



Woodland Play Sessions

Risk Benefit Assessment

Subject of Risk Assessment:	Woodland Play Site
Description of Site	Area of Crow Wood bounded by burn, gully and trees On private estate with public access
Benefits	Fresh air promoting physical & mental wellbeing. Improves communication and social skills Improves connection with nature and the environment, weather and seasons Provides fun Provides independent play opportunities Promotes increased confidence, self-esteem and resilience Develops an appreciation of risks and provides opportunities to make decisions about physical, social and emotional risk taking.
Participants	Children Parents Staff
Local factors affecting risks or controls	Area used for recreation, dog walking Many walkers are from the village & known to staff and children. Occasional access by local farmer with sheep (not directly on to play site). Occasional traffic to and from housing. Occasional access by estate gardening team. Abilities and experience of attending children
Potential Hazards:	Precautions and Controls used to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or the severity of the risk
*All staff members hold a current first aid qualification and a first aid kit is always available.	
★ Slips, trips and falls leading to significant injury could occur from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge • Gully • Stones, rocks, mud, tree roots, branches, debris, litter 	Group become aware and familiar with terrain. Increasing competencies and confidence result in ability to move around with safety. Knowledge and understanding of changing weather conditions and impact on terrain. Litter pick performed before each session.

* Impact or collision between group members while moving around site or playing	Visual checks for low hanging branches or other obstacles at head height. Group briefed over potential hazards (eg bumps, impalements, cuts) of running into branches, sticks on trees or on the ground Games and activities relevant to group size and age and monitored by adults. Games restricted around areas of increased risks - e.g. bridge or water's edge
* Dogs	Children briefed and reminded about how to behave when they see a dog - stand still, hands at side. Do not approach animal unless mutually agreed with owner. Wash hands post contact. Staff remove and dispose of dog faeces if encountered on site
* Dangerous items of litter (picked up, stepped on, fallen on) leading to injury or harm	Litter pick performed before each session however children reminded not to pick up litter and to inform an adult.
* Children getting lost or straying from group leading to fear	Adults work with children to establish known and recognised boundaries and ensure children are aware of why we have them and where they are. Games and methods such as Number Keeper, whistle and Sticky Feet used to call children in to check numbers. All children wear high viz vests to ease visual checking.
* Children being abducted leading to harm	Adults monitor environment and any approaching adults. Adults ready to challenge and intervene if required.
* Unwanted approach from members of the public	Adults monitor environment and any approaching adults. Adults ready to challenge and intervene if required.
* Inclement weather leading to increased risk of injury or harm.	Staff monitor weather forecasts, particularly for high winds, and judge effects of weather on session.
* Severe cold or heat. Hyper/hypo thermia, dehydration.	Appropriate clothing to be worn for conditions. Shelters used to protect from heat or cold. Blankets (including emergency foil blankets) available. Drinking water available.
* Ingestion of toxins or poisons from plants	Children warned not to eat wild or scavenged food (it "belongs to" the birds and animals) unless adults supervised (eg bramble picking). Adults aware to avoid low level fruits and those found in high traffic areas
* Bite, sting, direct or indirect contact with animals leading to zoonotic disease such as Toxoplasmosis, E-Coli 157, Lyme Disease, Weil's Disease	All bites or stings recorded in accident book. Staff aware of any known allergies to bites or stings. Good hygiene practices followed post contact with any animal or animal faeces

<p>★ Falling in water leading to wet clothing or to injury or drowning</p> <p>Edges of the burn may be slippery resulting in slips, trips and falls into water leading to significant injury or drowning.</p> <p>Bite or sting from aquatic creatures</p> <p>Dangerous rubbish (eg glass, faeces) submerged and/or hidden under water</p>	<p>Children advised to stay back from water's edge when it is considered to be flowing too quickly or the water is considered too high.</p> <p>Children closely supervised when playing near the water, knowledge of individual competence used to assess situation</p> <p>Children wear high viz vests to help adults supervise.</p> <p>Additional clothing will be provided should children get wet.</p> <p>Visible rubbish will be removed prior to session.</p> <p>Care to be taken when playing in water - children reminded mud, wet stones, wood etc get slippery.</p>
<p>★ Proximity to cars in car park and on walk to and from site leading to significant injury</p>	<p>Children and adults aware of cars and moving vehicles.</p> <p>Children wearing high viz vests. Group sticks together when travelling to and from site.</p>
<p>★ Lifting or carrying heavy objects leading to significant injury or harm</p>	<p>Safe lifting practices used</p>

Precedents and Comparisons

Spending time outdoors has physical and mental health benefits.

Woodland and natural areas increasingly being used to provide learning experiences. The woods around the set are frequently used in all weathers for recreational activities such as walking, running and cycling. Hazards encountered are frequently encountered in daily life allowing children learn to make judgements, decisions and manage their own risk. Water hold a fascination for children and is attractive as a play area. Children benefit from being aware of how to play safely near and in water. Real play means taking risks and all play experiences expose children to some degree of risk.

We have used information from

Grounds for Learning (risk benefit assessments)

Play Safety Forum ([Managing Risk in Play Provision](#))

Health and Safety Executive ([Children's Play and Leisure - Promoting a Balanced Approach](#))

Forestry Commission ([Growing Adventure](#))

Care Inspectorate ([My World Outdoors](#))

to inform our assessment process

Judgement

When children play they naturally seek out elements of risk, challenge and adventure - encountering risk and challenge in this way helps build resilience, confidence and judgement. The woodland site offers an increase in the number of minor hazards and risks however it is not considered to be higher risk than other natural spaces. Regular visits to the same piece of woodland promotes familiarity and competence in both children and staff. The woodland site offers a fun, challenging and attractive play environment. Staff support children in managing their own play. The proximity of the site to water brings more risks and will require an increased level of awareness and supervision and in certain conditions a dynamic assessment of risk may require activities to be restricted

Our judgement is that the Woodland Play Site provides an increase in exposure to risk however this increase is acceptable when compared to the benefits the environment provides.