Brabyns Nursery School

Risk Assessment Policy

Policy written by C. Edwards - September 2026
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> "Sensible risk management is about practical steps to managing real risks, not bureaucratic back covering. Address the real risks, not only to pupils, but also to the health and well-being of your staff. And remember, risk assessment is just good planning – keep it fit for purpose and act on it."
> **Sir Bill Callaghan, former Chairman, HSC**

1. Introduction

Brabyns Nursery School is fully committed to promoting the safety, health and welfare of all children, staff, families, visitors and others who access our nursery. We recognise that effective education and care can only take place within an environment where risks are appropriately identified, managed and reviewed.

The highest priority is placed on ensuring that all activities and operations within the nursery environment are carried out safely and in accordance with relevant legislation, statutory requirements, guidance and good practice.

Risks are an inherent part of everyday life, particularly within an Early Years environment where children are encouraged to explore, investigate, develop independence and learn through first-hand experiences. Our approach is therefore not to remove all risk, but to identify genuine hazards, assess the level of risk and put proportionate measures in place to keep children and adults safe.

Children should be supported to develop an understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe. Appropriate, managed risk can provide valuable learning opportunities and help children develop confidence, independence, resilience and problem-solving skills.

Risk assessment is therefore an important part of effective planning and should be practical, proportionate and focused on preventing harm rather than simply creating paperwork.

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2. What Is a Risk Assessment?

A **risk assessment** is a careful examination of what could cause harm to people and what can reasonably be done to prevent or reduce that harm.

A **hazard** is something that has the potential to cause harm. For example:

- Hot surfaces or liquids
- Cleaning chemicals
- Water
- Choking hazards
- Slips, trips and falls
- Unsafe equipment
- Moving vehicles
- Fire
- Inadequate supervision
- Food allergens
- Infectious diseases

A **risk** is the likelihood that someone could be harmed by a hazard, together with the potential severity of that harm.

Risk control measures are the steps put in place to eliminate or reduce the risk. These may include:

- Appropriate staff supervision
- Staff training
- Safe working procedures
- Suitable equipment
- Physical barriers or restricted access
- Personal protective equipment where required
- Clear signage
- Maintenance and inspection
- Appropriate staffing levels
- Hygiene procedures
- Emergency procedures

Risk assessments should always consider the age, stage of development and individual needs of the children involved.

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3. Our Approach to Risk Management

Brabyns Nursery School recognises that accidents and injuries can have serious consequences for children, families and staff. Effective risk assessment enables us to focus on prevention and take sensible, proportionate steps to reduce foreseeable risks.

We do not aim to create a completely risk-free environment. Instead, we aim to provide an environment where children can safely explore, investigate, take appropriate risks and develop an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Risk assessments must be:

- Practical and proportionate
- Appropriate to the activity or environment
- Clearly understood by staff
- Implemented in practice
- Reviewed when circumstances change
- Reviewed following an accident, incident or near miss where appropriate

A risk assessment that identifies a control measure is only effective if that control measure is actually implemented.

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4. Areas Requiring Risk Assessment

At Brabyns Nursery School, risks may be associated with:

- The nursery premises and outdoor areas
- Individual rooms and learning environments
- Activities and experiences
- Equipment and resources
- Food preparation and eating

- Sleep and rest arrangements
- Personal care, including nappy changing and toileting
- Outdoor play
- Trips and outings
- Visitors and contractors
- Maintenance activities
- Staff working practices
- Children with individual medical, dietary or additional needs
- Special events and changes to normal routines
- Emergencies and critical incidents

Risk assessments may therefore relate to an **activity, location, individual child, group of children, event, piece of equipment or potential hazard**.

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5. Related Policies and Procedures

Risk management is supported by a range of Brabyns Nursery School policies and procedures, including:

Educational and Activities

- Educational Visits Policy
- Outdoor Learning and Play Procedures
- Activity Risk Assessments
- Forest School/Outdoor Activity Risk Assessments, where applicable

Health and Safety

- Health and Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Emergency and Critical Incident Procedures
- Lockdown Procedures
- COSHH Procedures
- Manual Handling Procedures
- Lone Working Procedures
- Contractors and Site Safety Procedures

Safeguarding and Welfare

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Supervision Procedures
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Procedures
- Missing Child Procedures
- Collection of Children Procedures

Medical and First Aid

- First Aid Policy
- Administration of Medication Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Allergy and Anaphylaxis Policy

- Food Safety and Hygiene Procedures
- Accident, Incident and Injury Procedures

These policies should be read alongside this Risk Assessment Policy.

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6. Dynamic Risk Assessment

Brabyns Nursery School recognises that not every risk can be identified through a formal written risk assessment.

Children's needs, activities, weather conditions, staffing circumstances, equipment and environments can change throughout the day. Staff must therefore undertake **dynamic risk assessment** as part of their everyday practice.

