



The Holy Family Catholic School OPAL Risk-Benefit Assessment

The Holy Family Catholic Primary School keeps this up to date comprehensive risk-benefit assessment for play in school. It was produced by OPAL's Risk-Benefit Advice and Record Sheet. The purpose of this **Benefit-Risk Assessments** is to enable our school to provide challenge, progression, excitement, creativity and fun in our play environment. We cannot and will not provide complete 'safety' and this is not our purpose. This document is to help us to think about, predict, and manage the most serious and most likely potential causes of harm.

We have two approaches to managing risk; Standing Benefit-Risk Assessments and Dynamic Risk Management.

Standing Benefit-Risk Assessments means we look at our usual environment and practices at least annually, and also when significant changes take place or new resources are added that may pose any harm. We keep a written record of the areas in the table below.

Dynamic Risk Management means that our staff are aware of the changing nature of the play taking place. They support children to assess and manage risk as much as possible for themselves, but are also vigilant and take action, if they think that risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by our staff when required balance the reduction of likelihood or severity or harm with preserving as much of the benefit of the play as possible and empowering the children to manage future risk as much as possible.

Common areas that require standing assessment, include: boundaries to dangerous areas, tree management and tree climbing, fixed equipment and inspection, broken loose parts, rope tying (especially at height), water use and water features.

The Play Team will carry out daily, ongoing risk assessment and pass on any potential hazards to a member Play Coordinator and or SLT

Risk Assessment Date: 24/04/26

Assessed by: Jennifer Tinsley and [Anna McNaulty](#)

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 play equipment- blue barrels, pipes, small pallets, milk crates, scaffolding netting, material, Potential for splinters, crush injury from cable drums and pallets. Potential injury when lifting heavy objects to legs and back. Falling from a height or slipping.</p>	<p>Many benefits listed in the HF Play Policy 2024- see on website.</p> <p>Plus; core strength, coordination, cooperation, creativity/ imagination, resilience, risk assessing and managing, problem solving.</p> <p>These items are essential for a varied and rich play environment.</p>	<p>Pupils briefed in assemblies about safe holding, moving and stacking. “Ready, steady, lift” – bent knees and straight back.</p> <p>The Play Team apply principles of dynamic risk assessment and guide children in movement and use of heavier play parts.</p> <p>Play coordinator weekly safety check of the area, removing any potentially unsafe items.</p> <p>Adult ranging the large loose parts area with focused attention on groups using.</p> <p>Maximum stacking height of 4 crates.</p> <p>If the weather is icy/excessively wet adult to remove items and/or advise children on potential risk.</p> <p>Designated and supervised tidy up of the area every Friday.</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>01.25</p>

<p>Water area Potential of consumption of dirty water/Legionnaires' disease.</p> <p>Drowning</p>	<p>Pupils are able to imaginatively use the area for a multitude of purposes in a safe creative way. Science- floating/sinking, changing viscosity of materials, water flow. Creativity, team work, collaboration</p>	<p>Play Team member patrol and apply principles of dynamic risk assessment.</p> <p>Pupils briefed in assemblies about water safety- empty containers after use, taking a small amount of water.</p> <p>Water emptied from containers and stored upside down- adult to check at the end of each week.</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>11.24</p>
<p>Mud Kitchen Touching a hazardous material- animal faeces. Trapping fingers/ other body parts between pots and pans</p>	<p>Exposure to beneficial bacteria to build healthy, functioning immune systems. Sensorial open ended material. Normal childhood experience. Children can be involved in checking the areas before play (visual), creates a sense of ownership and raises awareness of a possible hazard. . It is a great space to explore creativity and provides an important sensory experience. The mud kitchen will provide a focus for some children and encourage imagination.</p>	<p>Provide hand washing provisions for during and after play (ks2 toilets). Establish hand washing routines- chn wash hands following use of mud kitchen. Children encouraged to follow a no consumption routine in this area. Soil should be checked for contaminants daily, before play- checking for contaminants is part of the daily checklist inspection- visual RA by coordinator. Not using manure or fertiliser on garden beds surrounding the digging patch. Raise awareness on the signs of contamination to look out for- with chn in assemblies.</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>01.25</p>
<p>Scooters and Wheels There is an increased risk of slips, trips and falls, especially on the slope. Scarves and long hair could get caught up in wheeled play. If the handles break off of</p>	<p>A good selection of wheeled play resources will provide for many kinds of gross motor skills including muscle development, arms, legs, shoulders and core. They will help increase coordination, balance, spatial awareness and prediction.</p>	<p>Pupils briefed in safety talks about using the scooters, skateboards, wheeled play items in the playground. The steepness of slopes needs consideration and therefore the maximum speed scooters can reach needs to be closely monitored. Adequate space is provided and is sectioned off</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>11.24</p>

<p>scooters or the rubber grips wear away, the round end of the handle tubes could be sharp. These present a cut hazard.</p> <p>Collision between scooters or scooter and bystander</p> <p>Weather- snow, ice, rain can make the area more slippery.</p>		<p>from the rest of the playground to prevent others walking through.</p> <p>Any broken handles should be sealed with new grips or gaffer tape or discarded if unrepairable. If wheels on scooters/wheeled play items break off, these could be repaired or discarded but pupils should not use them until fixed.</p> <p>Staff are vigilant with items getting caught up in wheels and pupils are encouraged not to wear scarves/long flowing dressing up clothing items and to tie long hair up to avoid tangling.</p> <p>Ensure all wheeled toys are checked over regularly for damage- included in weekly checklist inspection.</p> <p>If pushing one another on a wheeled play item, children to ensure head is up looking at surroundings to avoid collisions.</p>		
<p>Sandpit</p> <p>Coming into contact with hazardous material- animal faeces.</p> <p>Sand in eyes</p>	<p>Sensory exploration, fine motor skills, imagination, collaboration to achieve a goal, problem solving.</p>	<p>Regular raking and turning over of sand- caretaker</p> <p>Daily visual inspection by member of the Play Team.</p> <p>Ranging area when chn are playing there. Remind chn of possibility of sand in eyes if they touch their face or throw sand- address in Play assemblies when necessary.</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>04/25</p>
<p>Mound</p> <p>Falling, sliding down over sticks or stones</p>	<p>Physical skills- gross motor, spatial awareness, balance.</p> <p>Perspective from different heights</p> <p>Cooperation- chn helping each other</p>	<p>Weeds around the mound are inspected and cut down over the winter if they become sharp/spiky.</p> <p>Adult ranging area to ensure proper use by chn- no pushing/rough play on the mound.</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>04/25</p>
<p>Slackline with obstacles to hang and swing from</p>	<p>Gross and fine motor skills- develop upper body and arm strength</p>	<p>Ensure the ground underneath is soft (grass/soil) and clear of obstructions. Chn have been informed</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>02/26</p>

<p>Falling from equipment Injury from a peer swinging too close</p>	<p>Coordination and balance Sensory- swinging motion Making risk judgements and managing risk for themselves. Social skills and working together to push each other on the swing. Turn taking Building resilience and challenging ones self. Swings have long been a staple of childhood play, providing joy and entertainment while also offering a host of developmental benefits. From enhancing physical strength and coordination to fostering social interaction, swings hold immense value in a child's growth and well-being. Swings play a crucial role in developing a child's vestibular system, which is responsible for balance and spatial orientation</p>	<p>not to put obstacle under it. No lifting other children up to reach the equipment. When equipment is in use other chn must stand well back to watch. Pupils taught agreed safety rules: only one person on the swing at a time- Play assembly 27.02.26. Included in daily checklist inspection- rope/equipment damage/fraying. Swing/swinging equipment (hoops, bar): 1 pupil at a time No jumping off the swing to avoid awkward landing and potential injury. Pupils to be aware of swing in use and walk around the area giving plenty of space Pupils to only push as high as the other pupil wishes. Careful consideration given to positioning of swings on field- located on soil for softer landing, away from tree roots. Close to fence due to lower foot fall. Staff member will test any new obstacle first. Participants feet on rope swings will be under the head height of the Participants at maximum swing/elevation. Vigilance and zero tolerance of wrapping the rope around any part of the body, swinging above height of slackline. Share above steps with Play Team.</p>		
<p>Spades x 4 large For digging in the digging area. Could get hit with the spade,</p>	<p>Physical- gross motor skills Hand eye coordination Spatial awareness</p>	<p>-Children have been taught a spade is a 'tool not a toy', what the difference is and a spade has 1 purpose which is to dig with.</p>	<p>JT/AM</p>	<p>20.3.26</p>

