WINDERMERE SCHOOL
FOUNDED 1863

16a : RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

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POLICY

Windermere School recognises and accepts its responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (H&SW) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to protect the health and safety of its employees, students and others affected by school activities.

Windermere School acknowledges the importance of risk assessment in terms of its overall management of health and safety. Arrangements will therefore be made to ensure that risk assessments are carried out throughout the range of the School's activities and premises.

In particular, risk assessments will:-

- Identify significant hazards
- Determine the level of risk
- Identify appropriate measures necessary to control or eliminate the risk
- Be recorded
- Be reviewed at least annually

All Heads of Department and Operational Managers are expected to have in place current and valid risk assessments covering their existing areas of activity/work, which address all significant hazards encountered by pupils their staff and others who may be affected by the School's activities and premises.

INTRODUCTION

What is risk assessment?

Life is not, and never could be risk-free, but it needn't be risky either. Risk Assessment is simply a process by which it can be decided what risks to life, limb or property are acceptable and which are not, as well as what reasonable action might be taken to reduce that risk of injury or damage to a tolerable level.
The HSE, the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) and other reputable bodies such as Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) are explicit in their view that, in the education sector particularly, the legal requirement to manage risks is about reducing them to an acceptable level and not necessarily eliminating them altogether as might reasonably be expected in an industrial workshop or a manufacturing process. Exposure to well managed risks helps young people learn and consolidate invaluable life skills, including how to manage risk for themselves and the HSE 'Principles of Sensible Risk Management' are helpful in promoting this view.

Sensible risk management IS about:

- ✔ ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected;
- ✔ providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences;
- ✔ enabling innovation and learning not stifling them;
- ✔ ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action;
- ✔ enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Sensible risk management IS NOT about:

- ✗ creating a totally risk free society;
- ✗ generating useless paperwork mountains;
- ✗ scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks;
- ✗ stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed;
- ✗ reducing the protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering.

Specific subject risk assessments

This procedure details the steps that should be taken to complete 'general' risk assessments required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. Other regulations require more specific risk assessments for example: fire, school trips, manual handling, hazardous substances, personal protective equipment, young persons, new and expectant mothers, and display screen equipment. Details of the requirements of these regulations and forms for recording the specific assessments can be found in other procedures.

It is recognised that uniformity across the whole organization of Windermere School is not realistic or appropriate due to working with partner organisations and the inevitable transition from historical working practices. However, all Hazards are expected to be effectively categorised into High, Medium or Low risk and Medium and High risks controlled.

Windermere School works closely with external partners for some specialist areas, for example: the science department with CLEAPS, (Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services) and as such adopts their model of risk assessment when applied to that specialism.

Where an assessment is being made for the first time, the general assessment outlined in this procedure is useful for identifying where a more detailed risk assessment is needed to comply with the requirements of other regulations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Heads of Department and Managers are responsible for carrying out and reviewing risk assessments, and for the implementation of any necessary measures to control risks within their area of accountability. The Director of Operations is responsible for the management of School premises and land and will ensure that assessments cover the suitability of the estate. Heads of Department and Managers must however risk assess the activities that they will undertake in these locations within the limitations of the estate.

Heads of Department and Managers should ensure that the significant findings of the risk assessment and any procedures that are introduced are passed on to employees and others as appropriate. Items that remain as a High or Medium risk after control measures are implemented must be passed to the Director of Operations as chair of the Health and Safety Committee for consideration and escalation to the Risk Management group if required.

The Health and Safety Committee will review the risk assessment process to ensure it remains effective, consistent and appropriate measures are taken to control risks, and to monitor progress in remedying any significant outstanding actions. Where control measures are not deemed adequate and the risk remains High the risk assessment will be passed to Risk Management group and where resource consideration is required they in turn will inform the Board of Governors.

The Operations Manager will provide Heads of Department and Managers with advice and assistance as required, audit risk assessments to ensure they have been carried out in a consistent and effective manner, and report outstanding significant risks to the Health & Safety Committee and Risk Management Group.

The Governors have appointed Kym Allan Associates to carry out two audits a year of Health and Safety policy, delivery and progress. Including a report to the board of significant observations. The Nominated Governor for Risk will also undertake an annual walk round of site to offer a further observation of hazards that they perceive to be evident.

CARRYING OUT A RISK ASSESSMENT

The key risk assessment terminology which everyone involved must understand, are as follows:

Hazard: Something with the potential to cause harm to people or property e.g. a slippery floor.

Risk: The chances or likelihood of the harm occurring e.g. how likely it is that someone will slip, fall and be injured, injure others or damage property and how serious the injury or damage is likely to be (including consideration of people at particular risk e.g. a child using crutches on a slippery floor).

Control: What is being done to prevent the harm occurring, e.g. replacing a slippery floor.

There are three key stages in the risk assessment process and not all of them will apply to every situation where significant risk might arise.

The simplest science experiments with any risk will employ generic and dynamic risk assessment. A science experiment with specific high risks such as fire and explosion would employ specific and dynamic risk assessment sometimes starting with a generic such as the CLEAPSS screaming jelly babies model risk assessment.

Generic Risk Assessment

This is usually a written risk assessment identifying common hazards; risks and control measures associated with activities, processes and substances in education and childcare settings. It is a starting point for the development of a safety management plan, based on past experience.

Generic risk assessments are often overly comprehensive and their purpose is to provide generic prompts on managing risk. Generic risk assessments adopted from any outside organisations must be customised before being introduced to the workplace e.g. by removing anything inappropriate such as reference to requirements in the Early Years when adopted by a secondary school. A Generic Risk Assessment Pack of prepared generic risk assessments covering the most common activities e.g. site security, managing food allergens etc. is available to download for adaptation from www.kymallanhsc.co.uk. They are indicative rather than exhaustive, i.e. they may not highlight every issue relevant to a particular organisation.
There is also a Supplementary Generic Risk Assessment Pack available to download covering some of the less common situations such as the annual fete or fayre or a student or a staff member returning after an injury with a cast, brace or mobility aids.

