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**Risk Assessment Policy**

**Reviewed March 2021**

Free Rangers Forest Schools ltd believes the health and safety of children is of paramount importance. We ensure our setting is a safe and healthy place for children, parents, staff and volunteers by assessing and minimising hazards and risks to enable children to thrive in a healthy environment. It is important to state the difference between a hazards and a risk. A hazard is something that can potentially cause physical, emotional or psychological harm, where as the risk is the potential likelihood of harm from that hazard.

The basis of this policy is Risk Benefit Assessment. Risk Benefit Assessment extends the traditional risk assessment strategies by assessing the hazard and considering whether “controlling” the risk associated with the hazard would prevent the children from benefiting from it, whether this is a physical or emotional benefit.

**Procedures:**

A basic risk benefit assessment follows these steps:

* Identification of risk: where and what is it?
* Who is at risk: children, staff, parents, visitors and outside companies; cleaners etc
* Assessment as to the level of risk as high, medium, low. This is both the risk of the incident happening as well as the impact if it did
* Control measures to reduce/eliminate risk: what will you need to do, or ensure others will do, to reduce the risk?
* Are there any benefits of leaving the risk in place?
* Monitoring and review: are the measures in place working? Is there a better solution?

As part of our Risk Assessment strategy, we also look to empower the children to assess their own risk on Forest School, and as such have 3 basic Forest School rules, which are discussed before every session starts.

1. **We don’t wander off without an adult –** our Forest School site is quite large and we regularly have sessions where the children *can* explore on their own terms, but we ask the children to check with us first before heading off. We may also utilise boundary flags to keep the children from straying too far on particular sessions. This rule is also used in conjunction with our ‘hide and seek’ game “1, 2, 3, Where are you?”
2. **We don’t put things in our mouths –** We ask the children not put things into their mouth to prevent illness or injury. We have a few plants (i.e. Lords and Ladies, Solanums), which do pose a risk to health if ingested, and these are managed as per our Environmental Policy and daily checks.
3. **We are careful around our Fire Pit –** Fires are an integral part of Forest School development, both as a learnt skill and as an experience for the children. However, fires do pose as a significant hazard, but the benefits of its use certainly outweigh the risks. In order to prevent any unnecessary injury, we look to routinely ensure the children actively think about how they can be safe around the fire (i.e. sitting/kneeling, not throwing things on the fire, not running nearby, carefully adding wood on the fire).

Free Rangers holds detailed full risk assessments for all areas within our premises including, the paddock, woods, pond, farm, rooms and gardens. The staff carry out daily risk assessments and notify management of any issues or hazards that arise. Staff continually risk assess when on outings and throughout their daily work. Risk assessments are reviewed and adapted when necessary.

*This policy was first adopted at a meeting of Free Rangers held on August 2011 and renewed on April 2015. Reviewed again in October 2018 and march 2021*