



The purpose of this Risk–Benefit Assessment is to ensure our school provides **challenge, progression, excitement, creativity and fun** within its play environment. It cannot and will not provide complete ‘safety’; instead, it supports us to **predict and manage the most likely and most serious risks**, while maintaining the benefits of play.

We follow best practice guidance from the **HSE, Play Safety Forum and OPAL**, using both:

- **Standing Risk–Benefit Assessment** (regular review of provision and environment)
- **Dynamic Risk Management** (ongoing, responsive judgement during play)

Staff work to balance reducing harm with **preserving play value and developing pupils’ ability to manage risk independently**. This is supported through regular **play assemblies**, ongoing **staff monitoring**, and **daily dynamic risk assessment** by the Play Team. Equipment is inspected routinely, and any hazards are acted upon promptly, with concerns escalated where necessary.

This Risk–Benefit Assessment is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective, responsive and aligned with the school’s approach to play.

This Risk-Benefit Assessment has used the following documents and reports as guidance: HSE Play & Leisure, HSE Risk, Managing Risk by Neil Coleman, Is School a Workspace or Playspace? by OPAL, Free-range supervision by OPAL.

“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

Risk-benefit assessment date: 4th April 2026

Assessed by: Amy Smith and Matthew Wareham

	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
General playground risks	First Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for children's medical needs are not attended to in a timely fashion. Children not reporting because of wanting to play 	BHPS health and safety policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has adequate first aid provision and this includes the provision of first aid at lunchtime. Members of staff are first aid trained and are able to manage first aid in inside and outside provision. (See 1st aider lists around school) A second first aider is radioed for more serious injuries/second opinion. Supervision can be maintained when first aiders are dealing with injured pupils/radios are provided to staff (1 radio in each zone). Keep training up to date and review.
	Injury from games activities in the playground Potential risk of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slips Trips Falls general physical harm as a result of being outside. 	BHPS Health and safety policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball games are only permitted in designated areas to create quiet areas and appropriate space for team games. (Football are only allowed in the MUGA) Games can be stopped at any time by staff if considered unsafe or inappropriate. Discussion regarding safety will take place. Activities to be age appropriate and reflect the mix of ages within the school as well as special needs of pupils. The school's behaviour policy applies on the playgrounds. Staff to enforce school rules & report behaviour problems to the Play Leader/SLT/HT. Members of SLT on duty each lunchtime to check

	Sheds and outdoor storage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fingers caught in hinges and locks Being hit by doors opening and closing Unsupervised children 	All those listed in the play policy. The use of the Sheds also enables play equipment to be stored and accessed throughout the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All shed doors to be open when in use. No children are allowed to be unsupervised in the sheds. Play workers should have the majority of play equipment already out at the start of lunchtime.
	Site access and boundary fencing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climbing the playground/boundary fence. Throwing equipment over fencing 	Health and Safety policy and safeguarding policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gates locked and secure at all times. Admittance for visitors only by office staff Visually inspected signs of wear and tear present (daily checks by caretaker). If a potential breach is located a member of SLT is to notified immediately and a play worker must stay by the breach to ensure children's safety.
Zone 1	Wheeled Play – scooters, buggies and suitcases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accidental blows – collisions Risk to players and bystanders Children zipping each other in suitcases Cuts and Grazes Getting Scarves, long hair, fingers caught in mechanisms, straps or zips 	All those listed in play policy Plus – upper body strength, coordination, balance, enjoyment, creativity, managing space, role play motor skills, coordination, strength.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Assembly reminders of safety rules. One-way system for scooter track. No Helmets – to minimise risk in other zones. Marked out agreed area. If a child is too tall to reasonably fit, then they must choose another piece of play equipment. Queuing system operated by play worker. Max 15 items on the track at one time. Children are required to stay on the marked out track. Max speed scooters are traveling at needs to be closely monitored, and appropriate steps taken if children are going too fast. Ensure all wheeled toys are checked over regularly for damage.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pushing one another on a wheeled play item, children to ensure head is up looking at surroundings to avoid collisions.
Zone 2	Use of sports equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slips • Trips • Falls • general physical harm as a result of being outside. 	BHPS Health and safety policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball games are only permitted in designated areas to create quiet areas and appropriate space for team games. (Football are only allowed in the MUGA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Wednesday and Mixed on Friday • Games can be stopped at any time by staff if considered unsafe or inappropriate. Discussion regarding safety will take place. • Activities to be age appropriate and reflect the mix of ages within the school as well as special needs of pupils. • The school's behaviour policy applies on the playgrounds. • Staff to enforce school rules & report behaviour problems to the Play Leader/SLT/HT. • Members of SLT on duty each lunchtime to check
Zone 3	Mud kitchen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingestion • Equipment used as weapons • Risk to players and bystanders 	BHPS Health and safety policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to monitor use tools for their intended purpose • Pupils taught not to eat anything from the mud kitchen. • If it is suspected a child or adult has eaten part of a doubtful item, seek medical advice immediately from a hospital Accident & Emergency department. Take a sample of the plant with you. Do not panic and DO NOT try to make the person sick. • Always get the pupils to wash their hands after play.
	Musical instruments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Degradation • Conflict & Behavioural Issues • Noise & Auditory Overload • Physical Injuries • Tripping and falling 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform routine checks for weather damage. • Promptly remove unsafe items. • Provide an ample supply of loose beaters. • Let children co-create playground "noise rules".

