



St.Helen's CE Primary OPAL Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment: OPAL equipment and environment.			
Assessed by:	Date of Initial Assessment:	Review Dates:	
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This is a working document and will be continually updated and reviewed as and when new equipment is added or the environment adapted.



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 in your school approach which should be followed alongside the guidance on managing loose parts set out in Doc 3.2 OPAL Loose Part Guidance. (Appendix 1)

- 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. A brief written log must be kept noting risks discussed and how they will be managed.
- 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. This should include formal adoption of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance (Doc 4.1) and your policy should include a statement on supervision styles (Doc 4.3).
- 4. Inspection** - technical reports of engineered fixed play equipment. Fixed equipment should have an annual inspection by a certified inspector. Ongoing visual inspections should be carried out by a member of staff and a record kept.
- 5. 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



and that children can develop a high degree of competence, given practice, over time. However, staff should also be vigilant, 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.

Intervention – if staff think that *serious harm* (meaning death, life-long debilitating injury or hospitalisation), is *imminent* or *probable* they should intervene to either stop or manage the risk. If they think that serious harm is possible but not probable, they should remain vigilant. If serious harm is very unlikely then they should probably focus their attention elsewhere or act to further improve the quality of the play offer.

St.Helen’s CE Primary Standing Benefit-Risk Assessments: Environment and Equipment

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>Level of adult supervision in children’s play.</p> <p>Play policy principles are adhered to in developing and enhancing play.</p> <p>..</p>	<p>Children are able to follow the play principles that are described in our play policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We use a form of supervision called ‘ranging supervision’. This means that staff are situated across our site in key locations and move around designated areas, engaging with play, carrying out dynamic risk assessments and supporting the schools values and rules introduced to LBS 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 	<p>LBS Introduced to LBS wk beginning 7.6.21</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



		<p>readily available to react to incidents as well as respond to children’s invitations to play and opportunities to extend play values</p> <p>Areas chosen for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied play environment • during lunchtime and playtimes, • Ease of non-invasive supervision <p>Area prepared by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sourcing relevant equipment to nurture varied • play experiences, <p>Risks managed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play team introduction and discussion of all • areas and specific risks, • OPAL staff identified to check equipment regularly • OPAL team regular updates (at least once a term), 		
<p>Pupils playing with different loose parts play equipment: Potential for splinters, crush injury from cable drums, ply sheets and pallets. Potential injury when lifting heavy objects. (See separate equipment risks below)</p>	<p>Pupils able to lift and move heavy play parts and use in a safe, creative way, maximising their play.</p>	<p>Pupils briefed in assemblies about safe holding, moving and stacking. “Ready, steady, lift” – bent knees and straight back.</p> <p>Assembly held with children on 7.6.21 to talk about the implementation of OPAL activities.</p>	<p>KC LBS</p>	<p>7.6.21 and ongoing</p>



		<p>Lunch Break Supervisors (LBS) applies principles of dynamic risk assessment and guide children in movement and use of heavier play parts.</p> <p>LBS meeting on June 7th held to reinforce the safe habits of moving loose parts play.</p>		
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 playing with rope and other loose parts equipment that has the potential for neck injury and strangulation and any other areas of being bound.	<p>Thick rope enables pulling and dragging and other safe applications such as demarcation, den-building etc</p> <p>Use rope enables children to tie things together to be creative.</p>	LBS are vigilant on the use of rope and any other loose strings that has the potential for injuries.	KC to monitor the loose part equipment	7.6.21 and ongoing
Pupils playing on field which is uneven and unsuitable due to high, mud mound. Supervision difficult and risk of pupils being injured and out of sight	<p>Future benefit of physical play (rolling, scrambling and jumping) on mound. Also elevated flat area for play)</p>	Children have been briefed as part of an assembly LBS ensure pupils stay in the correct areas, where they have significant lines of sight.	KC LBS	<p>7.6.21 and ongoing</p> <p>Assembly to children 7.6.21</p>



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
Pupils playing in different environment with new potential dangers eg 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.	All LBS will continue to carry their own 1 st aid pouches and 1 st aid records. Pupils with minor injuries (scratches and minor abrasions) will be treated in situ. More serious injuries will be referred to office staff and school first aid protocols will be followed for example, informing a member of SLT if the injury requires parental contact	LBS	Ongoing
Loose parts play such as plastic tubes, guttering etc is broken (See Loose parts action plan and risks appendix 1)	Enabling children to play with the guttering enables children to develop their creative play.	All loose parts play are checked regularly (fortnightly) to ensure it is safe enough to play with. All parts that are identified as having 'rough' edges or broken will be removed. Children are encouraged to place broken items in a 'broken zone'.	KC AR – Site manager	Ongoing
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	KC AR – Site manager	Ongoing



