



Risk Assessment for Forest School



Date of Assessment: September 2026 Date of Review: September 2027

Sydenham Primary School operates under a dynamic risk assessing process which is the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing, in the rapidly changing environment of the natural world.

Activity/ Process/ Operation	What are the Hazards to Health and Safety	What Risks do they pose and to whom?	Risk Level H/M/L	What existing control measures are in place to reduce the risk?	Risk Level Achieved H/M/L	What further control measures are still required to reduce the risk	Date of Completion of further action
Movement around site	Uneven ground	Trip/Fall All	M	Rules of site-Walking	L	Re-cap of rules at start of each session	On-going
	Tree stumps	Trip/Fall All	M	Area indicated at start of session	L	Re-cap area at start of each session	On-going
	Trees (overhead)	Falling branches/ debris All	H	Trees monitored by council Checked weekly before sessions	L	Weather report checked for wind conditions	On-going
	Low branches	Cuts, scratches, eye injury All	M	Rules of site-Walking Removal of low branches across pathways	L	Re-cap of site rules at start of each session Weekly check of site	On-going
	Brambles/nettles	Cuts, stings All	M	Position of plants mentioned at start of sessions. Site maintenance	L	Re-cap position each session. Check of site	On-going
	Litter	Cuts All	M	Sweep of site and removal. Rules-Inform adult if found, do not touch	L	Re-cap rules each session. Site check before sessions	On-going
	Seasonal poisonous plants	Poisoning All	M	Rules-No fingers in mouth, eating. Site checked	L	Re-cap of rules each session. Site checked before sessions. Areas out of bounds if necessary	On-going
	Pond	Drowning Child	H	Area is fenced off, gate locked.	L	Supervise children near area. Maintenance of fence as needed	On-going
	Compost bins	Rotting debris	M	Rules-area out of bounds. Supervise children around area	L	Re-cap rules each session. Supervise children near area	On-going

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Tools	Use of string/twine	Rope burn Wrapping around body parts	M	Demonstration of use of string for activity, safety rules.	L	Re-cap of demonstration safety rules each session.	On-going
	Incorrect usage	Cuts/ serious injury All	H	Tools stored in cupboard accessible only by adults. Knives stored in lockable box	L	Re-cap of demonstration safety rules each session	On-going
	Unsupervised usage	Serious injury All	H	Tools checked at end of each use. Tools cleaned and maintained after each session	L	Only take tools that are needed to sessions. Return at end of each session	On-going
	Unsafe/Broken tools	Cuts/ serious injury All	H	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use. Bit checked by leader before use.	L	Repeat tool check, cleaning, maintenance at end of session of use	On-going
	Improper use of hand drill.	Cuts/serious injury All	H	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Tool demonstration each session used.	On-going
	Improper use of bow saw	Cuts/serious injury All	H	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Permission must be given before tool use	On-going
	Improper use of potato peelers	Cuts All	M	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Tool demonstration each session used. Permission must be given before tool use.	On-going
	Improper use of loppers, secateurs	Cuts All	H	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Tool demonstration each session used.	On-going
	Improper use of junior hacksaw	Cuts/serious injury All	H	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Permission must be given before tool use.	On-going
	Improper use of Knives	Cuts / serious injury All	H	Tool demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Tool demonstration each session used.	On-going

Fire lighting/ Camp fire	Fire striker / flint and steel	Fire spreading Burns Injuries Death	H	The Forest School leader will decide if the child is ready to use a fire striker taking into account their maturity, dexterity and experience. The Forest School leader will demonstrate how to use a fire striker safely. The fire striker will only be used in the cleared fire circle area. Fire safety briefing will be given prior to use of fire striker. Before the start of a session the tools will counted in and out. All tools will be checked for faults and any damaged tools will be removed from use. The tool box will be kept locked and the Forest School leader will have the key. Once the fire striker has been used it will be returned to the tool box Children will be taught to use the fire striker safely in the briefing and the Forest School leader will model how to strike it safely. It will only be used in the location of the fire circle. Only one child will use a striker at a time. The fire striker will be transported in the palm of the hand and not swung around. They must never be thrown.	L	Rules stated whenever fire being lit. Adult supervises fire-lighting and fire.	On-going
Fire lighting/ Camp fire continued	Improper behaviour near fire circle	Burns Serious injury Smoke inhalation Death All	H	Rules around fire-distance, no walking within fire circle. Fire supervised whenever lit by trained leader.	L	Rules stated whenever fire being lit. Adult supervises fire	On-going
	Bags and belongings inside fire circle	Trips Sprains Burns	H	Students will be reminded to keep fire pit area clear and all bags, coats etc. must be kept outside the seating area.	L	Rules stated whenever fire being lit. Adult supervises fire	On-going
	Fire spreading	Burns All	H	Fire lit only in fire circle. Area cleared of debris before use. Removal of over-hanging branches. Fire supervised by leader. Water bucket kept near. Fire properly extinguished	L	Rules stated whenever fire being lit. Adult supervises fire	On-going