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children to use found items as sticks.
Zone 2 and 4	Water play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slips, Trips, & Falls Hypothermia / Dampness Water Contamination Drowning / Submersion 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, sensory, creative play and managing risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never leave open water containers deeper than 10cm. Use shallow trays or channels instead of deep troughs. Pause water play in cold and freezing temperatures. Request that parents provide spare clothes and wellies. Keep a stock of school spare clothes on hand. Teach children to identify when they are too cold. Empty all loose play containers daily. Use fresh mains tap water rather than old rainwater. Clean water channels and troughs regularly. Remind children via signage/assemblies not to drink it.
	Use of tyres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burns and grazes to skin Collecting water that is turning stagnant Risk to bystanders 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, creative play and managing risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Assembly reminders of safety rules Agree stacking heights in play assembly (Max 4 tyres) Visual checks by play team and children. Tyres will be checked for any water build up and emptied prior to usage. Drill holes in large tyres to let water out Tyres may only be stacked up to armpit height but NO HIGHER (arms and head kept clear).

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pupils are inside tyres and they are rolling at a dangerous speed, this type of play will be discussed with the children to help them understand the risks. • Pupils should wash their hands between playing with tyres and eating.
	Pallet play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injuries: Bumps or bruises from falling crates. • Getting fingers caught in between crates when stacking. • Cuts from broken or sharp edges. • Splinters from rough wood • Falling in between gaps (ankles, arms, bodies) • Nails protruding from broken pallets 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, creative play and managing risks Transporting materials. Building possibly linked to role play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crates will have a stack height limit of shoulder height on tarmac. Children taught about how to handle correctly to minimise risk of splinters. First aid provided by Play Team. All staff first aid trained. • No solo lifting. Always in groups of 3+ • Pallets inspected twice weekly by staff for structural integrity – for exposed nails, finger traps, broken slats etc • If children discover broken pallet, stop playing with it immediately and report to staff member. • If pallet is repairable, it will be placed out of reach of children until fixed. If broken beyond repair, it will be removed and disposed of off-site. • Large constructions only when in direct supervision of play worker.
	Large loose parts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling on children • Crushing injuries • Heavy lifting • Could involve players or bystanders 	All those listed in the play policy plus – core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity. Items are essential to a rich play environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Assembly reminders of safety rules. • Regular checks of all equipment, with damaged items removed. • Always at least 1 play worker in FS and 2 in Zone 3+4. • Large dens only when in direct supervision of play worker.