		with loose parts appropriately within the Flying High culture.		
<p>Pallet Use Risk of using pallets include: Unstable stacking, nails from popping up, slats breaking from under pressure, minor splinters caused by hands on roughly sawn wood.</p> <p>At Risk pupils:</p> <p>Harm - category:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splinters – med • Scrapes – low • Cuts - low 	<p>Enabling children to play with the loose parts play enables children to develop their creative play.</p> <p>Useful knowledge and skills of construction. Healthy living link to core strength, cardiovascular and mental health</p>	<p>Through the play policy and through assemblies the children have been taught the expectations for using more than one pallet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pallets chosen for: • Reasonable condition/sturdy, • Any protruding nails removed/made safe. • Area prepared by: • Caretaker sanding down pallets prior to use. • OPAL identified staff check area daily • Risks managed by (pupils worked with through play assembly): • Don't build above waist height, • Pallet may break, uncovering protruding • nail/screw, be careful and tell play team, • Pallets can give splinters if not handled • correctly. • Caretaker to prepare 	<p>LBS Staff on duty.</p>	<p>Ongoing Assembly</p>



OPAL Risk-Benefit Advice and Record Sheet

Doc 4.1

		<p>Children know that two children should move pallets (KS2) and four children (KS1)</p> <p>All pallets will be inspected for structural integrity by staff once a week for exposed nails, potential finger traps, broken slats etc.</p>		
<p>Use of crates or pallets are stacked too highly and children are injured.</p> <p>Main risk for this will be from unstable stacks, or from toppling of pallets when balanced on their edge.</p>	<p>Play policy deems what is appropriate and inappropriate play.</p>	<p>Children are aware of the rules for stacking any crates and pallets. This has been communicated clearly to the children.</p> <p>LBS remain vigilant in the areas where pallets/crates are in play.</p>	<p>LBS Staff on duty.</p>	<p>Ongoing Assembly</p>
<p>Risk of using baskets as stepping stones or being piled up on each other.</p>	<p>Enabling children to play with the loose parts play enables children to develop their creative play.</p>	<p>Through regular assemblies (fortnightly) children are made aware themselves to be able to identify broken pieces of loose parts and to highlight this to different adults.</p> <p>Regular check are made of all equipment.</p>	<p>Children LBS Staff on duty</p>	<p>Ongoing Assembly.</p>



<p>Tyre use At Risk pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm - category: • Knocks – low • Scrapes – low 	<p>Play Policy, Benefits of children engaged in an exciting and engaging activity. Exploration of movement and imaginative play</p> <p>Useful knowledge and skills of construction.</p> <p>Healthy living link to core strength, cardiovascular and mental health.</p> <p>Challenge for gross motor skills when moving and lifting types.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyres chosen for: • Reasonable tread, no metal showing, • Size and weight medium/low – moving • Large tractor - climbing. • No slope long/steep enough to produce • dangerous inertia when tyre rolled down. • Risks managed by (pupils worked with through play assembly): • Don't build above waist height, • Don't move tractor tyres for climbing/balancing • only. • If rolling down slope, check area clear. 	<p>Play lead Play team</p>	<p>Assembly 7.6.21</p>



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Doc 4.1





Appendix 1

What are Loose Parts?

Loose parts are any materials that can be easily moved, combined, and incorporated into children's free play.

Fabricated Loose Parts (see list A) are anything man-made that is not a toy or a specific piece of sport equipment.

Natural Loose Parts (see list B) is any moveable natural material that children can transport, mix, construct with or incorporate into their play.

The five rules of loose parts are:

1. **Plentiful**; large quantities, many items (4 per child)
2. **Accessible**; always available, got-out and put-away by children, available across the whole environment
3. **Varied**; lots and lots and lots of different stuff and material
4. **Safe-enough**; regularly checked, monitored and disposed of
5. **Replaced**: you will need to keep replacing and refreshing your loose parts

Loose parts are such an essential element of all play environments that they will require their own Loose Parts Action Plan (at the end of this document).

Health and Safety when using Loose Parts:

When using loose parts, the health and safety considerations are simple and practical.

Before putting Loose Parts into the play environment:



- All scrap should be checked that it is safe enough to play with. Pockets, bags etc should all be cleared out, cable cut-off etc
- With more unusual items, it pays to run your hands lightly over surfaces and bend and wiggle bits to test if they are going to flake, fracture or break
- Ensure that all part edges and surfaces are smooth not rough, i.e. wooden items. If they have become rough, sand before use
- Create a 'broken-zone' and encourage children to put broken items in it
- Stop and think, what concerns you have about risk? If you think an item is really dangerous then don't use it. If you need to negotiate with children to manage risk then inform children and staff about high and low risk uses of the items (e.g. pencil - writing low risk, stabbing - high risk!)

This Tidy-O-Meter records how well tidy up has gone. OPAL of playtime should be tidy up. Lots of greens gets bonus day closure. Orange brings a discussion to the play



recommends not more than 4 minutes playtime. Lots of reds means and one assembly.

During play:

- Inform those playing that as some items are heavier or long, they should not be carried or held above head height and that some should ideally be moved using two people to ensure that no injuries occur
- Good playwork practice will always involve risk-benefit discussions with children and about safe-enough use
- Play fighting/rough and tumble should follow scrap-on-scrap principles if allowed
- Be clear of the purpose when intervening in play.

After play:

- Children should tidy up. Five-minute warning, everyone pick-up three things, throw them into the play-store or the broken zone.
- Whilst tidying up take stock of all the loose parts and identify any breakages, damage or dirt which needs to be sorted out before next playtime.
- Issues of dispute and difficulty e.g.: tidy-up, safety and sharing, are learning opportunities and should be discussed in play assemblies and circle times.





(List A) Fabricated Loose Parts	
Fabricated	Sources
Astro Turf Off cuts	Landscapers
Boards, Old Cabinet Doors, Panels	Parents, trades people
Bread, milk, bottle and grocery crates	Traders
Brief cases	Parents, charity shops
Buggies, push chairs	Parents
Cable drums	Trades People
Cardboard boxes	Trades, deliveries, parents
Carpet samples	Carpet shops
Carpet squares	Carpet shops
Cuddly Toys	Charity Shops
Fabrics - all shapes and sizes	Parents, Jumble Sales, Charity Shops. Fabric shops, Markets
Foam pipe covers and noodles	Plumbers, Pound shops
Guttering	Trades people, suppliers



Hoses	DIY stores, parents,
Keyboards	Computer companies, parents
Metal pots, pans, trays etc. Especially catering sizes	Caterers, Parents, Gumtree
Nets, fishing, cargo, football	Scrap stores, internet, football clubs
Office removal crates	Tea Crates Ltd, Office movers
Old clothes, jackets, overalls, hats, bags	Parents, Jumble sales, charity shops
Old household appliances, hoovers, fax machines, microwaves etc	Parents
One Ton Dumping Bags	Builders
Pallets	Builders, stores, parents
Phones	Phone companies, parents
Piping, gas, water and drainage	Trades people
Planks - decking, scaffolders (need sanding) (1m-2m)	DIY, Builders merchants, carpenters, builders
Plastic Chairs with no legs	Schools and offices
Plastic Road Barriers	Highway firms, Border Barriers Ltd



Plastic trugs and bins	DIY Stores and Internet
Ropes	Ships Chandlers, Internet
Small Children's Bike Wheels, wheels	Parents, DIY stores, internet
Small wheely bins	Online
Sofa and chair cushions	Parents
Steering Wheels	Scrap dealers
Suitcases - all sizes	Parents, charity shops
Tarps	DIY and Building Merchants
Traffic Cones	Internet, Highway Companies
Tubes of all kinds	Parents, trades
Tyres; car, Go-kart, motorbike, cycle	Garages, Qwick Fit etc
Waterproof Cot Mattresses	Parents
Wooden block and off cuts	Carpenters, Builders



(List B) Natural Loose Parts	
Natural	Source
Branches and stick	Parents, Local woodland, tree surgeons
Feathers	Internet
Fruit	Fruit Trees
Grass	Plants
Leaves	Plants
Logs	Firewood companies, Local Authority, Tree surgeons
Mud	Nature, Landscape suppliers, Builders Merchants
Pea Gravel	Builders Merchants, Landscape Suppliers
Peat	Garden Centres
Pinecones	Woods and Forests
Play Bark/ Woodchip	Landscape Suppliers, Play Companies
Sand (Washed dredged not 'Sharp')	Builders Merchants, Landscape supplies
Sea Pebbles	Landscape suppliers



Shells	Seaside
Varied Aggregates, slate, flint, clay	Landscape supplies, Specialist Aggregates
Water	Sky (not the company!), Tap
Wood Off Cuts	Carpenters, Builders, Woodworkers



Loose Parts Safe Enough Guidance		
In all cases talking with children in play assemblies and in the playground is an essential part of the risk management process		
Items	Risk	Management
Suitcases	Being Locked In Suffocation	Remove or break lock Make holes in airtight cases
Buggies and push chairs	Finger traps on folding	Cable tie open
Tyres	Puncture, cuts, crushing	Reject tyres with exposed wires, check for nails and remove. Don't roll very heavy tyres
Pallets	Splinters Scratches and punctures Sharp wood Crushing	Select quality pallets Children sand down rough pallets Remove exposed nails with pliers as soon as exposed Don't use very heavy pallets apart from flat on ground.



Bags, clothing	Hidden hazardous items	Check all pockets and compartments
Electrical Items, Hoovers, toaster etc	Suffocation from cords	Cut off all electrical cords
Other	Puncturing Cuts Entrapment Strangulation	Remove pointed items, items with very sharp edges or that will shatter Assess risk of fingers getting stuck, remove if too high Remove thin wires, cords and strings. Keep rope play in view and use thicker ropes.

