



Risk assessment

Policy statements

Risk-Benefit management is a fundamental part of life and is a skill needed for children's safety and well-being. Forest School leaders have a duty of care towards children. However, this certainly does not mean 'wrapping them in cotton wool'. Therefore we have responsibility not only to keep children safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves.

Risk management is all about identifying and managing any significant chance of harm. Significance is determined by two factors:

1. The likelihood of an accident or incident happening.
2. The severity of injury or harm if it does occur.

Forest Schools conduct four types of risk assessment:

- ✚ Generic Site — this should take into account all four layers within a woodland and general users of the woodland.
- ✚ Generic Activity/Experiences — this should take into account all the aspects of activities/experiences, including creative experiences, games and tool use. Once correct procedures, such as safe tool use has been established these generic activity risk assessments become part of the standard operating procedures.
- ✚ Daily – includes weather, other factors and any changes noted on the day. This can include assessments on individuals attending the session. This should be carried out by the Forest School leader prior to a session. The children should be encouraged to conduct a generic site risk assessment with their leader on arrival at the site and before entering the designated area.
- ✚ Ongoing Dynamic — involves professional judgments during the session in response to changing situations, for example, within the Covid 19 pandemic

Procedures

A *site* risk assessment is carried out every week and a daily check made before every Forest School session on the site we plan to use (as set out above). In addition, an *activity* risk assessment will be in place for any activity that may require it, such as stick whittling, wood cutting, shelter-building, and fire-lighting. Additional risk assessments will be carried out for children whose behaviour or medical condition demands them.

The Forest School leader carries out a *site* risk assessment before every visit to Queens Wood. If the site to be visited is further afield a transport risk assessment will also be carried out.

The risk assessment process involves consistently applying the five-step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School sites and activities:

1. Look for the hazards (up, down and all around)
2. Decide who might be harmed and how this might happen.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
4. Record our findings by noting risks related to a specific activity on the appropriate session plan.)
5. Review our assessments and revise them if necessary.

Alongside this;

- ✚ Inform staff, helpers and children of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimize their risk further
- ✚ Inform staff, helpers and children of any changes to policies and procedures in relation to risk assessment
- ✚ Ensure that all helpers and children are aware of the emergency procedures for all sites
- ✚ Be responsible for teaching children adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.
- ✚ Ensure children and adults will have access to drinking water during sessions
- ✚ Ensure a nil-by-mouth policy is adopted in all Forest School sessions (i.e. do not put anything you pick up in your mouth), except when eating food brought by the children and adults around the 'camp fire'.

Signed; <i>Janine Young</i>	date; 10/7/17	review date; 10/7/19 10/7/21
-----------------------------	---------------	---------------------------------