**Home Ed-Venturers Risk Assessment**

**To be read by all staff and volunteers working for Home Ed-Venturers**

**Date last reviewed 26/09/2024**

This risk assessment applies to all Home Ed-Venturers sessions held on Bristol Forest School’s site at Leigh Court Farm.

It describes methods and procedures for reducing specific risks involving: the BFS site, activities and transport.

It is to be used in conjunction with general stipulations that **must** be adhered to by all staff including:

- All sessions will **be led only by a qualified FS Leader** who holds: a **Level Three Forest School** qualification, a current **First Aid certificate**, an enhanced **DBS certificate**.

- The emergency **First Aid Kit must always be accessible**.

- The FS Leader will **carry a mobile phone at all times**, and can phone for an ambulance if necessary.

- As children are attending sessions without parents, **medical consent forms** will be completed covering children’s existing illnesses and allergies, and giving permission to administer first aid.

- **Adequate ratios** will be consistently maintained: for 5-10 year olds a ratio of 1:6 adult:child and for 10-14 year olds a ratio of 1:8 adult:child

One of the main benefits of Forest School is allowing children to manage their own risks in a secure and safe environment.

These activities are deemed risk-beneficial for various reasons including:

* Physical development: gross motor skills (moving, climbing, running, balancing), health, warmth
* Practical skills: use of specific equipment (tools, honey/beeswax), fire lighting and outdoor cooking, sufficiency
* Connection to nature: woodland habitats, wildlife, biodiversity, identification of plants and insects, place within world
* Social skills: trust building, communication, confidence, respect, risk management, using initiative, problem-solving
* Shared lasting experiences: sitting around the fire, adventure and exploration, creativity

RISK RATING

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **PROBABILITY** of harm (1-5) |  |  | **SEVERITY** of harm (1-5) |
| 5 | Almost Certain/  Frequent | Almost 100% certainty that an accident will happen. | 5 | Major | Death to one or more people. Loss or damage is such that it could cause serious business disruption (major fire, structural damage). |
| 4 | High/  Probable | Effects of human behaviour or other factors could cause an accident but is unlikely without this additional factor. | 4 | High | Causing permanent disability (e.g. loss of limb, sight or hearing, skin disfiguration). |
| 3 | Medium/  Occasional | Loss is unlikely during normal operation but may occur in emergencies or non-routine conditions. | 3 | Medium | Causing temporary disability (e.g. fractures). |
| 2 | Low/  Improbable | Situation generally well managed but occasional lapses could occur. | 2 | Low | Causing significant injuries (e.g. sprains, bruises, lacerations). |
| 1 | Unlikely/  Remote | Loss, accident or illness could only occur under exceptional conditions. Situation is well managed and all reasonable precautions have been taken. | 1 | Minor | Causing minor injuries (e.g. cuts, scratches). No lost time likely other than for first aid treatment. |