Staff are expected to:

- Remain alert to changing circumstances
- Identify hazards as they arise
- Take immediate reasonable action to reduce risks
- Adapt activities where necessary
- Ensure children remain appropriately supervised
- Report significant hazards, defects or concerns to management
- Stop an activity if it cannot be carried out safely

For example, an activity may have been assessed as safe when planned but may need to be changed because of wet weather, damaged equipment, a change in the number of children participating, or a child's individual needs.

Dynamic risk assessment is particularly important in Early Years because children are developing rapidly and their abilities, interests and behaviours can change over time.

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7. Staff Responsibilities

All staff at Brabyns Nursery School have a responsibility for maintaining a safe environment.

Staff must:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others
- Follow nursery policies, procedures and risk assessments
- Maintain appropriate supervision of children
- Follow agreed ratios and staffing arrangements
- Report hazards, defects, accidents and near misses
- Use equipment safely and appropriately
- Ensure activities are suitable for the children's age and stage of development
- Follow safeguarding, health and safety and hygiene procedures
- Attend required training
- Carry out dynamic risk assessments throughout the day
- Take immediate action where a serious or immediate risk is identified

Staff should never assume that a risk assessment completed by somebody else removes their own responsibility to act safely.

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8. Educational and Activity Risk Assessments

At Brabyns Nursery School, risk assessments are completed for activities and experiences where a foreseeable risk has been identified.

These may include:

- Indoor learning activities
- Outdoor learning and play
- Water play
- Sand and messy play
- Cooking and food activities
- Gardening
- Malleable and sensory activities
- Use of tools and equipment
- Physical activities
- Trips and outings
- Special events
- Visits from external providers
- Activities involving animals
- Activities involving heat, electricity or other potential hazards

Activities should be planned so that children can participate safely while still experiencing meaningful opportunities for exploration and learning.

Before an activity, staff should consider:

- The age and developmental stage of the children
- The number of children involved
- The level of supervision required
- The suitability and condition of equipment
- Potential choking, allergy or ingestion risks
- Whether children require additional support
- The environment in which the activity will take place
- Any relevant medical or individual needs
- Emergency arrangements

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9. Supervision and High-Risk Areas

Effective supervision is one of the most important ways of reducing risk within an Early Years setting.

Brabyns Nursery School ensures that:

- Appropriate EYFS staffing ratios are maintained
- Staff are deployed according to the needs of the children
- Children are supervised appropriately at all times

- Additional supervision is provided where an activity or individual circumstance requires it
- Staff understand the particular risks associated with different areas of the nursery
- Children do not have unsupervised access to areas that may present significant hazards
- Outdoor areas are checked before use
- Equipment and resources are checked regularly
- Staff remain vigilant to changes in the environment

Particular consideration is given to areas such as:

- Outdoor play areas
- Water play areas
- Kitchens and food preparation areas
- Changing and toileting areas
- Sleep areas
- Storage areas
- Maintenance areas
- Car park and vehicle access areas
- Areas containing cleaning materials or hazardous substances

Children must not have unsupervised access to areas, equipment or substances that could present a significant risk to their safety.

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10. Risk and the Early Years Learning Environment

Brabyns Nursery School recognises that children learn through exploration and first-hand experiences.

Where appropriate, children should be given opportunities to experience **managed and proportionate risk**. This may include:

- Climbing
- Balancing
- Using age-appropriate tools
- Exploring natural environments
- Playing with water
- Using loose parts
- Physical challenges
- Investigating unfamiliar materials
- Developing independence in everyday routines

The purpose of risk assessment is not to prevent these experiences but to ensure that they are planned and managed appropriately.

Staff should consider whether a risk can be reduced without unnecessarily restricting children's learning and development.

Children should also be encouraged to talk about safety, recognise hazards and understand why certain boundaries and rules are necessary.

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11. Medical, Allergy and First Aid Risks

Medical and first aid risks are managed in accordance with the nursery's relevant policies and procedures.

This includes consideration of:

- Allergies and anaphylaxis
- Dietary requirements
- Medication
- Individual healthcare needs
- First aid provision
- Accidents and injuries
- Infectious illnesses
- Emergency medical treatment
- Specific health conditions
- Individual risk assessments where required

Where a child has an identified medical condition or additional need that creates a specific risk, an individual risk assessment and/or healthcare plan will be considered where appropriate.

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12. Sleep and Rest

Sleep and rest arrangements require particular attention within an Early Years environment.

Brabyns Nursery School follows its Safe Sleep procedures and ensures that:

- Staff understand safe sleep requirements
- Sleeping children are appropriately supervised
- Sleep environments are checked
- Babies and young children are positioned safely
- Individual sleep needs are considered
- Relevant information from parents is taken into account
- Any concerns regarding a child's sleep or safety are reported to management

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13. Food, Allergens and Choking Risks

Food-related activities and mealtimes are managed with careful consideration of:

- Allergies
- Intolerances
- Choking hazards
- Dietary requirements
- Food hygiene
- Safe food preparation
- Appropriate seating and supervision
- Individual medical needs

Staff must follow Brabyns Nursery School's Allergy, Food Safety and Safer Eating procedures at all times.