When a risk assessment identifies risks from a hazard which is legislated for by specific Regulations, then the assessment should be carried out in accordance with those Regulations e.g. a design technology risk assessment identifying dust as a hazard needs to reference the specific requirement for a thorough examination and test every 14 months of any Local Exhaust Ventilation system as required by the *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002)*.

Specific Risk Assessment

This kind of risk assessment is undertaken most frequently by visit leaders and is specific to a proposed location, activity, group etc. Usually using the generic risk assessment as a prompt, the specific risk assessment will be written to take into account the location, the unique characteristics of the group and any activity-specific needs. A specific risk assessment cannot be deemed 'suitable and sufficient' unless it:

- has the name of the assessor(s) on it (a signature is desirable but a legible name is essential);
- is suitably amended to reflect the real risks that are significant; and
- has a date, including the day, month and year of assessment.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

This level of risk assessment is what steers how decisions are taken during activities. It is about applying sound management strategies in appropriate situations. While it will be informed by what was planned and should reflect the recorded specific risk assessment, it will be a dynamic process and is **not required to be written down**. It involves professional judgements, informed by competence based on training and experience, and will be responses to changing circumstances. It is critical that the planned control measures are monitored and confirmed or adapted as events dictate. In practice, it is only these on-going decisions that will determine whether people remain safe and whether an activity is successful.

Risk Assessment: The Process

A blank template risk assessment in MS Word table format can be found at Appendix B. There is no required format for a risk assessment to have but, whatever form it takes, it needs to facilitate the following process.

Identifying Hazards

A hazard is something people are exposed to through activities, processes or substances which has the potential to cause injury or harm to their health or significant damage to property e.g. bodies of water, wood dust or corrosive cleaning chemicals.

To identify hazards consider:

- the nature and complexity of the **activity** in view of who will be carrying it out;
- the **environment** where the work is taking place e.g. workshops, science laboratories, classrooms, sports halls, kitchens, locations on educational visits;
- the **equipment and substances** used and what the manufacturers' instructions or safety data sheets explain about the hazards and the risks they present;
- **non-routine operations** e.g. maintenance, cleaning operations or changes in activities;
- the long-term **hazards to health** e.g. high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances
- accident, near-miss and ill-health **records** which can often help to identify the less obvious hazards;
- **asking people** such as employees and pupils what they think the hazards are (they may notice things that are not obvious to others and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks - this is a key component of risk education for young people of all ages).
- consulting **specialist guidance** e.g. Professional Trade Bodies such as Gas Safe and the Ladder Association; the Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of School Science (CLEAPSS); Design And Technology Association (DATA); the Outdoor education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) etc.

It is important to ignore the trivial and concentrate on the significant hazards in order to identify the real risks.

Identifying who might be harmed

The best way to control a risk may be determined by who is exposed to the hazard i.e. crossing the road with sixth formers and crossing the road with three year old's will involve very different procedures. Therefore the different groups of people who might be harmed by each hazard need to be considered i.e. the pupils watching the science experiment, the teacher carrying out the demonstration, contractors working nearby, visitors etc.

To identify who might be harmed by the hazards consider:

- workers with special requirements e.g. new and young workers who are inexperienced, migrant workers whose first language is not English, new or expectant mothers, people with disabilities or pre-existing health conditions, temporary workers, contractors, homeworkers and lone workers;
- people who might not be in the workplace all the time e.g. visitors, contractors, agency and maintenance workers;
- members of the public e.g. pupils, parents, trespassers.
- other organisations that share the workplace e.g. the private childcare facility, Children's Centre, Council library service etc. Consider how the setting's work affects others and how the work of the other organisation(s) affects the setting. This requires good communication and cooperation to ensure that the real risks are identified and suitable controls are put in place.

Evaluating Risk

Having identified the hazards, the likelihood that harm will occur must be decided on i.e. the level of risk and what to do about it. Risk is a part of everyday life and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is keen to promote the idea that risk elimination is particularly undesirable in most aspects of education and childcare, where the taking of carefully planned risks with trained and trusted people in a relatively safe and secure environment helps children to develop healthy risk management strategies for themselves. Understanding the real risks and the controls that need to be in place to manage risk responsibly is much more important.

This evaluation of the riskiness of work-related activities will enable assessors to devise proportionate measures to control them.

Risk rating columns are usually provided in risk assessment templates to help assessors evaluate how high risk activities, processes or substances might be *before* control measures are put in place and again *afterwards* to show how those measures reduce the risks. The final column, usually entitled 'Residual Risk', is an important concept that everyone involved needs to understand, from staff and volunteers to parents and children as well. Life is not risk-free no matter how carefully planned and controlled it might be and 'residual risk' is an important acknowledgement of the leftover risk that is tolerable after all reasonable controls have been put in place.

Rating the Level of Risk

The HSE considers education and childcare to be relatively low risk work environments and there is no right or wrong way to make an adequate assessment of the risks. Many settings are uncomfortable with numerical risk assessment methodology, preferring a three value risk rating range of Low, Medium or High and sometimes more narrowly differentiated using five values including a Low-to-Medium and a Medium-to-High value as well. There is nothing wrong with this approach, but the following description of a 5 x 5 numerical risk rating matrix will be helpful to those working in more complex areas such as sporting and adventure activities, science, design technology etc. as well as to those struggling to prioritise risk reduction with limited resources at their disposal. It can also be a useful tool to introduce the concept of risk assessment and evaluation for those new to, or less practised in, carrying it out.