	Kelly kettle use	Scolds/Burns Adult	H	Kettle only used by trained adult. Heat proof gloves used to handle kettle. Fire lit in Kelly kettle only in fire circle. Area cleared of debris before use. Fire supervised by leader. Water bucket kept near. Kelly kettle fire properly extinguished	L	Existing control followed each time Kelly kettle used	On-going
Camp Fire Cooking	Food	Burns Food poisoning Eating off sticks – risk of bacterial infection / poisoning All	H	Simple recipes will be followed. If food needs to be kept chilled, a cool box with Ice blocks will be used. Any food used must be safe to eat and within its use-by date. The Forest School leader needs to know about any food allergies/intolerances before the session and if children have food allergies then those foods must not be used. Food sticks must either be purchased skewers or whittled live (green) branches (not dead wood). Fire glove will be used to place / move / remove baked foods from embers. Saucepans / frying pans will have metal handles and fire glove will be used to pick up pans.	L	Pupils (especially younger children) will be warned that some foods such as marshmallows may burn due to the temperature of the sugar. Adult supervises camp fire cooking. Forest School Handbook protocols followed	On-going
	Unsuitable Clothing/long hair	Burns Serious injury Death All	H	Long hair needs to be tied up when tending fire. Synthetic gloves are not worn when tending the fire Any clothes that are hanging loose such as scarves and belts must be tucked in before entering the Fire pit area.	L	Adult supervises camp fire cooking. Forest School Handbook protocols followed.	On-going
Weather	High wind (falling branches)	Head injury Eye injury Cuts/bruises Broken bones All	M	Weather channels, radio and weather warnings observed. Site sweep on days with that are windy with Beaufort score of 9 q 6 to ensure no loose branches are present. Removal of loose branches if possible. If branches are not reachable, then area of risk taped off and safety briefing given to students to stay away. Medical bag to contain eye wash.	L	Cancellation of Forest School on days with a Beaufort score of 9 in line with weather warnings. Forest School Handbook protocols followed.	On-going

	High temperatures / heat	Sun burn Heatstroke Dehydration All	M	Prior to sessions observe weather channels, radio and weather warnings. Ensuring students wear suitable clothing in hot weather – long sleeved cotton tops, long light trousers and a hat. Sun cream to be applied prior to session. All children will take regular breaks to have a drink. Ensure that students do not spend long periods in the full sunshine or at all between 11.00 and 3.00. Children will be encouraged to have a rest and drink in a shady area. Forest School staff will put up more shelters to provide shade	L	Inappropriate dress may cause FSL to refuse participation. Forest School Handbook protocols followed	On-going
	Very low temperatures	Frost bite Dehydration Hypothermia All	M	Prior to sessions observe weather channels, radio and weather warnings. Ensuring students are wearing suitable cold weather clothing, thermals, hats, scarves, waterproofs, gloves and thin layers. Ensuring that letters are sent to parents to remind them what suitable clothing is required and ensure a reply is received. Ensuring that there are enough extra clothes on site should a child not dress appropriately. Offer hot drinks regularly to ensure hydration. Use of Kelly kettle and flasks.	L	Forest School leader will have to refuse children to participate if not dressed appropriately and / or there are insufficient additional clothing items available to borrow in school Cancel Forest School in extreme weather conditions (depending on age of children) Take wind chill factor into account. Forest School Handbook protocols followed	On-going