**RISK RATING = PROBABILITY X SEVERITY**

**1-9 LOW**

**10-15 MEDIUM**

**16-25 HIGH**

SPECIFIC RISKS OF **BFS WOODLAND SITE**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nature of Hazard** | **Type of Harm** | **Individuals at Risk** | **Probability** of harm (1-5) | **Severity** of harm (1-5) | **Risk Rating**  (P x S) | **Short term actions** to reduce risks | **Long term actions** to reduce risks |
| Ground layer  Slippery  Muddy Uneven  Tree Roots  Vegetation  Burrows  Pegs (log circle) | Slips/trips/falls  Grazes/cuts, bruises  Breaks/sprains etc | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 4 | 2 | 8 | - Group leader will give verbal instruction to the children to be aware of slippy and uneven ground underfoot  - Group leader continually monitors paths for obstacles/potential dangers  - Daily site check for hazards carried out | - Routes will be altered throughout the year to avoid overuse  - Woodland Manager to regularly check/lop paths for obstructions  - Woodland Manager to mark off roots/re-route as necessary  - Participants advised to wear appropriate outdoor footwear |
| Low branches | Trips, knocks, impaling | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 2 | 3 | 6 | - Verbal warnings to be given | - Woodland Manager to remove/mark dangerous low branches |
| Falling from trees | Bumps, cuts, scrapes  Breaks, serious head injury | Children | 2 | 4 | 8 | - Any log/net climbing should not go above head height (in line with our FS insurance policy) (roughly 1m)  - Children informed not to climb above 5m (in-line with FS insurance)  - Children informed not to climb trees when wet |  |
| Plants  Nettles  Brambles | Stings, scratches    (allergic reaction) | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 5 | 1 | 5 | - FS Leader/Staff continually educates children about features of different plants e.g. stinging/prickles  - Children shown how to use plantain leaves | - Participants encouraged to wear long trousers, tops and closed shoes to avoid stings |
| Foraging  Ingesting toxic plants/fungi | Sickness Poisoning | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 2 | 4 | 8 | - Group leader will give verbal instructions about not putting things in mouths unless part of organised foraging activity  - Seasonal warnings e.g. Yew: reminded to the group at high berry season/wash hands after touching ‘fungi’  - Children will be well educated around any poisonous or hazardous plants | - Woodland Manager will mark off areas with poisonous plants if necessary |
| Insect bites:  Bees (incl. hive)  Wasps  Ticks | Stings/bites  Allergic reaction  Lyme Disease | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 3 | 4 | 12 | - All individuals will keep a safe distance from hive unless instructed; bee suits will be worn when in close proximity to hive  - Any ‘wild’ nests will be identified, highlighted and avoided if possible  - If children are attending without parents, must have a list of those with allergies | - Staff to maintain clearly marked rope boundary around bee hive. Planned hive visits only  - New routes into woods to avoid ‘wild’ nests  - If in very invasive position, wasp nests will be destroyed (bee nests will be relocated)  - Parents/Schools sent info re Tick prevention |
| Dog or animal faeces | Sickness/ infection  Toxocariasis | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 1 | 2 | 2 | - Staff to check area before session, any faeces to either be collected and disposed of or flicked with a stick into the undergrowth | - The privacy of the woodland is upheld e.g. telling any unknown persons/not drawing attention to site |
| Litter | Broken glass/metal cans:  Cuts/tetanus infection | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 3 | 1 | 3 | - Staff to carry out daily check of site and dispose of any litter  - Verbal warnings to children to not pick up glass will be given as necessary  - Thoroughly clean any wounds using anti-bacterial soap |  |
| Lost children | Shock/panic, injury | Children | 1 | 3 | 3 | - FS Leader do head count at snack, lunch and at the beginning and end of each session  - Boundaries will be clearly shown to new children | - Woodland manager to maintain a hedge/rope markings surrounding BFS woodland  - Lost child policy in place |
| Toilet steps | Slips/trips/falls  Grazes/cuts, bruises  Breaks/sprains etc | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 3 | 2 | 6 | - Group leader will give verbal instruction to the children to be aware of slippy and uneven ground | - |

