



Risk-benefit advice and record sheet **November 2025**

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
To be revisited each half term following the review of all accident forms.

A: Assemblies focused on playtime
Email updates as well as assemblies to keep all staff up to date of any immediate changes.

P: Policy for play ratified by your governors or equivalent
Play policy shared with SIP May 2024 and circulated to all staff June 2024. ratified by FGB 1.7.2024. All staff read annually as part of September safeguarding reading.

I: Inspections carried out regularly
All staff to be responsible for reporting any concerns and all equipment to be checked weekly on a rota basis.

D: Dynamic risk management embraced by all staff
RBA was evaluated with all classes summer 2025. Revisit of play principles autumn 2025. RBA shared November 2025 for any further reflections.

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 box 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 with 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.

The following staff are responsible for making judgments on the RBA:

Lamara Taylor - Headteacher and Curricular Lead

James Griffiths - Curriculum Lead

Vicky Bootland - Governor Lead

Sarah Bentley - EYFS/KS1 Play Coordinator

Leah McQuillan - KS2 Play Coordinator

Gill Taylor - Outdoor Learning Lead

Donna Mardon-mowbray - Parent Lead

Common areas that need standing RBAs are:

- boundaries to dangerous areas **boundary check every Monday by Site Manager**
- tree management and tree climbing **Site survey completed April 2026**
- fixed play equipment
- broken loose parts and heavy loose parts



- rope tying (especially at height) **adults only**
- water use **hose and water butts**
- use of sharp or heavy tools **adult supervision only**

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

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. **Parent Stay and Plays and FaceBook celebrations**
- 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. **Play assembly each half term as well as regular emails and pop ins**

As part of your health and safety recording, a brief written log will be kept on the RBA noting risks discussed and how they will be managed. 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 pack.



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). **Completed July 2024. Approved October 2024**

4. Inspections carried out regularly

Engineered fixed equipment should have an annual technical inspection by a certified inspector. **Site Manager organises all external inspections.** Ongoing visual inspections should be carried out by a member of staff and a record kept. **Any ongoing inspections - staff are to notify a member of the OPAL team to be rectified straight away and add to the H&S log. System working well OPAL team overseeing equipment. Staff are encouraged to check each area every Monday as per the rota.**

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 who to report to and when**, as well as appropriate responses. **Any observations are held in the school's health and safety log to be actioned.**

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 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. **Completed spring 1 2024.**

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.

Risk-benefit assessment date: **Updated November 2025**

Assessed by: **Lamara Taylor OPAL Lead**

EYFS/KS1 OPAL Playground			
Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Management of risk and agreed mitigations	Observations and action date
Gravel Digging Pit Swallowing/choking gravel Danger from throwing gravel	Core strength. Coordination. Cooperation. Creativity. Teamwork. Fine motor.	Purchase of large gravel to prevent choking hazard. Secured tyres around the edge to form a boundary. Children were informed not to throw gravel. Size of digger. Plastic equipment.	Observed April 2026. Gravel low. AS to order some more and LT to coordinate Y5 to assist in moving 29.4 2026



Risk to bystanders			
<p>Sand Pit Swallowing of sand Sand in eyes and throwing sand Hygiene of sand Entrapment and suffocation from cover</p>	<p>Opportunity to explore sand as a material on a regular basis as some families have limited opportunities and don't go to the beach. Core strength. Fun. Able to choose how to play with the sand. Creativity</p>	<p>Cover allows sand to breathe, protects from animal faeces and allows sunlight through to reduce risk of build up on bacteria. Sand to be dug over if not used for more than a six week period. Cover fixed to one side to avoid children using it as part of their play. The children need to be reminded that the sleepers can be slippery.</p>	<p>No further sand needed as yet. April 2026</p>
<p>Large Loose Parts, Tyres and Crates Falling from height Being hit with loose parts Strangulation from rope Use of materials when wet and dry Risk to bystanders Heavy lifting Sharp edges and slippery</p>	<p>Core strength. Coordination. Cooperation. Creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment</p>	<p>Encouraging the children to report sharp parts of broken equipment. Demonstrating how to move equipment correctly. Children agree to safe heights to build with crates and pallets. Ropes for tying are no more than 1 metre long. Ropes given out by the adult and rope safety discussion held by adults. No climbing onto equipment during wet weather. Designated area along the fence for building. Crates to be used on hard surfaces only to ensure stability and never in a competitive situation.</p>	
<p>Climbing Arcs and Fixed Play Equipment Falling from height Slipping</p>	<p>Balance and coordination. Upper-body strength. Core strength</p>	<p>Safe number of children on equipment at any given time Consideration of weather conditions Fixed play equipment has appropriate flooring</p>	