Zone 5	Den Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injuries: Bumps or bruises from falling crates. Getting fingers caught in between crates when stacking. Cuts from broken or sharp edges. 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, creative play and managing risks Transporting materials. Building possibly linked to role play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No solo lifting. Always in groups of 3+ Crates will have a stack height limit of shoulder height on tarmac. Riding in dragged crates is fine on Tarmac All crates need to be inspected for structural integrity by staff at least weekly for finger traps, sharp edges, breakages, etc. If a pupil discovers a broken crate they should immediately stop playing with it and take it to the nearest member of staff for checking. If a crate is repairable it should be placed out of reach of pupils until fixed. If broken beyond repair it should go into the waste bins for off-site disposal.
	Trees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for falling from a tree Falling branches Injury from branches Rope ladders and swings on the trees. 	All those in play policy- Plus trees and branches used for swinging and motion in the play-ground offer therapeutic experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils are not allowed to climb any tree on site Daily and weekly check of tree branches by Play Team/site manager. Tree survey completed by registered professional (certificate obtained) Ropes/swings two children at a time, staff aware and monitor in case ropes are used dangerously e.g ropes not around necks and check for frayed rope. See also 'using cordage' below
	Using rope/cordage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for neck injury and strangulation. Whipping 	All those in play policy- Plus enables pulling, dragging and other safe applications such as demarcation, den-building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All pre-looped rope has been discarded. Climbing rope is not used. All rope is checked by Play Team to ensure it is of reasonable thickness/regular checking to ensure it is not frayed Pupils briefed about the dangers of looping rope.
	Planting and growing area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ingestion/poisoning Allergies 	All those in play policy- Plus the right plants can	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils taught 'not to eat any of the plants' Use gloves when pruning, weeding, planting and keep skin covered.

		<p>provide a source of natural loose parts providing a self-renewing source of leaves, flowers, twigs, branches and logs.</p> <p>The greening of hard surface areas has benefits to air quality, mental health and wellbeing, attention and improves and softens the acoustics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it is suspected a child or adult has eaten part of a doubtful plant, seek medical advice immediately from a hospital Accident & Emergency department. Take a sample of the plant with you. Do not panic and DO NOT try to make the person sick. • Always get the pupils to wash their hands after play.
	<p>Gun/sword play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive or overly enthusiastic play 	<p>All those in play policy- Plus symbolic gun/swordplay falls within the 'Deep Play' category of play.</p> <p>These play types often make adults uncomfortable, but they are as deep in our nature as all of the other play types.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If groups want to play any form of symbolised conflict or physical sword play then the discussion should be about consent, who wants to be involved and who does not? • A threat is not a threat if you agree to it within the rules of your game. • If the symbolised conflict or physical play starts to have an impact on those not playing within the frame of the play then the players must be reminded that only those 'in the game' should be drawn in or subjected to this type of play. • Closely monitored by play workers and will intervene if this kind of play goes too far.
	<p>Digging area use of real spades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chopping feet • Accidental blows • Use as weapon • Risk to players and bystanders 	<p>All those in play policy – plus</p> <p>Upper body strength</p> <p>Creativity</p> <p>Core strength</p> <p>Enjoyment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure pupils only enter and exit through the main entrance • A maximum of 20 pupils to be in the area at one time. • 'Tools not toys' training in play assembly. • Only digging equipment in the digging zone and this must be kept there. • Only spades, not forks. • Area marked out.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranging supervision by adults. • Rules discussed and shared for the digging area • Staff encourage pupils to tidy all tools away at the end of each session. • Staff monitor digging activities carried out. • Children to use the provided wellies store. No wellies = No entry. • Staff encourage pupils to help each other put on/take off water-proofs. • Pupils encouraged to back fill holes at the end of the week.
Zone 6	Sand Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand pit possible attraction for cats, dogs and fox faeces. • Sand in eyes. 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, creative play and managing risks, sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Assembly reminders of safety rules. • Covered by net • At end of play Wash hands on return to classroom and before eating lunch. • No throwing/eating sand Regular checks of all equipment. • Pit checked daily by the OPAL team, caretaker and monitored throughout the day by staff. • Sandpit covered at the end of every day to avoid contamination. • New Sand added annually.
	Costumes and dress up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting stuck in costumes 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, creative play and managing risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage children to only wear what they can comfortably get in and out of independently • respect all dressing up items • pupils briefed about kind communication within play • • check for chokeables
	Small World toys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small objects to be ingested • Throwing of toys 	All those listed in play policy Plus – enjoyment, experimentation, creative play and managing risks, sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules are briefed on not putting small world items in mouths. • Small world needs to stay in small world areas.