SPECIFIC RISKS OF **BFS FOREST SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nature of Hazard** | **Type of Harm** | **Individuals at Risk** | **Probability** of harm (1-5) | **Severity** of harm (1-5) | **Risk Rating**  (P x S) | **Short term actions** to reduce risks | **Long term actions** to reduce risks |
| Tools:  Bow saw Loppers  Hack saw  Whittling knives  Peelers  Axe | Small cuts/ grazes  Serious injury to limbs | Staff  Learners  Volunteers Parents | 2 | 4 | 8 | - Tools will not be taken out of chest unless needed in the session  - Tools will be carried in a box. Any needed for the session will be taken out by the staff  - All saws will have a safety guard  - Tools will be counted in and out  - Staff will supervise children at all times  - After the activity staff will take responsibility for putting the tools away  - All children will be given a clear tool safety talk prior to any activity involving tools  - Staff will ensure that themselves and children have bare hands (tool using one) or specific tool gloves with grip when using tools | - Tools to be kept in a locked chest when not in use  - Tools to be maintained termly by a staff member  e.g. keeping sharp, rust free, adequate safety guards, secure storage |
| Fire:  Rocket stove | Burns, scalds | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 2 | 4 | 8 | - Children and staff will be given a safety briefing prior to using  - The rocket stove will be placed on a hard, flat surface with the opening facing the staff member  - The rocket stove will only be lit by a staff member (never a child)  - Once the fire is lit, extra sticks can be added by the children through the top and bottom cylinder under supervision  - Staff will take responsibility for putting out the fire and carrying the stove  - A bucket of water will be readily available for extinguishing and for burns | - RS checked termly for safety  e.g. safety case secure, base/top is securely balanced  - A fire blanket will be out whenever a fire is lit. |
| Fire:  Cob oven/ open fire | Burns, scalds | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 2 | 4 | 8 | - Children will be given verbal instructions about sitting round the fire circle and not walking around inside it. These instructions will be repeated at each session  - Children are not allowed to walk on the log circle, sitting only  - The fire will only be lit if it is needed for the session  - The fire will be lit by FS staff or lighting will be supervised by FS staff  - Fire gloves will be available  - Long hair will be tied back when tending the fire  - The fire will always be attended by a staff member throughout the session  - The group leader will take responsibility for ensuring that the fire is put out at the end of each session  - A bucket of water and fire blanket will be readily available for extinguishing and for burns. | - Any fires will be contained spaces only (either fully contained, such as in the cob ovens, or partially inside a purpose-built fireplace  - All seating around the fire will be securely staked to the ground, and placed at least **1.5m from the fire**  - A fire blanket will be out whenever a fire is lit |
| Den building:  Lifting heavy objects | Injury to: back, knees, joints,  Impaling | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 1 | 3 | 3 | - FS leader will give verbal instruction about lifting loads using good manual handling techniques  - FS Leader will ensure that all logs/branches are handled safely, with one end on the ground at all times | - FS leader will give demonstration to children before den building activity/if the group is interested in handling sticks/den building |
| Food:  Preparation  Eating | Cuts  Food Poisoning | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 2 | 2 | 4 | - All food to be stored correctly prior to cooking  - All cooking equipment is clean  - Wash hands before food is prepared |  |
| Play Equipment:  Balancing log (fallen Oak)  Climb net  Hammocks  Swing | Slipping/falling  Bumps, cuts, scrapes, bruising  Breaks/sprains  Head Injury | Children | 4 | 1 | 4 | - Children will be reminded not to climb on the fallen Oak when wet and slippery  - Staff will check the climb net, swing and hammock ropes at the beginning of each session  - The swing will be taken down at the end of every session | - Net/hammock is no more than 1m off ground so cannot fall great distance  - Net, swing and hammock ropes will be replaced when worn |

SPECIFIC RISKS OF **TRANSPORT/TRAVEL TO BFS**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Transport/ traffic problems | Late arrival, cancellation of session | Staff | 2 | 1 | 2 | - Ask a parent/carer if they are able to supervise until staff member is available  - Cancel session if necessary |  |
| Traffic/farm vehicles on the road  Including walking from car park | Being hit/ knocked down by a car | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 1 | 4 | 4 | - FS staff to escort groups to and from car park and entrance  - One member of staff at the front and one at the back of the group  - Late-comers to escort child to base camp  - Group leader will give verbal instructions and warnings for appropriate road walking e.g. this is a road – there are cars, walk on this side of the road | - BFS maintains contact with Freeways regarding road safety: maintenance of speed bumps, MPH signs  - Ensure that the driveway remains a 10MPH road |

SPECIFIC **OTHER** RISKS

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Inclement Weather:  Extreme heat  Rain  Snow  Extreme Cold | Sunburn, dehydration  Wet clothes, general cold, hypothermia | Children Staff Parents Volunteers | 3 | 3 | 9 | - FS Leader to check weather prior to session and assess current weather conditions to allow flexible adaption from plan as necessary e.g. movement games  - FS Leader will carry sun cream and will apply to children as necessary  - FS Leader/Staff will encourage children to drink plenty of water (providing a jug from the tap if necessary)  - Group will seek shelter if necessary  - Fire/hot drinks, hot water bottles provided for extra warmth  - In snowy weather/extreme cold, the session may be made shorter and agreed with parents | - Participants encouraged to dress appropriately: lots of layers, warm boots (not wellies) OR sunhats etc  - Emergency foil blanket kept in First Aid Kit |
| Safeguarding children | Abuse, neglect | Children | 1 | 4 | 4 | - Adults with ensure they are not alone with children, maintain a group of 3 | - All staff and volunteers will carry enhanced DBS check  - See Safeguarding policies and procedures |