<p>Scooter Track and Pushchairs Falling off Collision and crashing Danger from broken equipment (wire in tyres) Danger to bystanders</p>	<p>Fun, Recognition of impact of physical activity. Balance. Spatial awareness. Children learn what it means to be tired.</p>	<p>One-way system around the track Helmets to be worn if needed Children encouraged to check the equipment as they use it Identified area for scooting</p>	<p>Scooters in KS1 replaced and replenished. March 2026</p>
<p>Football Risk to bystanders Aggressive behaviours at end of football matches</p>	<p>Teamwork. Lose with grace. Cardiovascular benefits. Coordination. Balance</p>	<p>Designated pitch space away from other games. Direct supervision. Children have agreed upon safety and appropriate consequences.</p>	<p>Concerns raised about climbing fences to get balls. VB to discuss in assembly.</p>
<p>Dressing Up and Performance Area Falling off stage Choking hazards Hygiene</p>	<p>Creativity. Fun. Developing speech and language. Role playing - curiosity</p>	<p>Stage is secured together. Clothes washed at the end of each half-term. Bins will be used to store clothes so they can be brought inside during holidays.</p>	
<p>Tree Climbing, Swings and Rope Ladders Risk to bystanders Falling from height</p>	<p>Balance and coordination. Upper-body strength. Core strength Fun</p>	<p>Monitoring how safe the children are in the tree. Ensuring no damage has been done outside of the school day. Discussion around 3 points of contact and footwear with grip on soles. Direct supervision of climbing tree in KS1.</p>	<p>If KS1 begins to climb please complete a reminder assembly and ensure direct supervision. VB</p>
<p>Spinning Cones Falling out or off Risk to bystanders</p>	<p>Core strength. Creativity to use as other things.</p>	<p>One child in a cone. Only the child can spin themselves. Cones can be used safely on grass or tarmac as tarmac is new.</p>	<p>No Trampolines. Please complete a digging pit area as the hole is a trip hazard.</p>



<p>Mud House Broken plastics Sharp screw and broken handles</p>	<p>Sensory benefit. Collaborative role play.</p>	<p>Good drainage of storage containers to avoid standing water. Water butts were added to support safe movement of water and to wash hands prior to entering school.</p>	
<p>Digging Pit TBA</p>			
<p>Actions for autumn 2025 (these were ideas from last year)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role play resources I will order two more sheds and we will develop the small world role play. - More crates VB/SB to decide on whether to return the crates. - Dolls and pushchairs EYFS staff and TAs to source - Invest in small parts Y2 staff and TAs to source and agree the focus for the 3 sheds - Science area Y1 staff and TAs to source and plan - Revamp the stage VB/SB - Willow tunnel - sensory Mr Taylor sourcing willow from the river bank. 			
<p>KS2 OPAL Playground</p>			
<p>Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.</p>	<p>Benefit or utility or related policy -all listed in play policy plus:</p>	<p>Management of risk and agreed mitigations</p>	<p>Assembly action date</p>



