

Hind Leys Pre-School & Natural Play Centre

Risk Assessment Policy

At Hind Leys Pre-School, we believe that the health and safety of children is of paramount importance. We make our setting a safe and healthy place for children, parents, staff, volunteers and visitors by assessing and regulating the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

However, we strongly believe that taking risks is part of life and is an important aspect of learning. Therefore we support children in learning to make their own risk assessment rather than prevent them from facing any risk at all. This enables them to build confidence and independence. It also allows them to make informed choices and to learn to take responsibility for themselves, their life and their decisions.

We offer children opportunities to follow their interests without being undermined by the risk aversion which has swept through our present society.

We follow the principle laid down by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) by making the pre-school environment as safe as necessary **not** as safe as possible.

“Schools have a statutory duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the safety of pupils and staff on school premises and when taking pupils off site. However, it is also vital to share with them the skills of recognising hazards, assessing risks and taking steps to control risk. Otherwise when young people gain greater independence from parents and teachers and move on to unfamiliar environments such as the workplace, they are likely to have accidents and injuries.

Children are able to recognise some hazards from a very early age, for example, crawling babies will avoid obvious heights, but they do not have the same control over their bodies that older children do, so can easily fall. Children need to learn how to manage risk, just like adults and in situations where, for example, toddlers may be reluctant to come down stairs unaided, with adult help they can learn to come down backwards on their hands and knees. It is vitally important for adults to take responsibility for the youngest children, gradually helping them to learn how to keep themselves safe as they get older. This learning process of recognising hazards and assessing and managing risk can start with encouraging children to follow simple instructions i.e. holding hands with an adult on a busy street, or wearing a seat belt in the car. Gradually, children can (and do) learn how to cross the street, both aided and unaided. As young adults they can then set a good example to younger siblings and peers and help others to be safe.

Like adults, children learn about safety by experiencing risk and as children gain greater independence, they encounter many more hazards and risky situations. Sometimes their behaviour will result in a bump, a bruise or a scrape - occasionally it can be far worse. As adults we tend to expect the worst outcomes and so can become over-protective. Showing children how to keep themselves safe without scaring them and making them risk averse is a tricky job for a teacher or educator. Ideally, children and young people will learn how to maximise the benefits of challenge and adventure, while managing the risks. This means being as safe as necessary, not necessarily as safe as possible.

More generally, understanding risk is all about helping young people to make sound judgements when coping with danger and uncertainty. It is an important life-skill which they can take with them into adult life.” Jenny McWhirter, RoSPA Risk Education Adviser (Safety Education Journal Spring 2007).

At Hind Leys Pre-School, we have drawn a series of risk assessments for different areas in the Pre-School environment and for the use of tools and resources and for activities.

Our generic Risk Assessments cover and record all aspects of safety looking at:

1. The identification of the risk
2. Who is at risk
3. The level of risk

4. Control measures in place
5. Monitoring of the risk

Thorough risk assessments for all areas of Pre-School are carried out regularly by the Manager and other staff. These follow the generic risk assessments made for these areas and are logged on the 'Risk Assessment Entries' form.

Practitioners are required to also log usage of tools and of the tool room.

A copy of the risk assessments for the whole of Pre-School are kept on the shelves in the quiet area. The tool room daily assessment is behind the tool room door.

Practitioners are required to read all risk assessments and sign to acknowledge that they have done so. They are also expected to notify the Manager or a senior practitioner of any issues arising. Generic risk assessments will be modified accordingly.

Risk assessments will also be carried out for any other places that Pre-School may visit, for example a walk around the village, the market etc.

Appendix

Below is an extract from RoSPA's website which clearly explains what a risk is. It is essential to have this understanding in order to recognise the importance, the purpose and the process of risk assessment.

Understanding risk

The risk assessment process begins with recognising hazards. So what is a hazard? A hazard is something that might cause harm. Some hazards are obvious because they are objects - ladders, worn carpets, garden ponds, are all hazards. Other hazards are only apparent because of the effect they have on something else - for example bottles of chemicals or food which has not been stored correctly can become hazardous. Other hazards are forms of behaviour like violence or bullying. And behaviours like neglect or inattention can increase the potential of hazards to cause harm.

How can we assess risk?

Risks can range from "intolerable" to "trivial". Risk is made up of two components - probability and "consequence". Very often we focus most on the negative consequences or severity of harm, but we should always bear in mind that many activities which are potentially hazardous are also well controlled so the level of risk is actually quite low. We also have to remember that things or activities which are hazardous also have the potential to benefit people as well as harm them. A good everyday example would be electricity in the home.

So when we make a risk assessment we are weighing up two complex bits of information – what might happen and what is the probability that the various consequences will actually occur. Risk assessment gets even more complicated when we think about who might be affected – is the risk for the individual only or for other people? For example, if a child of school age has an accident a parent may have to stay away from work to look after them. This could affect the family finances.

We also need to ask what other factors might affect the likelihood or the outcome. There are health risks associated with drinking alcohol, but the risks change if we also drive a car when we have been drinking.

Finally we have to recognise that the level of risk associated with many hazards is affected by our experience of that hazard and the environment. A child may learn to look both ways before crossing a road, but does she also know that she should do this in a car park? So we have to take into account the unfamiliarity of the environment and the possibility of some unknown or unforeseen hazards when assessing risk

Appendix 2

This appendix explains in more details the five steps process referred to in the policy:

1. Identification of risk: Where is it and what is it?
2. Who is at risk: Staff, children, parents, volunteers etc?
3. Assessment as to the level of risks on a scale of 1 to 5. This is both the risk of the likelihood of it happening, as well as the possible impact/harm if it did. The likelihood is measure on a scale of 1 to 5. The harm is also measured on a scale of 1 to 5. Therefore the risk is: likelihood x harm = risk on a scale of 1 to 25.
4. Control measure 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.

Hind Leys Pre-School's assessment process covers adults and children and includes:

- Checking for and noting hazards and risks in our premises, in the outdoor areas and offsite.
- Assessing the level of risk and who might be affected.
- Deciding which areas need attention and
- Writing a relevant risk-assessment.