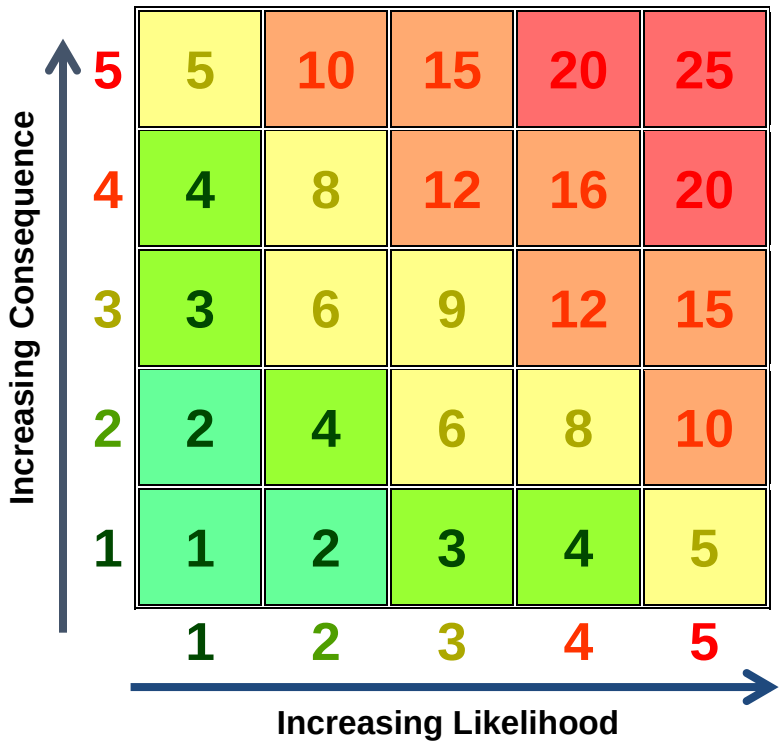
To evaluate how hazardous something might be the assessor first considers the *likely* **consequences** of any harm from the hazard being realised. A worker might trip over a pothole on the entrance path and break their leg. While it is certainly possible to sustain such a serious injury, it is much more likely that they will bruise and graze their knees and elbows so assessors do need to keep a sense of proportion when they consider the worst *likely* outcome from exposure to a hazard. A numerical value can be assigned to this judgement call on the likely consequences as described in the table below.

Consequence	Value
Insignificant (may result in very slight injury/illness)	1
Minor (could result in minor injury/illness or multiple slight injuries/illnesses)	2
Moderate (could result in serious injury/illness or multiple minor injuries/illnesses)	3
Major (could result in major injury/illness or multiple serious injuries/illnesses)	4
Catastrophic (imminent danger of death/large scale illness)	5

When the consequences have been established the next step is to decide the **likelihood** that the harm will occur. If the pothole is in the middle of the path to the main entrance of a building, it is much more likely that a worker or visitor will trip than if the pothole is around the back of the building in the corner of the secure bin compound. This is because many more people will be exposed more frequently on the main path than in the restricted area. A numerical value can be assigned to this judgement call on the likelihood of the hazardous event occurring as described in the table right.

Likelihood	Value
Very unlikely	1
Unlikely	2
Fairly Likely	3
Likely	4
Very likely	5

To express the level of risk numerically, the final step is to **multiply** the numerical value assigned to the possible **consequence** of the hazard **by** the numerical value assigned to the **likelihood** of that hazard causing harm to give an overall risk rating as described in the table below.



17 – 25
Unacceptable
Stop activity and make immediate improvements.

10 – 16 **Tolerable**
Look to improve within a specified timescale.

5 – 9 **Adequate**
Look to improve at the next review.

1 – 4 **Acceptable**
No further action, but ensure controls are maintained.

To make generic risk assessment templates as user friendly as possible, the initial risk rating column is placed before the 'Control Measures (what are we doing now?)' column, unlike some other templates where it is put after. This is just so that assessors can use the blank 'Notes/ Additional Control Measures (what more do we need to explain or do?)' column as an extension of the completed column where perhaps more precise expectations or slight variations in controls for different age groups etc. can be briefly noted.

For example: when assessing the crossing of a road, running without looking, listening or waiting for a gap in the traffic makes this a very high-risk activity with a potentially catastrophic outcome. The risk rating column immediately before the control measures would reflect that. After employing the control measures of using a suitable or designated crossing point, looking and listening and waiting for the appropriate conditions to walk sensibly across makes the activity much safer, but still with residual (or leftover) risk that is uncontrollable and requires vigilance eg. drivers not stopping for red pelican crossing lights. The residual risk rating column would then reflect that. The 'Notes' column might also say that all children under a certain age/maturity will wear high visibility vests when walking from the setting to local venues in the winter or poor weather because there are no pavements.

Controlling Risk

In general, everything 'reasonably practicable' must be done to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the cost of the measures needed to control the risk in terms of money, time and/or trouble. Action that is grossly disproportionate to the level of risk is not required and the risk assessment should only include what is reasonably foreseeable.

Any organisation working with children also needs to consider that employers and the HSE are keen for children to learn about risk first-hand by being exposed to it in a carefully controlled way, with trusted and professional adults and in a relatively safe environment. Elimination may be the very best control measure for any hazard, but the HSE would much rather young people were inspired in physics by

demonstrations and experiments using real radioactive sources than being uninspired watching videos of them.

