

3.2 Risk assessment

Policy

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 and volunteers by assessing and minimising the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment. 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. 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. Health and safety risk assessments inform procedures.

Staff and parents are involved in reviewing risk assessments and procedures – they are the ones with first-hand knowledge as to whether the control measures are effective – and they can give an informed view to help update procedures accordingly.

This policy is based on the five steps below:

- Identification of a risk: Where is it and what is it?
- Who is at risk: Childcare staff, children, parents, cooks, cleaners etc?
- Assessment as to whether the level of a risk is high, medium, low. This takes into account both the likelihood of it happening, as well as the possible impact if it did.
- Control measures to reduce/eliminate risk: What will you need to do, or ensure others will do, in order to reduce that risk?
- Monitor 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.

Procedures

Understanding Risk Assessments

- Risk assessments document the hazards/aspects of the environment that needs to be checked on a regular basis, who could be harmed, existing controls, the seriousness of the risk/injury, any further action needed to control the risk, who is responsible for what action, when/how often will the action be undertaken, and how this will be monitored and checked and by whom.
- The manager is responsible for ensuring risk assessments are followed correctly. All staff have access to training on understanding the importance of risk assessments, which includes understanding the process of compliance and how to complete assessments correctly and to a high standard.
- The setting carries out written risk assessments regularly. These are regularly reviewed and cover potential risks to children, staff and visitors at the setting.
- When circumstances change in the setting, e.g. a significant change to procedure or pieces of equipment is introduced; we review our current risk assessment or conduct a new risk assessment dependent on the nature of this change.
- Our risk assessment process covers:
 - determining where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how we are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers and inspectors;
 - checking for and noting hazards and risks indoors and outside, in relation to our premises and activities;
 - assessing the level of risk and who might be affected;
 - deciding which areas need attention; and
 - developing an action plan that specifies the action required, the time-scales for action, the person responsible for the action and any funding required.
- Our risk assessments are based on the 5 Steps. This model uses numerical values to calculate the levels of risk.
- The risk rating allows us to identify the level of risk and prioritise our actions, as well as identifying how our control measures have reduced a risk further. That doesn't mean that we only consider the higher risk – we should be reducing the risk to as low as reasonably practicable across the setting. It is easy to become focused on 'scoring' a risk assessment – we should be mindful when completing a risk assessment that the focus is on the hazards and control measures in place – the scoring is then just a reflection of how well those hazards can be controlled.
- For more information please refer to our risk assessment handbook.

Carrying out a risk assessment

- Our manager and supervisors ensure that staff members review and carry out risk assessments.
- When completing a risk assessment we simply assign a value of:
 - No Controls: 1-5 for the hazard with 'no controls' potential for causing harm
 - Controlled: 1-5 for the hazard with controls currently in place 'controlled' reducing the potential for causing harm.
 - Understanding the value: 1 being the lowest value, 5 being the highest. The two figures are then multiplied to achieve a risk rating score: NoC x C = R.
 - The letter 'R': is the overall risk level.

Assessing current risk level			
No Controls		Controlled	
Rating	Guide words	Rating	Guide words
1	Extremely unlikely	1	No/Minor harm
2	Unlikely	2	Moderate harm
3	Likely	3	Serious harm
4	Extremely likely	4	Major harm
5	Almost certain	5	Catastrophic