and stacking. “Ready, steady, lift” – bent knees and straight back.<br/>           Adults apply principles of dynamic risk assessment and guide children in movement and use of heavier play parts.<br/>           Children taught ‘safe sand / water play’ guidelines.</p> | <p>MDMS / Opal<br/>           Play Lead</p> | <p>April<br/>           2024</p> |
| <p><b>Wheeled items / equipment</b><br/>           Children falling out of equipment<br/>           Collision with other children / adults<br/>           The following items are available;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prams</li> <li>● Suitcases</li> <li>● Scooters</li> <li>● Trikes</li> </ul>  | <p>Running with wheeled items provides children with opportunities for coordination, creativity, the enjoyment of ‘going fast’, upper body strength</p> <p>Items provide children with the opportunity to play with others</p> | <p>Adults carry out visual check regularly.<br/>           Children taught and reminded about ‘safe play’ agreements<br/>           When running with item, watch where going and no sharp turns. <b>If someone asks to stop, then stop.</b></p>   | <p>MDMS / Opal<br/>           Play Lead</p> | <p>April<br/>           2024</p> |



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| 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 |
|--|---|---|--------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Trees</b><br>Trees unsafe to climb: potential injury falling from trees with thin or weak branches.                         | We currently have suitable trees in the designated area for children to climb. Children are aware of no climbing above Yellow line, and dynamic risk assessments. | All children briefed not to climb trees above yellow line. Supervision by adults to enforce this.   | MDMS / Opal<br>Play Lead | April 2024  |
| <b>Ropes</b><br>Children playing with rope: potential for neck injury and strangulation.                                       | Thick rope enables pulling and dragging and other safe applications such as demarcation, den-building etc   | Climbing rope not used. All rope checked to ensure it is the correct thickness.<br>Play guidelines for children – pulling, dragging, attaching to items not children, den making.<br>Rope always below waist height | MDMS / Opal<br>Play Lead | April 2024  |
| 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 |
| <b>Digging area use of real spades</b><br>Chopping feet<br>Accidental blows<br>Use as weapon<br>Risk to players and bystanders | Using spades and trowels provides children with opportunities for<br>Upper body strength<br>Creativity<br>Core strength<br>Enjoyment                              | Tools not toys training in play assembly<br>Only spades not forks   | MDMS / Opal<br>Play Lead | April 2024  |



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|   |   |  |   |                                |
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| <p><b>Tyres</b><br/>         Multiple of tyres in the playground<br/>         Available for children to use all the time<br/>         Children using tyres and those around/nearby<br/>         Chemicals on the tyres<br/>         Staff - setting out, moving, manual handling,<br/>         Building - fire risk</p> | <p>Physical activity<br/>         Gross motor skills<br/>         Awareness of recycling<br/>         Materials / science<br/>         Understanding of physics and motion<br/>         Spatial awareness<br/>         Team building<br/>         Heavy lifting<br/>         Planning and designing<br/> <br/>         Links to curriculum policies</p> | <p>Play assembly to discuss risks and negotiate rules. What to do if the child feels something sharp?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If going inside tyres, not higher than waist height of smallest person</li> <li>● Rolling of tyres - not down banks</li> <li>● 2 children minimum to carry tyre</li> </ul> <p>On receipt of tyres, leave out in the rain<br/>         On first use, provide water, washing up liquid and brush to do extra clean<br/>         Adults feel inside every tyre before use.</p> | <p>MDMS / Opal<br/>         Play Lead</p> | <p>April<br/>         2024</p> |
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**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

## APPENDIX 1

### 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.

The 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.

Common areas that need standing risk-benefit assessments 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.



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- when your concerns are raised more than once by staff.
- when you have had serious 'near-miss incidents or very frequent low-level injuries.

Your assessments should cover risks and hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury. A template is provided below. Many others are available. You should adapt or adopt the format that is in usual use in your setting.

## 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.

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 3.6.

## 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 3.



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This should include formal adoption of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance (Doc 4.0) and your policy should include a statement on supervision styles (Doc 5.6).

## 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 when to record and appropriate responses.

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

All staff in the playground and 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 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 course and training book. They should be observant, mobile and attentive at all times.



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

- **stop 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** if they think that serious harm is possible but not probable.
- **note and move on** 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.**