



Kew Wildlife Zone: Health and Safety

Outdoor activities, while rewarding and enjoyable, also carry extra risks. As the organiser, you are responsible for ensuring that you have taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that your activity runs without causing harm to the children in your care, or other people.

The information here offers guidance on running an environmental activity safely, and can be used as a supplement to any procedures and training that your school or other professional bodies have already arranged.

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Planning

Activities outside the school grounds will need extra planning. It is important that you visit the site and get to know it. You should also familiarise yourself with the locations of telephones (mobile phones are not always reliable), appropriate pick-up and drop-off points, and the location of the nearest Accident and Emergency department. It may also be worth finding out how long it would take an ambulance to reach you, and if there are any access issues for emergency services (e.g. narrow lanes or locked gates).

Planning is the key to an outdoor activity running smoothly. As well as the usual logistics of getting the children and helpers to and from the site with appropriate clothing and equipment, as part of your plans you must also carry out a risk assessment. This is the case for every activity that you do, whether inside your school grounds or elsewhere.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a careful examination of the things that may cause harm to the people (the hazards), and how much harm may be caused (the risk). Once you have identified the hazards and assessed the risks, you can make sure you have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent injury or illness.

When organising school activities, the risk assessment needs to be formalised and recorded. This is to ensure that both the children and you, the organiser, are protected. Should an accident or other problem occur, you may need to prove that you have carried out a risk assessment.

There are three basic elements to a risk assessment:

- 1 – the **Hazards** – the things that may cause harm to the people
- 2 – the **Risks** – how much harm may be caused
- 3 – the **Safety Measures** – what you can do about it / the precautions you can take.

Hazards

A hazard is a potential danger. Examples include:

- Slippery mud or ice
- Fallen trees
- Deep water
- Tools with sharp edges or points

Not all hazards are visible or immediately obvious, e.g.

- Water-borne diseases
- Plants that are normally harmless but may cause an allergic reaction
- An adult who may abuse a child

Risks

The risk is a rating factor based on the likelihood of the hazard happening, and the seriousness of it causing major harm if it does. For risk assessments, they are usually classified as high, medium or low.

Particular attention should be paid to high risks. All possible safety measures should be considered and implemented to ensure that, as far as reasonably possible, they do not happen, and if they do happen, an appropriate method of dealing with them is in place.

Bear in mind also that the consequences of a problem may be different depending on the situation. For example, a fall causing a broken ankle may be far less of a problem in a city-based wildlife garden than it would be should it happen on a mountain. Where the site location presents particular difficulties, then extra precautions should be taken to ensure that any emergency can be adequately dealt with.

Safety measures

These are the actions that you need to implement to avoid the problem happening. They might include warning children of potential hazards, insisting on appropriate behaviour, training helpers and children in the safe use of tools, and wearing appropriate protective clothing. Safety measures should include the option of cancelling the activity if the risks are too great (e.g. in the event of adverse weather).

Recording form example

An example of the sort of risk assessment that might be completed for a school visit to the Wildlife Zone is on p.7.03. A blank form is available on p.7.06 for you to complete for each of your activities.

Other sources of information

The Growing Schools website offers a selection of useful documents on H&S for school visits:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools/support/detail.cfm?id=3

Risk Assessment Recording Form – Example

Activity Date: 28th September 2004

Activity: Autumn planting around the pond

Location: Wildlife Zone, Kew Gardens Class: Indigo (year 4)

Assessed by: [Name, signature]

Number of children: 30

Comments on site:

Mobile phone reception usually good.

Ambulance access from Brentford gate, a third of a mile away.

Visited by the public during open hours (access to path adjacent to site, but not site itself).

Hazard	Risk Low, Medium or High?	Safety measure
Traffic	High (potential for serious harm)	Getting off the coach - ensure that helpers are available to marshal children. Tell them of the need to behave sensibly by the road.
Losing children between entrance gate and site	Low	Ensure that children behave sensibly and keep in the group. Helpers to maintain alertness.
Thorns - brambles and blackthorn	Low (because although common, the potential harm is only scratches)	Warn children of their presence, and point them out so that children can identify them easily.
Nettles	Low (unless we have a child who is particularly allergic)	Warn children of their presence, and point them out so that children can identify them easily. Check that no-one in the group has particular allergies or sensitivities.
Other stings or bites	Low	Warn children that many creatures can bite or sting but usually only do so if they feel threatened. Wasps may be a problem at this time of year. Check that we do not have any children who are allergic to bee stings. Those that do should carry their EpiPen.
Allergenic plants	Low	Warn children that some plants might cause a reaction in some people. Check that no-one in the group has particular allergies or sensitivities. Those that do should carry their EpiPen. Tell children to let an adult know if a rash appears.
Slippery mud on paths	Low	Point out the hazard. At particularly hazardous points, e.g. where the mud is on a slope, have a helper standing by to highlight hazard, and to help if necessary.
Uneven ground, rabbit holes	Low	Point out the hazard. Tell children to look where they are going. Make a 'walking only' rule - no running allowed.
Tasty-looking berries	Low	Warn children that they should never eat berries from the wild, unless they have expressly been given permission to do so. We have been given permission to collect blackberries from the site, so these will be carefully identified and distinguished from other berries, and children will be allowed to collect a few each to take back to be washed before eating. (NB - remind children to save some for the birds!)