<p>trip over, get fingers/hands caught.</p>	<p>Team work- working to achieve a shared goal. Turn taking and sharing Imagination- finding treasures in the soil/ where will the hole lead? Risk assessment and management in a safe area with adult ranging.</p>	<p>- Spades do not leave the digging area. -Hand held spades and forks are not used at the same time as the large spades. - The are not to be raised high- e.g. put over shoulder or flicked up. Spades are not to be swung around- keep eyes on your spade at all times.</p>		
<p>Rope Ropes can be used for making rope swings, crafts, tying things together, pulling each other around, skipping, tug-of-war, jumping over all kinds of objects and imaginative play. In the long run, it is better that children learn how to use ropes safely</p> <p>Potential for neck injury and strangulation.</p>	<p>Rope enables pulling, dragging and other safe applications such as demarcation, den-building. Encourages imaginative play, problem solving, collaboration, assessing and managing risks themselves, fine motor skills.</p>	<p>All pre-looped rope has been discarded. Thin 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. Rope is not to be tied to fixed play equipment. Children are not to tie rope around themselves or others.</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>24.04.26</p>
<p>Tyres There is a risk of harm from protruding nails and wire from old tyres. Heavy tyres could be a hazard if pupils try to move them and they fall on body parts. Tyres stacked high could topple off onto pupils and if</p>	<p>Tyres are used in almost all OPAL schools because they are plentiful, free, versatile and generally carry a low level of risk. They can be used as free standing loose parts, fixed play objects or filled with earth, sand or stone and dust to act as borders for sand pits or social spaces.</p>	<p>All tyres will need to be checked for nails and protruding wire prior to usage. Any tyre with nails and wire exposed will be discarded. Tyres may only be stacked up to armpit height but NO HIGHER (arms and head kept clear). If pupils are inside tyres and they are rolling at a dangerous speed, this type of play will be discussed</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>01.25</p>

<p>rolled, or inside, there could be an increased risk of injury by hitting other people or objects.</p>		<p>with the children to help them understand the risks.</p>		
<p>Crate play The main risks from crate play usually come from unstable stacks toppling over or injury caused by hands or feet getting caught or cut in split and damaged crates.</p>	<p>Crates can be used by pupils in many different ways; for pulling by hand or ropes and pipe and pushing each other around, for building towers, homes or dens, for climbing on top of, for simply sitting in, for bracing other loose parts so they don't easily move, and especially as stepping stones, when upturned.</p>	<p>Crates will have a stack height limit of shoulder height on tarmac/soft grass/artificial surfaces. Avoid standing on a stack of crates over 150cm max on soft grass/mud/artificial surfaces. Not to be used on tarmac. Test stacks of crates (pupils and regularly by staff) for stability before playing with them to reduce likelihood of them toppling over. Only lift single crates above head height, not multiples of crates to prevent head bump hazard. • Riding in dragged crates is fine on grass but beware of speed and cornering. • Sliding down a slope (eg on a board - like a luge) in a crate should only happen after staff and pupils discuss the fall height, angle of slope and the plank/board for stability (it may require bracing with tyres etc to stop someone sliding off sideways) including the 'landing area' at the end of the plank/board, as well as both sides of the board for hard hazards like roots, stones or people if a child falls out, loses control or tips over. 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</p>	<p>JT/AM Play Team</p>	<p>01.25</p>

		reach of pupils until fixed. If broken beyond repair it should go into the waste bins for off-site disposal.		
<p>Pallet houses/ pallet car Risk could be falling from a height, getting cuts or splinters from the wood and crushing from the structure.</p>	<p>Houses can used for going inside or climbing on top of and car can be sat and climbed all over. Climbing encourages gross motor skill development. Imagination- role play using the houses and car within their play. Collaboration, sharing and turn taking.</p>	<p>Structures (houses/car) should not be moved by the children- if tried revisit in assembly. Corners and edges have been sanded down. Included in visual inspection at least weekly for protruding nails, screws or sharp loose wood. Height of structures 1.5m- chn should be encouraged to only climb as high as they feel comfortable.</p>	JT/AM/play team	04.26