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14. Premises, Equipment and Maintenance

The nursery environment and equipment must be maintained in a safe and suitable condition.

Regular checks and risk assessments will consider:

- Buildings and rooms
- Outdoor areas
- Furniture
- Toys and learning resources
- Electrical equipment
- Playground equipment
- Fire safety equipment
- Lighting and ventilation
- Slips, trips and falls
- Storage
- Cleaning materials
- Hazardous substances
- Water and heating systems
- Maintenance work
- Vehicle movement around the site

Any defective equipment or significant hazard must be removed from use or appropriately controlled until the issue has been resolved.

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15. Cleaning and Hazardous Substances

Cleaning products and other potentially hazardous substances must be stored securely and away from children's access.

Where applicable, COSHH assessments will be completed for hazardous substances.

Staff must:

- Follow manufacturer's instructions
- Use appropriate protective equipment where required
- Store substances securely
- Never leave hazardous substances unattended where children can access them
- Report spills or unsafe storage immediately

Cleaning and maintenance activities must be planned to minimise risks to children and staff.

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16. Trips and Visits

Activities taking place away from the nursery premises require appropriate planning and risk assessment.

The nursery's Educational Visits Policy provides further guidance.

Risk assessments should consider:

- The destination
- Travel arrangements
- Staffing and supervision
- Ratios
- Children's individual needs
- Medical requirements
- Emergency arrangements
- Weather
- Public access
- Water or traffic hazards
- Lost or missing child procedures
- Safeguarding considerations

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17. Contractors, Visitors and External Providers

Visitors, contractors and external providers must follow Brabyns Nursery School's relevant procedures.

Where work or activities could present a risk to children or staff, appropriate controls must be put in place.

Children should be protected from:

- Building or maintenance work
- Tools and equipment
- Vehicles
- Hazardous substances
- Unauthorised access
- Areas temporarily unsuitable for children

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18. Staff Training

All staff receive appropriate information and training relating to health and safety and risk assessment as part of their induction and ongoing professional development.

Additional specialist training will be provided where required, including training relating to:

- First aid

- Safeguarding
- Food hygiene
- Allergies and anaphylaxis
- Safer eating
- Safe sleep
- Fire safety
- Manual handling
- COSHH
- Specific equipment or activities
- Emergency procedures

Training records are maintained by the nursery in accordance with the nursery's staff training procedures.

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19. Managing Risk

Brabyns Nursery School aims to reduce risks to a level that is **reasonable, proportionate and appropriate** to the activity or environment.

When assessing an activity, consideration should be given to:

1. **What could cause harm?**
2. **Who could be harmed?**
3. **How could the harm occur?**
4. **How likely is it to happen?**
5. **How serious could the outcome be?**
6. **What measures are already in place?**
7. **Are additional control measures required?**
8. **Who is responsible for implementing them?**
9. **When should the assessment be reviewed?**

Risk control measures should follow the principle of removing or reducing risk wherever reasonably practicable.

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20. Recording and Storage of Risk Assessments

Brabyns Nursery School maintains a central record of relevant risk assessments.

Risk assessments are made available to staff so that they can understand the risks associated with their work and the control measures that are expected to be followed.

Staff are expected to familiarise themselves with relevant risk assessments and to ask management for clarification where necessary.

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21. Accident, Incident and Near-Miss Review

Where an accident, incident or near miss occurs, the circumstances will be reviewed to determine whether:

- The existing risk assessment remains appropriate
- Additional control measures are required
- Equipment or resources need to be removed or changed
- Staff training is required
- Supervision arrangements need to be amended
- Procedures need to be updated

The purpose of reviewing incidents is to learn from them and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

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22. Reviewing Risk Assessments

Risk assessments will be reviewed:

- At least annually
- When there is a significant change to the environment or activity
- Following an accident or serious incident
- Following a significant near miss where appropriate
- When new equipment or resources are introduced
- When new activities are introduced
- When legislation or guidance changes
- When there is a change in children's needs that affects the level of risk
- When existing control measures are found to be ineffective

Risk assessments should always remain **fit for purpose and reflective of actual practice**.

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23. Monitoring and Review of This Policy

The Nursery Manager and leadership team are responsible for ensuring that the nursery's approach to risk assessment is implemented effectively.

The policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes in EYFS requirements
- Changes to nursery practice
- Changes to the premises or equipment
- Learning from accidents, incidents and near misses
- Relevant guidance and best practice

The overall aim is to ensure that risk management at Brabyns Nursery School remains practical, proportionate and focused on protecting children and adults while enabling children to learn, explore and develop confidence and independence.