The hierarchy of controls, where one is likely to be the most effective and ten is likely to be the least effective measure to control the risks to people, are as follows:

1. **Elimination** - Using video instead of real radioactive sources to teach young people about radioactivity will eliminate all risks associated with radiation exposure (and perhaps any attraction for young people to studying physics).
2. **Substitution** - Using a less hazardous alternative to bleach for daily cleaning tasks will significantly reduce the risks of exposure to bleach.
3. **Enclosure** - Limiting access to the hazard by enclosing boilers in a purpose built and locked brick building away from areas that children access reduces the risks to children immensely. An EYFS setting will often use this method in reverse, enclosing part of a playground to keep the things at risk i.e. vulnerable nursery children safer from hazards outside the enclosure i.e. the bigger children playing chase or ball games.
4. **Guarding** - Using the barriers on machinery to prevent fingers, clothing etc. from accessing moving parts to reduce the likelihood of injury and potential severity.
5. **Safe system of work** - Using mechanical aids to assist manual handling tasks can significantly reduce the risks to handlers. Having a visitor badge system and briefing staff and young people about it can effectively safeguard children.
6. **Written procedures** - Having written Educational Visits Procedures in place will help staff effectively plan and monitor safer visits.
7. Adequate **supervision** - Having good supervision of young, new, inexperienced etc. workers will reduce risks to people vulnerable through a lack of knowledge or familiarity. Having good supervision of children and young people will reduce the risks through that same lack of experience as well as from poor behaviour, bullying etc.
8. Identify **training** needs - Using an induction checklist for new staff and having appraisals for existing staff is one way in which training needs can be identified that may help keep people safer. Planned progression and skills monitoring in activities for children can help identify training needs in them as well i.e. mastering basic moves in gymnastics before progressing to combination or more complex moves.
9. **Information / instruction** – Providing the instruction manual for a computer chair will help staff understand how the chair can be adjusted to fit their needs to prevent the musculoskeletal problems associated with poor posture.
10. **Personal protective equipment** (PPE) – Using vinyl gloves when carrying out first aid can effectively protect workers from blood borne infections and viruses.

Elimination of a hazard is first on the list because it will protect everyone all of the time as the risk will no longer exist. A worker or child wearing PPE is last on the list because it will only protect the individual and even then, only as long as the PPE is suitable for the task, functioning and the user is wearing it properly.

Recording Significant Findings

It is a legal requirement for all employers to carry out risk assessments of their work. Only when there are five or more employees does the law require risk assessments to be written down. Any paperwork produced should help to communicate and manage risks simply and for most people and workplaces this does not need to be a big exercise.

Any collection of generic risk assessments are only a tool designed to help settings manage risk assessment effectively, but it is not a finished off-the-shelf product. It can only be considered valid when

it has been amended to suit the environments, tasks and people involved in work-related activities and processes.

In their guidance leaflet INDG163 (rev4) *'Risk assessment: A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace'*, the HSE explains that:
"You may also come across model assessments developed by trade associations, employers' bodies or other organisations concerned with a particular activity. You may decide to apply these model assessments at each workplace, but you can only do so if you: satisfy yourself that the model assessment is appropriate to your type of work; adapt the model to the detail of your own work situations, including any extension necessary to cover hazards and risks not referred to in the model."

If a risk assessment identifies a number of hazards, their order of importance needs to be established so the most serious risks are dealt with first. The greater the hazard, the more robust and reliable the measures to control the risks will need to be with long-term solutions in place for the risks with the biggest consequences, as well as those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health.

Reviewing Risk Assessments

Few workplaces stay the same over time and when new equipment, substances or processes are introduced they could lead to new hazards or changes in risks and should trigger a risk assessment or a review of any existing risk assessment. New personnel or new groups of visitors might also change risks as might changes to the environment. Changes in the law might also prompt a review of risk assessments to take account of more or less stringent legal requirements.
The education sector undergoes a significant change every September (and more often in the early years) when the new intake may or may not significantly change the characteristics of the risks associated with some hazards. Risk assessments should therefore be reviewed at least annually to ensure they are still effective and again whenever a significant incident or change takes place.
An accident, incident or a complaint should also trigger review of any relevant risk assessment to see if it had adequately considered the risks, whether it had been implemented properly and whether anything more can be done to prevent it from happening again.

Effective Use of Generic Risk Assessments

While the Headteacher and Head of Faculty / Department Manager will be ultimately responsible for the risk assessments as the employer's representative, the Director of Operations holds the role of Health and Safety Coordinator and is appointed to help coordinate, what should be, a shared process and not a paper exercise.

Generic Risk assessment templates that are currently used include those provided by;
Kym Allan Associates Ltd, for General Education Hazards, External Visits Coordination and School operations. CLEAPS, for all Science, Art and DT related subjects. Contracted specialists for Facility Management Risk Assessments, for example, Asbestos, Legionella, Fire, Catering and Cleaning. The Community Transport Association for transport related risks.
Although Risks Assessments will be initially compiled by the Head of Faculty/ or Department, all staff should be involved because each person will have their own unique perspective on what is and is not hazardous in their work, as well as what does and does not work to control those risks. This will be developed over reasonable time by discussing the Risk Assessments and the controls with colleagues whose feedback will be considered in further Risk Assessment reviews. Adults who need to know about hazards to children should also ask children who can express a considered view what they think because they will see things differently and they may have something helpful to contribute, while at the

same time they will be learning about staying safe. This would be an excellent example of the requirement for a school to listen to the Pupil Voice, perhaps through the School Council as described in the *DfE Governance Handbook, Nov 15.*

To make the best use of generic risk assessments, avoiding the pitfalls, users need to:

1. Read each risk assessment that applies to the work or workplace and suitably **amend** them to:

    a) ensure all the hazards identified apply and that nothing significant or peculiar to the setting has been omitted i.e. remove anything inappropriate (a primary school is unlikely to have materials of interest to terrorists) or add in a hazard peculiar to the setting e.g. a beck running along the bottom of the playing field;
    b) ensure that all groups of people potentially at risk have been identified i.e. remove anyone identified who will not be at risk and add any groups of people not identified who are likely to be at risk;
    c) ensure that control measures identified are proportionate i.e. remove anything that will not be done and add anything extra that is specially required;
    d) remove all guidance notes and suggestions for clarification from the *Notes/Additional Control Measures* column and replace them with helpful additions to ensure staff (and volunteers) understand how to apply the control measures e.g. the name of the person to report to and email address. Users can also be more specific about one kind of group/place/activity/day etc. i.e. a special arrangement in place for one group or a longer term control (a fence perhaps) not in place yet but being invested in.
    e) evaluate risks by rating them using the numerical matrix and recording the number, **or** the range e.g. Acceptable (Ac), Adequate (Ad), Tolerable (T) and Unacceptable (U), **or** by resolving them more simply to Low (L), Medium (M) or High (H) i.e. show how the control measures have reduced the risks from higher in the left hand *Risk Rating* column to lower after the control measures in the *Residual Risk* rating column.

2. **Ensure** that the top section is fully completed with:

    a) Location(s) the risk assessment applies to e.g. the whole setting, particular room(s), a particular activity in a variety of locations.
    b) Name(s) of the assessor(s) who finalised the risk assessment i.e. at least an initial and surname, never just initials which may make it too difficult to identify defence witnesses to call in case of a claim for compensation in future.
    c) Distribution i.e., who the risk assessment needs to be shared with as a priority e.g. a particular department, all staff, maintenance staff, visits staff etc.

It is not a legal requirement that a risk assessment be signed by the assessor(s), but it is good practice. If there are security issues with applying a signature to electronic formats, the space can be left blank or be typed into.
See Appendix A for a worked example of how a generic risk assessment might be used.

Risk-Benefit Assessment

An alternative to more traditional risk assessment is the risk benefit assessment system explained here, together with a blank template form (Appendix C) and completed example (Appendix D).

Purpose and Scope

The Play Safety Forum (PSF) commissioned respected researchers and authors Professor David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegal to design a form to support a balanced approach to risk management using the process of risk-benefit assessment (RBA). It is aimed mainly at those involved in providing play opportunities in a range of contexts, including play areas, public parks, green spaces, out-of-school childcare settings, playwork settings, schools and early years' services and is just as applicable to curricular activities as non-curricular. It builds on the PSF guidance document *'Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide' (2nd edition 2013)*.
Users should focus on the **significant** risks that provision gives rise to which the HSE defines as those risks that go beyond everyday life and that "are capable of creating a real risk to health and safety which any reasonable person would appreciate and would take steps to guard against."

Why Risk-Benefit Assessment?

Risk management in education and play contexts is different from workplace or factory contexts in one crucial respect. A degree of risk is often beneficial, if not essential for learning and skills development in children in a way that it is not for adult workers. Children and young people enjoy challenging, adventurous learning and play opportunities where they can test themselves and extend their abilities. Giving children the chance to encounter hazards and take risks provides other benefits, such as the chance to learn how to assess and manage these and similar risks for themselves. Hence accidents and minor injuries are not necessarily a sign of problems, because of the value of such experiences in children's learning. Unlike conventional risk assessment, RBA takes account of benefits by bringing together consideration of risks and benefits when deciding on appropriate responses.
Judgements about the balance between risks and benefits can be complicated. They involve many factors, and are often partly subjective. For example, children may be unpredictable in their play or approach to learning, and have widely varying interests and competences; different settings or providers may have different aims, goals and values, which may be expressed in widely varying approaches; and the context of a site, and the level and style of supervision, are important local factors. Guidance such as play equipment standards help to set reference points, but do not provide an absolute answer, nor do they take into account local circumstances.
Some play environments and structures are complex, and go beyond everyday experience. Judgements about structural stability, water hygiene, head traps or structures built into trees, for instance, may require some technical knowledge and specialist expertise. However, other cases will not involve such expertise: decisions can be based on everyday experience, skills and knowledge. Different situations will require different types and levels of expertise, and this form is designed to reflect this.

Risk-Benefit Assessment in Practice

Incorporating RBA into an existing risk management system may involve changes in principles, procedures and practice at many levels, including thinking and understanding about children and their learning, play and development, overall values and direction, service management, staff and site supervision, and ongoing maintenance and inspection procedures. Some kind of organisational review or training may be helpful in ensuring that considerations of the benefits of risk in children's play are properly understood and implemented. When first introducing the form, some piloting and group/team discussion is likely to be useful.

Structure of the Form

This risk-benefit assessment form is split into 4 parts, but is not set in stone. Users may find it helpful to make their own template with amendments or adaptations.
Part One is the overview with important information about who is carrying it out and why.

Part Two is the detailed consideration of the activity, design, environment, equipment, hazards, likely risks and control measures or mitigation.
Part Three references the people with specialist knowledge who have contributed to the RBA and the specific advice they have given to make the activity reasonable.
Part Four is the glossary of terms which will be essential for users not familiar with the RBA process or form, but it could be removed and made into a separate appendix which users can be directed to look at before they start.

Involving Children

Research into the teaching of risk management across the curriculum, but particularly within science, design and technology, information and communication technology, art and design, and physical education in schools, has revealed that:

- Pupils are being instructed about particular risks and hazards in particular contexts, but not about risk itself, or the principles of risk management which is fundamental to good health and safety practice;
- There are no firm grounds for assuming that education about risks in one context e.g. road safety, will lead to the application of the same principles that can be applied and used to manage different risks (e.g. substance abuse);
- Teaching staff have difficulty with terms like 'risk education' and 'risk concepts' and there is no mechanism for the HSE to influence teacher training or trade union agendas;
- Discussions with teachers on risk and health and safety revealed that they themselves feel vulnerable and often inhibited, fearing personal liability and litigation; and
- Young people are at their most vulnerable when entering the workspace for the first time.

As they grow, develop and progress to adulthood, a pupil's ability to assess and control risks will become increasingly important. In order to become healthy and safe workers, pupils will need to be taught about the hazards, risks and risk control within the context of their studies so that risk awareness forms an integral part of their learning and development.
Teaching about the concept of risk will help pupils make their own decisions about risk so that they can:

- recognise the existence of hazards, risks and uncertainty in a range of contexts;
- assess their own ability, and the ability of others, to deal with different situations;
- assess the consequences when dealing with hazards presented to themselves and to others (for example, within school, the environment, the home);
- seek advice from appropriate sources to minimise and manage risk;
- understand that rules and regulations follow from risk assessment and help define individual and collective responsibility.

When working with tools, equipment and materials, in practical activities and in different environments, including those that are unfamiliar, pupils need to be taught:

- about hazards, risks and risk control;
- to recognise hazards, assess consequent risk and take steps to control the risks to themselves and others;
- to use information to assess the immediate and cumulative risks;
- to manage their environment to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others;
- to explain the steps they take to control risks.

An ability to manage risk will positively influence a pupil's whole life in leisure activities and the home as well as in future workplaces.

Author:	RH from template provided by Kym Allan Associates.		
Version:	25.0	Nevil Jeffery	October 2025
Approved by Risk Management Group. Date:	27th November 2020		
Next Review date:	September 2026		
Version history	Version 20.1. based on V 19 format. 20.2 includes further sections from Kym Allan Associates.		
Approved	Version 25.1, November 2025, F Thompson		

Worked Example Risk Assessment

Text is blue in this generic risk assessment template only to show how it has been used by a primary school to make it specific to their workplace and how they operate. It deals with curriculum, maintenance and catering tasks e.g. young/unskilled people cutting with scissors; using hand tools whether for design technology, craft or maintenance tasks and slicing/chopping/back-slicing vegetables etc. whether for food technology or catering requirements.

Activity:	**Tool use (edged, abrasive, pinching & pointed)**			**Location(s):**	Windermere School, Elleray Campus
Assessor:	Anna Aspinwall	**Ref No.:**	RA14	**Distribution:**	All teaching and site staff and relevant volunteers
Date:	09th September 2020	**Proposed Review Date**	Annually in October	**Signed:**	A Aspinwall

Hazard	Risk	Individuals at risk	Risk Rating	Control Measures What are we doing now?	Notes/Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk
Contact with cutting edges, abrasive surfaces, tool mechanisms and the ends of sharp, abrasive, pinching or pointed hand tools	Cuts, grazes, entrapment in tool mechanisms/ against objects, amputation and puncture wounds including eye injuries	Users and anyone nearby	Medium (M)	☐ Hand tools provided are age, skill and task appropriate e.g. size, material (plastic or metal edges), left-handed, serrated. ☐ Tool use, cleaning and maintenance is always in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. ☐ Tool condition is appropriately monitored by staff and defect procedures are followed i.e. items quarantined for repair or disposed of for replacement. ☐ Tools are cleaned and maintained appropriately by staff and users if they are competent i.e. sharp tools go in dishwashers point/edge down, knives are never left in sinks but washed immediately, Kevlar glove worn when sharpening with a steel. ☐ Users are instructed in how tools might become harmful, to visually check them before use e.g. blunt, loose handle, broken edge, loose rivets, and what to do if they are defective. ☐ Supervision arrangements of young/unskilled people reduce the risk of tool misuse/incident through poor behaviour. ☐ Edged tools are kept suitably sharp or replaced when dull e.g. kitchen knives, textiles scissors, chisels. ☐ Tools are stored appropriately i.e. out of reach from young/unskilled users or locked away. ☐ How tools are arranged/stored reduces the risks of injury when selecting/ returning them. ☐ Tool distribution is appropriate for safety and security e.g. adult or nominated user(s) distribute to all users to reduce traffic carrying sharp objects, 'controlled weapons' (any fixed blade incl. Stanley knives and	Governors sample monitor annually to ensure procedures work. Defects Book kept in reception. Users to report defects to supervisor who quarantines/disposes of it immediately where possible. Pupils are not to dispose of sharp objects. Blades are wrapped securely in cardboard before disposing in normal waste in a staff only area. Kitchen Manager monitors all catering tools and equipment (check/ maintenance schedule in kitchen file). Food tech knives in knife block on high shelf, catering knives now point down & blade away on wall magnet and kitchen access restricted. Y2 and under scissors kept in scissor blocks with rotary sharpeners on high shelves. In Y3+ scissors in trays at low level but scrapers, scalpels etc. kept in locked art cupboard. DT tools kept in painted wall display so missing ones are obvious & room locked when not in use.	Low (L) L

Hazard	Risk	Individuals at risk	Risk Rating	Control Measures What are we doing now?	Notes/Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk
			M	scalpels) are counted out and in and nobody leaves the room until they are all accounted for. ☐ In cases of suspected theft, supervisors strictly follow the lawful searching, screening & confiscation procedure. ☐ Users are trained in the safe carriage of tools e.g. sensibly, by the handle, point down, never in a pocket and to never to try to catch a tool that they drop. ☐ Users are trained in the safe use of tools i.e. working parts and how they might be harmful; what tasks they are suitable for; the importance of using the right tool for the right job; how to hold/use tools; safe practice e.g. carrying point down, appropriate cutting techniques, cutting away from the body; keeping flesh out of entrapment points and clear of exposed parts such as file tangs; leaning on stable hard surfaces and never the body; when to use a board or vice; when to use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves or goggles; the claw hold for slicing, chopping and back-slicing food etc. ☐ Users tie back long hair and clothing/jewellery entanglements are minimised through uniform policy. ☐ When adults use tools they lead by example in good practice and do not leave them lying around. ☐ Contractors using such tools are instructed to ensure they keep them safe from young/unskilled people and are suitably monitored.	Only headteacher & deputy are authorised to search pupils (consent not required) or call Police if theft established. Young/unskilled users demonstrate competence in a range of pre-cutting activities before they cut with tools. By September 2017 all pupils should only have clip-on ties. Until then tied ties are removed or tucked inside shirts.	

Further Information or Further Action Required	Date Action Completed	Date RA Reviewed	Significant Changes Y/N	Shared with Staff Date or N/A
This risk assessment must be read and followed in conjunction with other applicable risk assessments. ☐ Class teachers/activity leaders must adjust controls in light of individual behaviours or special educational needs. Refer also to individual risk assessments e.g. Behaviour Management Plan (BMP) and/or Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans for specific action to take (if any). Further advice can be sought from the SENCO. The range of sharp, edged, abrasive, pinching or pointed hand tools used on site include: Scissors, pinking shears, cutters, sharpeners (pencil and knife), knives, scalpels, chisels, ~~gouges~~, hacksaws, ~~saws~~, ~~shears,~~ secateurs, wire-cutters; Files, ~~rasps~~, foil art scrapers, sanding blocks; Pliers, ~~grippers~~, tongs, tweezers; Staple guns, ~~bradawls, gimlets~~, screwdrivers, dibbles	Continuous process	15/09/17 14/10/18 17/09/19	N N Y	N/A N/A 29/09/19

Risk Assessment Template

Activity:		**School/setting:**		**Location(s):**	
Assessor:		**Ref No.:**		**Distribution:**	
Date:		**Proposed Review Date:**		**Signed:**	

Hazard	Risk	Individuals at risk	Risk Rating	Control Measures What are we doing now?	Notes/Additional Control Measures What more do we need to explain or do?	Residual Risk
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		

Further Information or Further Action Required	Date Action Completed	Date RA Reviewed	Significant Changes Y/N	Shared with Staff Date or N/A
This risk assessment must be read and followed in conjunction with any other applicable risk assessments.				

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PART ONE:	**Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA) Form: Overview**		
Project/Proposal Name:			
Assessment Type: (tick 1 only)	☐ Designer ☐ Post-installation ☐ Provider / manager ☐ Monitoring		**Date of Assessment:**
Name of Assessor:		**Position:**	
Description and location of facility, feature, activity or equipment:			
Date to review risk-benefit assessment:			
Signature of senior worker/manager:			

PART TWO:	**Risk Benefit Assessment** (see glossary below for explanation of terms)
Benefits:	
Risks: (taking into account any technical information identified in PART THREE below)	
Local Factors:	
Precedents and/or Comparisons:	
Decision:	
Action Taken:	
Ongoing Management and Monitoring:	

PART THREE:	Technical or Specialist Knowledge Needed (if any) for this RBA		
Knowledge or Specialism	**Is this required ?**	**Person providing knowledge/ carrying out assessment**	**Any actions proposed**

PART FOUR Glossary of Terms

Actions taken: the actions taken as a result of the decision reached. Choices could include:

- None
- Introduce/increase monitoring of benefits and/or risks
- Introduce/increase supervision
- Book technical inspection
- Contact manufacturer to make modifications
- Introduce other measures to reduce risks
- Introduce additional features/activities that increase the level of risk and challenge or other benefits
- Meet with parents/users to raise awareness of the approach to risk and benefit
- Remove facility/structure, or suspend activity.

Benefits: the specific, positive things that children and young people gain through the opportunities under assessment (social, physical, emotional, educational, psychological, etc.).

Decision: the assessor's conclusion following RBA. Choices could include:

- Proceed/continue with no adjustments to the environment or working practices and monitor.
- Proceed/continue with some specific adjustments to the environment or working practices and monitor
- Cease use of the environment or working practices until work can be carried out/further assessments can be made.

Local factors: any relevant issues specific to the setting being assessed e.g. proximity to housing, characteristics of local residents and typical users, nature of supervision, access to the site, size of the site, proximity to busy roads or other hazards, etc. Any relevant supporting policies and strategies should also be mentioned here.

Ongoing monitoring and management: any future actions that may need to be taken which could include:

- Maintenance schedules,
- Inspection regimes,
- Reviews of accident records, injuries or other outcomes,
- User feedback exercises.

Precedents and/or comparisons: similar equipment, environments, loose parts or potential situations where learning or play is taking place either locally or elsewhere. This section is particularly helpful in relation to unusual, innovative, unconventional or novel initiatives, to help to justify departures from standard approaches. Leave blank in the case of straightforward projects.

Risk-benefit assessment (RBA): tool to aid risk management that explicitly brings together considerations of risks and benefits in a single judgement.

Risks: In general: the likelihood of an adverse outcome. In risk management contexts: also includes a measure of the seriousness of the outcome, as well as its likelihood. HSE definition: the chance that "somebody could be harmed by [a hazard] together with an indication of how serious the harm could be."

Other language used when assessing risks and benefits:

Hazards: HSE definition: "anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, etc." There is no action and no object that may not be hazardous in certain circumstances, but it is impractical to treat all potential hazards with the same degree of seriousness. In managing risk, judgements need to be made about:

- Which risks & hazards need to be modified/removed
- Which risks & hazards might be acceptable or desirable, because of their benefits to children/ young people
- What, if anything, is to be done about risks and hazards that have been identified?

Safe: 'safe' or 'safety' is perhaps the most commonly encountered term in debates about children and risk e.g. "Is this playground/park/tree/activity/public square safe?" There is no simple answer to questions like this, because the word 'safe' means different things to different people (see Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide, p. 31).