Weather conditions	<p>Cold play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children becoming ill with Colds/flu • Ice and snow • Rain and storms 	<p>All those listed in play policy. (Play should continue in the majority of weather conditions. However, considerations about how specific activities may need to be tweaked to respond to the changing weather conditions and increase the risk of injury will be made)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and plan for the winter weather. • The Play Leader should consult the Play Team, pupils and HT to come up with a plans and ideas before the wetter and colder weather begins. (e.g What are the plans for an icy playground? What about if it snows?) • Parent communications will be sent to parents when snowy days are forecast so that pupils can get out and play rather than stay in-side. • The Play Team will decide if weather conditions are suitable or not for outdoor activities on each day. • Staff to ensure that pupils have appropriate clothing. • Digging area to be closed when high levels of water are present.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm weather play Dehydration & Heat Exhaustion • UV Damage • Increased Injury • Equipment Hazards 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring plentiful access to drinking water and encouraging frequent rehydration breaks. • Utilizing shaded areas and canopy structures. • Enforcing sun-safe policies (e.g., "no hat, no play" rules, application of sun cream) and advising parents on appropriate light summer clothing. • Parent communications will be sent to parents when hot days are forecast so that pupils can get out and play rather than stay inside • Pre-screening or sectioning off fixed metal equipment that absorbs too much heat and setting up alternative water-play or shaded loose-parts zones. • Closing MUGA when deemed appropriate. • Staff to extra vigilant looking for anyone who maybe feeling too hot.

When building and moving large loose aprts items children school use the following rules:

If it's
heavier
than you,
it takes 2!



If it's
longer
than you,
it takes 2!



Build



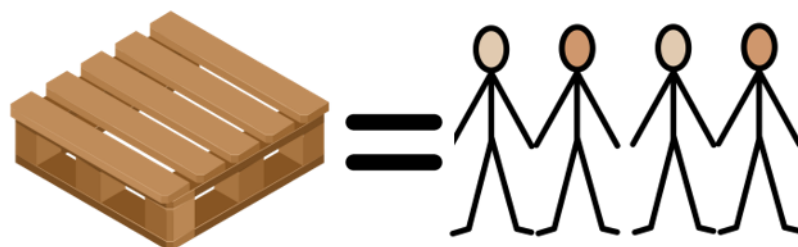
Use



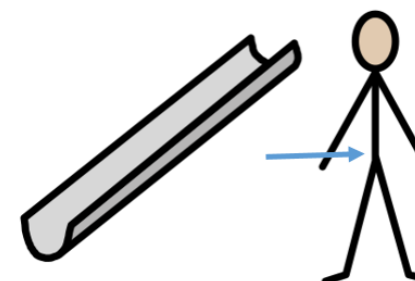
Climb



NEVER at
the same
time!



1 large item needs a team
of 4 to lift it.



Long items should be
carried at hip height.

There are displayed on posters in the relevant areas.

LOOSE PARTS SAFE ENOUGH RISK ASSESSMENT WEEKLY CHECKLIST

	What to check	What to check for and if found remove
Monday	Zone 4 Plastic loose parts (e.g. crates, tubes, pipes etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor structural integrity (Cracks and wobbles) Nails/screws exposed Splintered/frayed edges Snapped pieces of wood
	Zone 3 Mud kitchen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposed sharp metal (broken saucepan handles etc.) Loose, exposed screws Broken spoons/cups – sharp plastic or metal edges Signs of animal defecation
Tuesday	Zone 2 and MUGA Sports equipment and games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punctures Slits in casing and plastic items Inspect nets for loose, sagging loops or oversized holes. Flex plastic cones and hoops to check for sun-bleached, snapping plastic. Look for sharp, jagged edges on cracked cones. Inspect skipping ropes for unravelling fibers or cracked plastic beads.
Wednesday	Zone 5 Forest school and digging area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uneven ground Broken trees Damage to fencing Broken equipment Deep unfilled holes
Thursday	Zone 1 Wheeled play- Scooters, bikes, suitcases, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broken wheels Pointy metal bars/rods Lost or damaged handle bars Broken brakes/chair guards Punctures
Friday	Zone 6 Small world and art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broken cars/trucks (sharp plastic/metal edges) Missing or damaged equipment Stones and bark are topped up
	Zone 6 Sand pit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broken buckets or spades with sharp edged Checking around the base to ensure that sand is still being held within the pit Signs of animal defecation Water or sand build up in tyres