<p>Large Loose Parts, Tyres and Crates and Den Building Falling from height Being hit with loose parts Strangulation from rope Use of materials when wet and dry Risk to bystanders Heavy lifting Exploring near the boundary for dens has led to children finding unwanted rubbish and objects thrown over the fence.</p>	<p>Core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment.</p> <p>How to keep safe when finding things that could be dangerous has led to discussions on keeping safe in our community.</p>	<p>Encouraging the children to report sharp parts of broken equipment. Demonstrating how to move equipment correctly. Children agree to safe heights to build with crates and pallets. Crates can only be used on flat surfaces. Ropes for tying are no more than 1 metre long. Ropes given out by the adult and rope safety discussion held by adults.</p> <p>No climbing onto equipment during wet weather. Designated area along the fence for building. Far corner of field to avoid bystanders. Single pallets only to be moved and double pallets to remain as static bases. Tyres to be stored against the fence line when not in use. Large dens can only have a tarp roof.</p>	<p>Loose parts all ok. Disposal working well.</p>
<p>Sand Pit Swallowing of sand Sand in eyes and throwing sand Hygiene of sand Entrapment and suffocation from cover</p>	<p>Opportunity to explore sand as a material on a regular basis as some families have limited opportunities and don't go to the beach. Core strength. Fun. Able to choose how to play with the sand.</p>	<p>Shared discussions around no throwing of sand. Modelling of how to use equipment safely. Cover allows sand to breathe and allows sunlight through to reduce risk of build up on bacteria and animal faeces. Sand to be dug over if not used for more than 6 weeks. Cover fixed to one side to avoid children using it as part of their play. Downward facing hooks used to secure.</p>	
<p>Digging Pit Injury from tools Soil in eyes Infection from soil</p>	<p>Sense of purpose. Physical core strength. Using 'real' tools. Awe and wonder discovery.</p>	<p>No forks or rakes and the risks outweigh the benefits when spades can be used. Wellies to be worn at all times. Tools remain below waste height and within the boundary.</p>	<p>Hand trowels added 1.5.2026</p>



		Reminders about avoiding soil in eyes. Children wash hands in the mud kitchen toilet after all play. Direct supervision activity.	
<p>Tree Climbing, Swings and Rope Ladders Risk to bystanders Falling from height</p>	Balance and coordination Upper-body strength Core strength Fun	Monitoring of how safely the children are attached to the trees Ensuring no damage has been done outside of the school day Discussion around 3 points of contact. Direct supervision of climbing trees. All children wear trainers or shoes with a sturdy sole.	LT to add ribbons asap.
<p>Slacklines Risk to staff who tighten ratchets Risk to bystanders Being bounced off the line.</p>		Rule of three children at any given time. Designated space. No bouncing. Regularly checked by members of the OPAL team each half term.	
<p>Scooters Track can be a trip hazard Wire from tyres Loose screws on scooters</p>	Core stability. Understanding physical exertion. Teamwork.	New scooters bought to know that they are sturdy and safe from rotating round and hitting shins.	Track boundary renewed. All free scooters removed due to wear and tear.
<p>Social Spaces and Pig Arcs Falling from the top Missing children</p>	Social communication places. Free play and imaginative play.	No climbing/standing on the top of the arcs. Count the magic number after outside play.	
<p>Hammocks Falling from hammocks</p>	Social communication places. Sensory needs from swing.	Low to the ground and varying heights for different ages. Demonstrations completed on how to get in and out safely. No swinging higher than 90 degrees	Inform 3.9 : assembly with new Y3 on the first day of term about tree climbing and hammocks.



<p>Mud Kitchen Broken plastics Sharp screw and broken handles</p>	<p>Sensory benefit. Collaborative role play.</p>	<p>Good drainage of storage containers to avoid standing water. Water butts were added to support safe movement of water and to wash hands prior to entering school.</p>	<p>Needs a revamp and clear out</p>
<p>Football Bumping into and falling posts Risk to bystanders Aggressive behaviours at end of football matches</p>	<p>Teamwork Lose with grace Cardiovascular benefits Coordination Balance</p>	<p>Secured posts using sandbags Designated pitch space away from other games Direct supervision Children have agreed upon on what is safe and appropriate consequences</p>	<p>Negotiate 18.9: Met with Y5/Y6 footballers to discuss rough play and agree no slide tackling, shoulder barging and foul language.</p>
<p>Swamp Risk of falling Carrying water</p>	<p>Teamwork Coordination Cardiovascular benefits</p>	<p>Designated area zoned off Water carrying in pairs Children have agreed upon on what is safe</p>	<p>Innovate</p>
<p>Skipping Ropes strangulation rope burns</p>	<p>Core strength. Collaborative play to develop language and skipping songs/games. Cardio fitness.</p>	<p>Ropes to be closely supervised by a nominated adult and counted back in to avoid any inappropriate use.</p>	<p>Inform: Children asked for skipping games. Emailed TAs about supervision.</p>
<p>Dollie fall if stood on Flip is used on uneven surfaces trapped fingers if hands are near the wheels</p>	<p>Collaborative play. sensory benefits. Creativity to invent games.</p>	<p>1 person per dolly and children must be seated. No intentional bumping into others No standing Dollies must stay in the designated area.</p>	<p>Inform assembly: LM to action</p>
<p>Actions for summer 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tool chest - Demolition area to be established. LT to action - Construction Shed - OPAL Team to plan LT to order shed 			