Accidents / Illness	Child/ren may become ill/have an accident	Childhood illnesses / accidents	M	Within the Health and Safety briefing the students will be informed of action they should take if they feel ill or have an accident. Maintain a fully stocked first aid kit on site at all times. There will be a certified paediatric and outdoor first aider on site at all times. There will be an up to date accident book to record any incidents/illnesses on site at all times. Emergency contact details will be kept at the school office contact will be made either via walkie-talkie or by using the school's red triangle system	L	Forest School Handbook protocols followed	On-going
Use of acrylic paint (painting cobbles / stones)	Acrylic paints	Paint inhalation Paint spillage All	M	Water-based acrylic paint used. Children given clear instructions for use. Adult supervision. Children wearing old clothing.	L	Seat children at a table for the activity.	On-going
Use of pallets	General purpose flat pallets	Falling pallets Heavy pallets, causing crushing Unsafe stacking Poor handling techniques Projecting nails Split edges	M	Pallets will not be stacked, without security such as tying with cable ties. No more than two pallets will be stacked. Pallets will be checked regularly to ensure they are undamaged, clean and free from contamination and loose / protruding parts Movement of pallets will be minimised.	L		On-going

Tarps, hammocks and rope swings (including rope / string safety)	Rope visibility Condition of ropes Knots Unsuitable or loose branches Tarps Hammocks	Cuts/bruises Rope burns Broken bones	M	Children will be informed of safe rope use, they should only be used for tarps and dens. Children will be shown how to use hammocks appropriately - how to get in and out safely. Brightly coloured ropes will be used to make it easier to seen. Visually impaired students will have 1-1 support. All ropes used to build shelters will be shown to students during introduction sessions. Where possible ropes will always be anchored above waist height so they can be easily seen. Children will be advised to keep a look out for ropes when they are being used for activities. It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to ensure the ropes are in good condition before using them and any that show signs of wear and tear must be removed from use and disposed of. Ropes will be bought from a reputable school supplier. Dangerous or loose branches will be identified during the daily site sweep. They will be removed where possible. Ropes or hammocks should not be tied to branches unless the Forest School leader or Adult helpers have advised that it is safe to do so just in case they break. Ropes securing hammocks and tarps must be tied to trees with appropriate knots. The Forest School leader will check that the hammock is safe to use before students climb in. The ground below hammocks and tarps needs to be cleared from stones or branches. The space above the hammock and tarps needs to checked and cleared of any loose branches	L	Forest School Handbook protocols followed	On-going
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Birdfeeders	Melting lard	Burns / scalds / serious injury	H	Lard must only be melted over the fire by trained adult. Fire glove will be used to place / move / remove baked foods from embers. Saucepans / frying pans will have metal handles and fire glove will be used to pick up pans. Fire lit only in fire circle. Area cleared of debris before use. Fire supervised by leader. Water bucket kept near. Fire properly extinguished. Hot lard left to cool before being handled by children, under adult supervision.	M	Forest School Handbook protocols followed	
	Improper use of Knives to cut he oranges in half	Cuts / serious injury All	H	Tool safety talk and demonstration before use. Children supported in use.	L	Tool demonstration each session used.	On-going
	Use of tools to make holes in orange halves for threading with string	Cuts / puncturing	M	Tool safety talk and demonstration before use. Use a tree stump beneath the orange. Choose least sharp tool suitable for the job (e.g. pencil, rather than a skewer)	L	Forest School Handbook protocols followed	On-going
	Use of string/twine to hang the birdfeeders	Rope burn Wrapping around body parts	M	Demonstration of use of string for activity, safety rules.	L	Re-cap of demonstration safety rules each session.	On-going
	Anaphylaxis due to nut allergies from bird seed mix	Impaired breathing Swelling in the throat / difficulty swallowing / wheeziness / shortness of breath / feeling sick / vomiting Sudden drop in blood pressure Pale skin / blue lips / fainting / dizziness Death	H	The Forest School leader needs to know about any nut / food allergies/intolerances before the session and if children have food allergies then those foods must not be used. Forest School Leader has current, up-to-date First Aid training.	L	Forest School Leader is trained in the use of epi-pens. Anaphylaxis is a medical emergency – dial 999 and ask for an ambulance as soon as possible.	On-going

Signature: *Juliette Westwood*

