



Risk Benefit Policy

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Policy Code: FS-HS-005

Policy Name: Risk Benefit Policy

Version: 1.0

Effective Date: 17.06.2026

Review Date: Annually or following significant change or incident

Linked Documents

- FS-SG-001 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- FS-SG-003 Behaviour Policy
- FS-HS-001 Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessments
- Daily Site Safety Check Procedure

Statement of Intent

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, independence and problem-solving skills.

We are committed to providing a safe environment where children can experience challenge, adventure and exploration whilst being protected from serious or foreseeable harm.

We recognise that experiences involving managed risk provide significant benefits for children to develop physical skills, decision-making, emotional regulation, self-esteem and an understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

1. What is Risk Benefit?

Risk-benefit assessment 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.



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- Assess the level of risk.
- Consider the benefits of the activity.
- Put appropriate control measures in place.
- Enable children to participate safely.

2. Our Approach

We believe children learn best when they:

- Are given opportunities to explore their environment.
- Experience manageable risk.
- Learn from real-life situations.
- Develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- Build confidence through challenge and achievement.

We therefore:

- Encourage safe risk-taking.
- Avoid unnecessarily restricting children's experiences.
- Support children to recognise and assess risk for themselves.

3. Forest School-Specific Risks

Forest School environments naturally present risks which form part of children's learning experiences, including:

- Uneven ground and trip hazards.
- Climbing trees and natural structures.
- Exploration of logs, sticks, mud and natural terrain.
- Use of tools, such as peelers, knives and saws.
- Fire and heat sources.
- Weather conditions.
- Water and muddy areas.
- Insects, bites and ticks.



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- Contact with nettles
- Contact with plants, wildlife and natural materials.

These risks are managed through:

- The Forest School rules
- Qualified and competent Forest School practitioners.
- Ongoing dynamic risk-benefit assessment.
- Daily site safety checks.
- Appropriate staff deployment and supervision.
- Clear boundaries and safety expectations.
- Age and stage appropriate activities and guidance.

4. Types of Risk Assessment

4.1 Site Risk Assessments

- Completed for the Forest School site.
- Reviewed regularly and following significant environmental changes.

4.2 Activity Risk Assessments

- Completed for specific activities where required.
- Reviewed and adapted as activities develop.

4.3 Daily Site Safety Sweep

- A daily site safety sweep will be completed before children arrive.
- Additional checks will be undertaken throughout the session where required.
- Activities and areas will be adapted in response to weather, environmental conditions or children's individual needs.

4.4 Dynamic Risk-Benefit Assessment

- Practitioners continually assess risk throughout the session.
- Activities may be modified, relocated or paused if risks increase beyond acceptable levels



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5. Staff Responsibilities

All staff will:

- 50% of staff will be forest school trained
- Understand and follow risk assessment procedures.
- Carry out ongoing dynamic risk-benefit assessments throughout sessions.
- Position themselves effectively to supervise children.
- Intervene where necessary to prevent serious harm.
- Model safe and responsible behaviour.
- Encourage children to think about and manage risk appropriately.
- Report hazards, concerns or incidents promptly and record this

Staff must not:

- Eliminate all risk unnecessarily.
- Allow unsafe, reckless or uncontrolled behaviour.

6. Supporting Children to Manage Risk

Children will be supported to:

- Understand and follow safety expectations.
- Assess their own abilities and limitations.
- Make informed decisions about risk
- Develop confidence and independence.
- Learn from experience.

Practitioners will:

- Use clear explanations and guidance.
- Model safe practices.
- Encourage children to think before acting.
- Support children to identify hazards and make sensible choices.



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7. High-Risk Activities

Specific procedures and risk assessments are in place for activities such as:

Fire

- Designated fire area.
- Adult supervision at all times.
- Safety rules explained and reinforced.

Tools

- Used only under direct supervision on a 12:1 ratio
- Only used in the tool area
- Appropriate to children's age, stage and competence.
- Safe handling demonstrated before use.

Climbing

- Children encouraged to assess their own capabilities.
- Practitioners supervise and support safe decision-making.
- Natural limits and safety boundaries are discussed with children.

8. Inclusion and Risk

We are committed to promoting inclusion and ensuring that all children are given opportunities to access and benefit from Forest School experiences wherever reasonably possible.

We will:

- Make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Consider individual needs, abilities, developmental stage and circumstances.
- Complete individual risk assessments where required.
- Provide additional support where appropriate.
- Balance the benefits of participation with the safety and wellbeing of the child and others.

Risk will not automatically be used as a reason to exclude a child.

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Where an activity cannot be undertaken safely, alternative opportunities may be offered, or activities may be adapted where reasonably practicable and appropriate. Decisions will always be based on individual circumstances, risk assessment and the best interests of the child.

9. Recording and Review

- Risk assessments will be documented and reviewed regularly.
- Incidents, accidents and near misses will be recorded and reviewed.
- Practice will be adapted where learning identifies opportunities for improvement.
- Significant concerns will be shared with relevant staff and, where appropriate, parents/carers.

10. Balancing Risk and Safety

At Forest & Play, we believe children learn best through first-hand experiences.

We therefore seek to balance safety with opportunity by:

- Protecting children from serious harm.
- Providing opportunities for challenge and exploration.
- Supporting resilience and independence.
- Encouraging children to develop judgement and self-awareness.
- Enabling children to gain confidence through managed risk.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner following:

- A significant incident.
- Changes in legislation or guidance.
- Updates to Forest School practice.
- Changes to the site or activities offered.

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Signed: _____

Name: Tracey Doidge

Role: Director / Registered Provider

Date: _____