



# Risk Benefit Policy - Forest School

**Policy Code: FS-HS-005**

**Policy Name: Risk Benefit Policy**

**Version: 1.0**

**Effective Date: 21.04.2026**

**Review Date: Annually or following significant change/incident**

**Linked Documents:**

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy - FS-SG-001
- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy – FS-HS-001
- Risk Assessments

## Statement of Intent

Nurture & Grow Forest & Play recognises that risk is an essential part of children's learning and development. Through carefully managed experiences, children are supported to explore, take appropriate risks, and develop resilience, confidence and independence. We are committed to providing a safe environment where children can experience challenge while being protected from serious harm.

### 1. What is Risk Benefit?

Risk Benefit is the process of balancing:

- The **potential risks** involved in an activity
- The **developmental benefits** for the child

Rather than eliminating all risks, we:

- Identify hazards
- Assess the level of risk
- Put appropriate controls in place
- Enable children to engage safely

### 2. Our Approach

We believe children learn best when they:

- Are given opportunities to explore
- Experience manageable risk
- Learn from real-life situations
- Develop problem-solving skills

We therefore:

- Encourage safe risk-taking
- Avoid over-restricting children's experiences
- Support children to assess risk themselves



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## 3. Forest School-Specific Risks

**Forest School environments present natural risks including:**

- Uneven ground and trip hazards
- Climbing trees and structures
- Use of tools (e.g. peelers, saws)
- Fire and heat sources
- Weather conditions
- Natural elements (mud, water, insects)

**These are managed through:**

- Ongoing dynamic risk assessment
- Staff supervision and positioning
- Clear safety boundaries
- Age-appropriate rules and guidance

## 4. Types of Risk Assessment

### 4.1 Site Risk Assessments

- Completed for the full Forest School site
- Reviewed regularly and after environmental changes

### 4.2 Activity Risk Assessments

- Completed for specific activities (e.g. fire lighting, tool use)

### 4.3 Dynamic Risk Assessment

- Ongoing assessment carried out by staff during sessions
- Adjustments made based on weather, environment and children's needs

## 5. Staff Responsibilities

**All staff must:**

- Be trained in risk assessment and Forest School practice
- Continuously assess risk throughout sessions
- Position themselves effectively to supervise children
- Intervene where necessary to prevent harm
- Model safe behaviours

**Staff must not:**

- Eliminate all risk unnecessarily
- Allow unsafe or uncontrolled behaviour

## 6. Supporting Children to Manage Risk

**Children are supported to:**

- Understand and follow safety rules
- Assess their own abilities
- Make decisions about risk



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- Learn from experience

## Staff will:

- Use clear language and explanations
- Model safe practices
- Encourage children to think before acting

## 7. High-Risk Activities

Specific procedures are in place for:

### Fire

- Designated fire area
- Close supervision at all times
- Clear rules explained to children

### Tools

- Only used under supervision
- Age and stage appropriate
- Safety rules taught before use

### Climbing

- Children supported to assess their own limits
- Staff positioned to supervise effectively

## 8. Inclusion and Risk

**We ensure all children can participate by:**

- Adapting activities where needed
- Completing individual risk assessments
- Providing additional support

Risk is not used as a reason to exclude children. Instead, we consider how to enable safe participation.

## 9. Recording and Review

- Risk assessments are documented and regularly reviewed
- Incidents are recorded and analysed
- Practice is adapted based on learning

## 10. Balancing Risk and Safety

We aim to:

- Protect children from serious harm
- Allow children to experience challenge
- Support development through managed risk

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## 11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following:

- An incident
- Changes in legislation
- Updates to Forest School practice

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Doidge', is written over the printed name.

**Name:** Tracey Doidge

**Role:** Director / Registered Provider

**Date:** 21st April 2026