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensory pathways and social spaces to further develop LT discussion with AS and LS - Need a wider variety of resources for large loose parts play. KS2 Teachers to source. - Use of vegetable beds - use herbs and then plant KS2 TAs to plan for moving veg beds into a growing area. 			
<p>KS2 Games Playground</p>			
Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Management of risk and agreed mitigations	Action date
<p>Gym Shed Equipment Physical injury</p>	<p>Sensory benefit Physical exercise Proprioceptive benefit Core strength</p>	<p>Used under adult supervision. Only one child at a time using the punch bag. Boxing gloves to be worn when using the punch bag. Two children carried the rope out and put it away. Only to be used in dry weather on the playground. Children do not take out punch bags, dumbbell weights or weighted bags.</p>	<p>.</p>
<p>Indoor Gym Equipment</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>	
<p>Wrestling Physical injury Aggressive behaviours</p>	<p>Balance Play Coordination Sensory benefit Physical exercise Proprioceptive benefit Core strength</p>	<p>The mats must always be supervised by an adult on duty (if there is not enough staff, the mats will be closed). Children must not wrestle until there is an adult present. Only 2 children are allowed on a set of mats at any time (there are currently two sets of mats under the awning/ 4 mats per set). Wrestling always starts from a kneeling position and children are not to "throw" others down. There is to be no touching, grabbing, holding etc above the shoulders and absolutely no grabbing of necks. The moment a person is down, the other wrestler must release them and the round is over (there is no count to 3). The child who was down will tag out and rest so another child can join in. After two rounds, any child must rest even if they have</p>	<p>Updated following discussion with the OPAL team 1.5.2026</p>



		<p>not been "put down" onto the mats. If a child says stop, the other wrestler must pause. The adult is in charge. Their decision is final.</p> <p>No pushing from behind</p>	
<p>Trampolines Falling out or off Risk to bystanders</p>	<p>Core strength. Creativity to use as other things. Fulfils the sensory need to bounce.</p>	<p>One child on a trampoline at a time. Only the child can bounce themselves. The ridged edge protects trapped fingers. Trampolines buried in the ground to avoid movement.</p>	
<p>Football Bumping into and falling posts Risk to bystanders Aggressive behaviours at end of football matches</p>	<p>Teamwork Lose with grace Cardiovascular benefits Coordination Balance</p>	<p>Secured posts using sandbags. Numerous pitches. Direct supervision. Children have agreed upon what is safe conduct and appropriate consequences. Bans can be imposed for dangerous behaviours. Children are in charge of the maintenance of the footballs.</p>	
<p>Tennis Risk to bystanders Physical injury Fallouts over equipment</p>	<p>Coordination Cardiovascular benefit Teamwork</p>	<p>No more than four children playing at one time. Equipment to be kept within the zoned area. No equipment to be kicked.</p>	
<p>Basketball Risk to bystanders Physical injury Fallouts over equipment</p>	<p>Coordination Cardiovascular benefit Teamwork Lose with grace</p>	<p>As above.</p>	
<p>Den Building Physical injury Fallouts over territory or equipment</p>	<p>Coordination Creativity Imaginative play Teamwork</p>	<p>Equipment supplied by the play team. Children have agreed upon safe ways to source and use equipment. Children go to the play team if there are any disputes around the den building.</p>	



<p>Wheelchairs Physical injury Sharp metal spokes Broken wheels Tipping on chairs</p>	<p>Inclusive sporting activity Creativity Teamwork Coordination</p>	<p>Equipment checked daily. Children have agreed on safe ways to use the wheelchairs - no running whilst pushing each other.</p>	
<p>Gymnastics Physical injury Verbal arguments</p>	<p>Balance Play Coordination Sensory benefit Physical exercise Proprioceptive benefit Core strength</p>	<p>Under adult supervision at all times. Two children per mat. Discussion to be had about what children are comfortable with. No lifting / carrying / swinging. No shoes on the mats.</p>	
<p>Actions for summer 2026</p>			

Celebration Day 17.12: Thank you to all children for being so amazing. Whole school play date.