PART ONE:	Example Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA) Form: Overview				
Project/Proposal Name:	Tree swing Elleray Students in School Grounds				
Assessment Type: (tick 1 only)	☑ Designer ☐ Post-installation ☐ Provider / manager ☐ Monitoring			**Date of Assessment**	
Name of Assessor:	Paul Platt	**Position:**	Head of Adventure	**Date:**	18/09/2020
Description and location of facility, feature, activity or equipment:					
Tree swing fitted to oak tree in wooded area of grounds					
Date to review risk-benefit assessment:	By Bursar, once installed				
Signature of senior worker/manager:					

PART TWO:	Risk Benefit Assessment (see glossary below for explanation of terms)
Benefits:	• Pleasure and fun Mixing between different age ranges. • Physical play and reflective opportunities • Maximised rotational possibilities and therefore good potential for some unpredictability and therefore challenge • Development of self-confidence and well-being • Learning through experience: accidents from which one might learn • Swing users encounter conditions similar to those with other self-built tree swings – experience that will be useful if/when they play on them or make their own • Engagement with natural environment and natural elements • Potential for incorporation into imaginative games where woodlands are the play context, e.g. Tarzan • Swinging in the trees
Risks: (taking into account any technical information identified in PART THREE below)	**EQUIPMENT FAILURE** **Swing fitting fails due to wear** Wear should be detectable through regular internal inspection as per proposed maintenance schedule attached **Swing fitting fails due to vandalism** Same as for standard swings. The swing has a strong steel chain, cable and fitting which would require concerted effort with a hacksaw to cut. **PART OF TREE BREAKS** **The branch or support could collapse** There is some risk of minor injuries e.g. bruises, scrapes and possible long bone fractures. These would largely be incurred by falling from the swing onto the ground. A pendulum seat will be used which will deter multiple users from using the swing simultaneously thus reducing unpredictability. The tree has been checked by an arboriculturalist and considered fit for purpose (see arboriculturalist's report [not included here]). All fittings between the two shackles (No. 5 on specification drawing) will carry certification for Safe Working Loads. **The tree/branch could become damaged with wear** The rubber protector mat fits between all points of wear and the tree. The fixing design (see specification drawing) will minimise wear on the tree. The fixing has an additional bracing to the tree crown providing a secondary bearing in the unlikely event

	of the branch giving way. **OTHER FALLS OR COLLISIONS** **User could fall onto something hard/absence of Impact Absorbent Surfacing (IAS)** Possibility of head injury upon falling. The current surface is patchy grass and leaf litter. There are no protruding tree roots or stones. It is very unlikely that the fall height could exceed 1.4m. If the surface is kept clear of protrusions then the risk is considered to be low. Note wide general prevalence of children and teenagers creating own rope swings over similar surfaces and generally low risk of this activity. **Collision with obstacles** The adjacent tree stump should be felled and the nearby slide relocated off another platform. Risk of crashing into the tree or support It may be possible to hit the supporting tree but this is easily seen and will likely be used for pushing against with feet. **Collision with other person** There are no obstructions to the visibility of swing users and other users. **OTHER RISKS** **Risk of hanging** There is very little risk from hanging as the swing is suspended on sleeved chain and therefore very difficult to knot or loop.
Local Factors:	Mature woodland setting with implicit adventurous play e.g. tree climbing. Evidence of persistent self-build rope swings on tree that is now too weak to support it. Existing swings have a limited challenge and are suspended from a relatively low frame. Only a small budget exists for increasing the play offer at this site. There is a need for more challenging opportunities on this site. More play offers in this lower section of the space will invite greater use and help this area not to become a ghetto. Local housing and road nearby to call for help.
Precedents and/or Comparisons:	Many examples, recorded and in our own experience, of children and teenagers creating rope swings attached to trees in unsupervised settings with little risk of significant injury. • Forestry Commission guidance on “Rope swings, dens, tree houses and fires”. • Scouting Movement. • Go Ape facilities where risk, adventure and taking responsibility for oneself are core part of the experience.
Decision:	Proposed tree swing offers an acceptable level of risk. Go ahead with suitable site modifications and management arrangements (see below). Current 'natural' surface appropriate for setting. Using impact absorbency in the fall zone may reduce risk of injury. Note, however, wide general prevalence of children and teenagers creating own rope swings and generally low risk of this activity. (Excavation and loose fill is not possible in a root zone without damaging the tree or changing the level which would then need to be retained. Saver grass mats would be expensive and grass is unlikely to grow through. Matting would also decrease the charm of the woodland context and be likely to create trip hazards, especially over time.) Hence IAS not deemed necessary.
Action Taken:	The adjacent tree stump should be removed and slide relocated.

Ongoing Management and Monitoring:	• Swing & fixings should be "inspected" for the usual signs of wear as proposed in the maintenance schedule 1 month and 2 months after installation & thereafter adjusted in light of experience. • The tree should be inspected for damage by an arboriculturalist annually and thereafter adjusted in light of experience. • If an external inspection is required for the swing fixings, and as this is a non-standard item, this should be provided by a suitably experienced person and not inspected by someone whose main or only knowledge is of EN standards. • This document is a **Design Stage** risk-benefit assessment. It is possible that further issues come to light through the implementation of this feature and adjustments may be required. In addition it is recommended that a post-installation risk-benefit assessment is undertaken by the client.

PART THREE:	Technical or Specialist Knowledge Needed (if any) for this RBA		
Knowledge or Specialism	**Is this required?**	**Person providing knowledge/ carrying out assessment**	**Any actions proposed**
Tree specialist	Yes	Steve Hodgson	Follow advice re: location and method of attachment to tree, as in an arboriculturalist's report [not included here]
Rope specialist	Yes	Paul Platt	Follow advice re: type of chain, shackles and methods of attachment (as above)

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