



## RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

Last reviewed:	November 2025
Next review due:	November 2026

### Statement of intent

The Little Firefly believes that the health and safety of children is of paramount importance. We make our nursery a safe and healthy place for children, parents, staff and volunteers by assessing and minimising the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

The forest school approach to learning has six key principles, of which one is risk. Our forest school leaders and nursery managers plan sessions that offer opportunities for participants to take risks. We create and maintain records, policies and procedures that allow our staff to be confident in offering supported risk-taking opportunities. The paperwork will include:

- A site risk assessment
- Specific risk assessments for environments, activities
- Risk-benefit assessments
- A stated approach to dynamic risk assessment
- A clear health and safety policy that includes the risk-benefit approach taken in forest school
- Emergency plans for a variety of scenarios

In forest school there are high ratios of adults to children (1:4) to enable supported risk taking.

### Who does risk assessments?

Though typically conducted by managers, any member of staff could be asked to participate and contribute to a risk assessment.

Staff are expected to follow risk assessments, as well as write their own risk assessments when required (after internal and external training) for activities. As well as written risk assessments, staff are expected to dynamically risk assess throughout their working day to ensure the ever-changing environment and activities at forest school are safe.

Risk assessment means taking note of aspects of your workplace and activities that could cause harm, either to yourself or to others, and deciding what needs to be done to prevent that harm, making sure this is adhered to and is updated when necessary.

The law does not require that all risk is eliminated – but that ‘reasonable precaution’ is taken. This is particularly important when balancing the need for children to be able to take appropriate risks through physically challenging play. Children need the opportunity to work out what is not safe and what they should do when faced with a risk.

The Little Firefly uses risk assessment processes to ensure the health and safety of our children and staff. We follow the 5 steps process to risk assessment:

1. **Identification of risk** – where is it and what is it?
2. **Who is at risk** – for example childcare staff, children, parents, visitors?
3. **Assessment as to the level of risk as high, medium, low.** This is both the risk of the likelihood of it happening, as well as the possible impact if it did.
4. **Control measures to reduce/eliminate risk** – what will you need to do, or ensure others will do, in order to reduce that risk?
5. **Monitoring and review** – How do you know if what you have said is working, or is thorough enough? If it is not working, it will need to be amended, or maybe there is a better solution.

Our written risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis by the manager, or immediately following any incident.

Dynamic daily site risk assessments are carried out and any new risks highlighted to the manager and, if required, the nursery owner for action. Dynamic risk assessments are constantly carried out by practitioners so risks are assessed on an on-going basis throughout the day.

Health and safety issues are checked daily before each session by the manager.

### **Dynamic risk assessments**

Dynamic risk assessment in forest schools involves continuously identifying and managing risks to ensure a safe yet enriching outdoor learning environment for children. Dynamic risk assessment is a proactive approach that allows educators to evaluate risks in real-time as activities unfold in the natural environment. This method is essential in forest schools, where conditions can change rapidly due to weather, terrain, and children's interactions with their surroundings. It follows the same process as a written risk assessment in identifying hazards, evaluating risks, implementing control measures and monitoring and reviewing.

The benefits of dynamic risk assessment are that it not only enhances safety but also supports children's learning and development in several ways:

Encourages exploration: By allowing children to engage in risk-taking within a controlled environment, they develop confidence, problem-solving skills, and resilience.

Promotes responsibility: Children learn to assess risks themselves, fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness of their surroundings.

Facilitates learning opportunities: Educators can use dynamic assessments to create rich learning experiences that adapt to children's interests and abilities, ensuring that all children can participate meaningfully.

### **Risk benefit analysis**

The Little Firefly follows a risk benefit approach to tackling risk at forest school. Keeping children, staff and other individuals safe is incredibly important, but so is allowing children to explore risk in a safe way that will give them invaluable learning experiences.

A risk benefit analysis is a process used to evaluate and compare the potential risks and benefits associated with a particular action. It is a crucial tool in decision-making, enabling The Little Firefly to make informed choices by weighing the potential advantages against the potential disadvantages. The process involves identifying, assessing, and evaluating the potential risks and benefits of a given situation.

### **Managers**

Managers are legally accountable for their staff's safety whilst they are at work, including assessing risks and providing necessary training and resources.

### **Legal framework**

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Health and Safety at Work Act (1996)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1992

Policies, procedures and risk assessments referred to in this document:

- Health & safety (inc COSHH) policy
- Risk assessment template
- Risk benefit analysis template
- Risk assessments - shared Google Drive folder

External references:

- [Managing risks and risk assessment at work: Overview - HSE](#)
- [Full principles and criteria for good practice | Forest School Association](#)