

RISK ASSESSMENT

USE OF SANDPITS



School	Whitchurch Combined School
Activity	Use of sandpits
Year group	All year groups
Location	Outside Year 1 and 2 classrooms
Assessment completed by	Vanessa Brown
Review date	September 2028

Aims for Outdoor Sandpit Play

1. Develop fine motor skills – Strengthen hand and finger muscles through digging, scooping, pouring and moulding sand.
2. Physical development — opportunities for gross motor development and co-ordination such as digging, filling large buckets and carrying heavy vessels full of sand. This helps build muscle strength in readiness for writing.
3. Encourage creativity and imagination – Use sand and sandpit equipment to create imaginative structures, patterns and designs.
4. Develop problem-solving skills – Explore how sand behaves and experiment with building, shaping and transporting sand, instilling a sense of curiosity.
5. Improve hand-eye coordination – Practise controlling tools such as spades, buckets, sieves and moulds.
6. Encourage communication and language – Develop vocabulary and confidence through conversations and collaborative play.
7. Explore mathematical concepts – Develop an understanding of capacity, measurement, size, shape and quantity through practical play.
8. Promote sensory exploration – Explore the texture and properties of sand using touch and observation.
9. Build confidence and independence – Encourage children to make choices, try new ideas, make mistakes and take responsibility for their play.
10. Promote safe and responsible play – Follow sandpit rules, use equipment appropriately and demonstrate awareness of others.
11. Personal and social development — children interact together and engage in sharing, turn-taking, having ideas and problem solving. These interactions develop language and communication skills, leading to a sense of self-esteem.
12. Literacy — a medium to enjoy engaging in pre-writing skills and develop fine motor skills as they use their fingers to make patterns in the sand or try forming letter shapes on a large scale.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who might be harmed?	Control measures	Residual risk
Trips, slips and falls around the sandpit	Children and staff	• Check the surrounding area for uneven surfaces, standing water, toys and other trip hazards before use. • Keep access points clear. • Ensure children walk around the sandpit and do not run. • Remove spilled sand from pathways where practicable.	Low
Sand getting into eyes	Children	• Establish a clear rule that sand must not be thrown, flicked or deliberately scattered.. • Encourage children to handle sand gently. • If sand enters an eye, follow school first aid procedures and seek medical advice if irritation persists.	Low–Medium

Ingestion or choking on sand / small objects	Children, particularly younger children	• Use age-appropriate sand and equipment. • Do not allow children to put sand, tools or objects in their mouths. • Supervise younger children particularly closely. • Remove small, broken or unsuitable objects. • Follow individual care plans where relevant.	Low–Medium
Contaminated sand, animal faeces or foreign objects	Children and staff	• Inspect the sandpit before every session for animal faeces, litter, glass, sharp objects and other contamination. • Remove contaminated sand safely and restrict access until the area is made safe. • Keep the sandpit covered when not in use where appropriate. • Arrange periodic replacement or maintenance of sand in line with school procedures.	Low–Medium
Cuts or injury from damaged equipment	Children and staff	• Check sandpit edges, covers, toys and tools before use. • Remove cracked, sharp, broken or damaged items. • Use equipment suitable for the children's age and abilities. • Store equipment safely after use.	Low
Unsafe behaviour or conflict over equipment	Children	• Explain expectations before play begins. • Encourage sharing, turn-taking and cooperative play. • No throwing tools, pushing, digging near others or deliberately covering another child with sand. • Intervene promptly when unsafe behaviour occurs.	Low
Children leaving the designated area	Children	• Set clear boundaries and explain where children may play. • Maintain appropriate adult supervision.	Low
Hygiene and infection risks	Children and staff	• Encourage children not to touch their faces or mouths while playing. • Wash hands thoroughly after sandpit use and before eating. • Do not allow food or drink in the sandpit. • Clean equipment regularly according to school procedures. • Consider individual medical or allergy requirements.	Low
Weather, heat and sun exposure	Children and staff	• Check weather conditions before use. • Encourage children to drink water and wear suitable clothing / sun protection in line with school policy. • Stop use during thunderstorms or when conditions become unsafe.	Low–Medium
Sand dust or respiratory irritation	Children and staff	• Use suitable, clean play sand and avoid creating unnecessary dust. • Do not allow children to throw or blow sand. • Consider individual respiratory or medical needs. • Stop the activity if a child experiences breathing difficulty or significant irritation and follow school procedures.	Low–Medium
Manual handling of sand and equipment	Children and staff	• Use lightweight, age-appropriate buckets, spades and containers. • Avoid lifting heavy containers of sand. • Encourage children to carry manageable amounts only. • Staff should assist with moving covers or heavy equipment.	Low
Insufficient supervision or emergency response	Children	• Ensure adequate adult supervision for the number, age and needs of children. • Position adults so the whole sandpit area can be observed.	Low

		• Ensure first aid arrangements are known. • Stop the activity if safe supervision cannot be maintained. • Follow school accident and emergency procedures.	
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