Pond - immersion/drowning	High	Point out the hazard. Remind children to be careful near the water. No running and no fooling around.
Pond water - possibly contaminated with Weil's disease	High	Warn children that the water may contain dangerous bacteria. They should ensure that they do not ingest any water - they should not put their hands near their mouth or nose until they have washed their hands, or eat anything that has been in contact with the water. NB: there is no tap at the site. Take anti-bacterial cleansing gel/wipes and ensure that all children use it at the end of the session. Then wash hands as soon as possible. All cuts or open wounds must be covered with a plaster.
Soil - possibly contaminated with bacteria	Low	All cuts or open wounds must be covered with a plaster. If any child does receive a deep cut or other significant injury, ensure that treatment includes tetanus injection where appropriate. Hand cleansing rules apply (see above)
Bad weather (cold, icy, strong winds)	Low	Ensure that all children are adequately dressed. If weather is bad (e.g. windy enough to present hazards from falling branches) a decision to be made by [name] on the day, in conjunction with site staff as to whether to cancel.
Wooded areas - low branches	Low	Warn children that low branches can be hazardous, especially those at eye height. They should walk carefully and look where they are going.
Wooded areas - potential for children to get lost	Medium	Specify boundaries. No children are to go beyond them unless a helper is with them. Keep children in sight at all times. Ensure that helpers know who is in their group, and are alert at all times.
Wooded areas - potentially harbouring unwanted members of the public	High (not because likely, but because of the potential harm if it did happen)	As above. Make discreet enquiries if anyone appears to be paying unusual attention towards the group.
Using tools - trowels and hand forks	Low	Children are old enough to use trowels and hand forks responsibly. Advise on using tools with care. Warn them of the dangers of flicking soil into eyes.
Using tools - garden forks	Low	Children are too young to use these. Ensure helpers know how to use and carry them safely (carry with points downwards, do not carry over the shoulder, use with appropriate care). Tell children to keep out of the way when an adult is using a fork - no hands diving in to pick up worms!
Garden staff using horticultural machinery	Medium	Negotiate with the relevant staff to arrange a time when your group can visit in the area safely.

Extra planning information:

(not part of the formal risk assessment, but useful to consider for planning purposes)

What children should bring/wear:

Warm clothes; old clothes; wellingtons or sturdy, waterproof shoes; gloves.
A drink and a packed lunch (lunchbox should have fitting lid, for blackberries).
Small trowel if possible.

Equipment needed:

First aid box
Mobile phone (will a member of staff be on site with a walkie-talkie?? - check)
Tools (trowels, large garden forks for helpers)
Antiseptic hand-wash gel/wipes - plenty for the whole class
Bag for rubbish

Provided on site:

The plants we will be putting in
Some spare trowels (check how many)
One horticultural staff member

Other comments:

Adult to child ratio [this will be dependant on the group's age, but usually 1:8 for older children and 1:5 for younger]
Helpers on the day - [name list] - check that they are all available

Meeting arrangements:

Arrival at Kew: 10.30am
The coach drops us off at Victoria Gate where we will be met by a member of Kew staff [name]. The walk to the site takes 20 mins(XX). Three helpers [names] to also join us at the gate, rather than coming by coach.

Leaving arrangements:

Teachers to lead children back to coach - [name] also knows the route.
Group to gather in courtyard before getting on coach.
Departure time: 2.30pm (leave site at 2.10pm)

Site contact:

Staff member: [Name], Tel [number]

Emergency contact on site:

Staff member: [Name], Tel [number], Mobile [number]
Also: Site security: Tel [number]
Switchboard: Tel [number]

Risk Assessment Recording Form

Activity Date: Activity:

Location: Class:

Assessed by: Number of children:

Comments on site:

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Hazard	Risk Low, Medium or High?	Safety measure

Risk Assessment Recording Form – continued

Hazard	Risk Low, Medium or High?	Safety measure

Risk Assessment Recording Form - extra planning information

What children should bring/wear:
Equipment needed: First aid box
Provided on site:
Other comments: Adult to child ratio:
Meeting arrangements:
Leaving arrangements:
Site contact: Staff member: Tel:
Emergency contact on site: Staff member: Tel: Mobile: