

Danesholme Academies

Risk Assessment: OPAL equipment and environment.			
Assessed by:	Date of Initial Assessment:	Review Dates:	
Mrs Ives	5th January 2026		
Mrs Stuart		[

This is a working document and will be continually updated and reviewed as and when new equipment is added or the environment adapted.

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

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.

Our RBA is a judgement tool. It is based on our knowledge and professional judgement balanced with the potential for benefit. Our RBA is an active document. It is reviewed regularly and all children and staff supervising play are aware of the content and use it to guide their play and practice. Every time a new item or section of play is opened up it is added to. All changes are communicated with all children and staff.

Our assessments cover risks and hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury.

2. Assemblies focused on playtime

Our OPAL play assemblies are held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play.

Assemblies 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 which underpins this benefit risk assessment.



3. Policy for play

A play policy approved by the Academy Advisory Council is in place and is the basis for the understanding of all staff and their decision-making about managing risk in play. This includes formal the adoption of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance and outlines how pupils will be supervised.

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 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 **are** trained and reminded that active risk management is an essential part of their job. 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.



Risk-benefit assessment date: 5th January

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>Large loose parts Falling on children Crushing injuries Heavy lifting Could involve players or bystanders</p>	<p>All those listed in play policy plus – core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment.</p>	<p>Agree stacking heights in play assembly – no higher than your head. Large dens only in supervised den zone Lifting expectations shared in assembly</p>	<p>OPAL lead</p>	<p>05/01/26 Ongoing updates during Play Assemblies</p>
<p>Digging area use of real spades Chopping feet Accidental blows Use as weapon Risk to players and bystanders</p>	<p>All those in play policy – plus Upper body strength Creativity Core strength Enjoyment</p>	<p>Tools not toys training in play assembly Only diggers in the digging zone Only spades, not forks</p>	<p>Play Worker</p>	<p>Not yet introduced</p>
<p>Use of ropes and wool in crafts Strangulation friction burns bruises and cuts trapped limbs</p>	<p>All those in the play policy – plus Fine motor skills for knot tying Problem solving Construction skills Enjoyment Creativity</p>	<p>Play Workers are vigilant on the use of rope and any other loose strings that has the potential for injuries. Play assembly stating correct use to include no tying to children and no loops clearly defined.</p>	<p>Play Worker OPAL Lead</p>	<p>Not yet introduced</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
Wooden Loose Parts – Pallets, Cable Reels, Planks, Ply Board, long branches, logs Splinters, cuts and bruises. Broken Limbs or crushing Injury from lifting	All those in the play policy – plus Body strength Large motor skills Construction skills Enjoyment Creativity	Agreed rules in play assembly. Agreed technique for lifting in play assembly. Reporting if parts are broken Inspection of parts	Opal Lead Play Workers	06/01/26 Ongoing updates during Play Assemblies
Plastic loose parts – chair tops, down pipe, piping, water butts, crates, guttering pipe Cuts and bruises. Fingers trapped Broken Limbs.	All those in the play policy – plus Body strength Large motor skills Balance Construction skills Enjoyment Creativity	Agreed rules in play assembly Inspections of parts Report if parts are broken Ventilation added to water butts	Opal Lead Play Workers	Not yet introduced
Tyres Cuts and bruises, broken limbs by falling tyres or rolling tyres.	All those in the play policy – plus Body strength Large motor skills Construction skills Enjoyment Creativity	Agreed rules in play assembly Inspections of parts Drainage of water removed	Opal Lead Play Workers	05/01/26 Ongoing updates during Play Assemblies
Scissors in the craft area Cutting or stabbing, bruises and cuts if not used or stored correctly	All those in the play policy – plus Fine motor skills Crafting and creativity	Agreed rules in play assembly Inspections of parts Drainage of water removed	Opal Lead Play Workers	06/01/26 Ongoing updates during Play Assemblies

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
Fabrics and Tarps Suffocation, strangulation, trapped, Cuts and bruises. Fingers trapped Broken Limbs	All those in the play policy – plus Creativity Problem solving Role Play Enjoyment Creativity	Agreed rules in play assembly.	Opal Lead Play Workers	Not yet introduced
Wheeled Items – skateboard, scooters, wheelchairs, pushchairs, prams, zimmer frames, bikes Falling off, crushing under wheels, hit by item, whiplash, fingers trapped, Cuts and bruises. Fingers trapped, Broken Limbs.	All those in the play policy – plus Body Strength Hand-eye coordination Body Coordination Balance Fitness – raising of heart rate	Fast wheeled area set up Agreed rules in the play assembly	Opal Lead Play Workers	05/01/26 Ongoing updates during Play Assemblies
Water Play Drowning, illness from stagnant water, slipping.	All those in the play policy – plus Creativity Problem solving Role Play Enjoyment Creativity	Water source is a fresh water tap not a water butt. All water buckets to be emptied at the end of each play sessions. Ranging supervision check play is following the agreed rules. Agreed rules and expectations in play assembly.	Opal Lead Play Workers	Not yet introduced

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>Tree Climbing Falling, scratches, bumps, slipping, scratched, grazes, broken limbs, eye injury</p>	<p>All those in the play policy – plus Body Strength Hand-eye coordination Body Coordination Balance</p>	<p>Agreed rules and expectations in play assembly. Only trees assessed as safe and identifies to children can be climbed. 3 points of contact at all times No climbing on branches thinner than your wrist. No jumping from above the sprayed line.</p>	<p>Opal Lead Play Workers</p>	<p>Date TBC Not yet introduced</p>