



Happiness Outdoors Project

Health and Safety Policy

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2 Health & Safety Policy

The health and safety of learners, staff and other users of the school grounds will be of primary importance. Everything will be done to promote good health, to keep everyone safe and to protect them from danger.

2.1 Risk management and assessment

Due to the nature of the Happiness Outdoors Project (HOP), the activities that are carried out may be of greater risk to participants than normal.

Informed risk-taking is an essential part of learning and development and so, although there are risks that need to be considered in various activities, there can also be huge potential benefits that participants can gain. The National Trust 2012 report highlights that taking risks and learning to become independent are key factors in a child's physical, emotional and mental development and well-being.

The safety of adults and children in HOP sessions are of great importance and therefore, risk / benefit assessments of all activities will be carried out. Procedures will be followed to minimise risk and to identify hazards that participants may face.

Four different risk assessments will be applied within each school site and in relation to all HOP activities:

Site Assessment

Site assessments on a seasonal basis (i.e. four each year) and following adverse weather conditions. The location of known potentially harmful plants for example, nettles, brambles, Lords and Ladies, will be recorded and children will be taught to locate, identify and understand the hazard.

Daily Assessment

Checks will be carried out by the Outdoor Learning Facilitators on sites to be used prior to a day's activity, as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical. This assessment will include a review of the site and weather conditions.

Where checks are not possible prior to groups' arrival, a site sweep and assessment will be made with the group upon their arrival.

Activity Assessments

An assessment for every planned activity will be carried out. All activity plans and risk assessments will be shared with HOP staff and volunteers.

On-going Dynamic Risk Assessments

Dynamic, on-the-spot, assessments will be carried out continually during each session or event to take account of changing situations such as a change in weather conditions, change in planned activities or specific needs of the children.

Site and daily risk assessments are completed and kept in a designated HOP box in the school office. Activity risk assessments are updated regularly and shared digitally with HOP staff, volunteers and school senior leadership team.

Children and volunteers will be informed of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further. HOP staff will be responsible for teaching children and volunteers' adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.

Regular health and safety checks will be carried out to monitor the environment and equipment.

2.2 Physical and Mental First Aid Provision

The normal outdoor experiences of being stung by nettles, scratched by brambles or occasionally bruised by falls or trips are expected within outdoor activities and the children and adults are encouraged to accept

occasional stings, bumps and grazes as part of the learning experience. For example, if they fall while running on a slippery patch of ground, due to mud, they will learn how to handle this in the future.

These risks will be appropriately managed within the framework of activity/daily/dynamic risk assessments. However, it is likely that these hazards will at times be met and appropriate first aid administered.

HOP endeavours to be as safe as possible and there will be a trained Forest School Outdoor First Aider on site for each session and a first aid kit will be accessible if needed.

Working with children out of their normal learning environment can trigger anxieties and worries. It can also provide a space for children to feel comfortable to express feelings without judgement. HOP endeavours to support children to positively engage with these issues and offer alternative options if required. There will be a trained Mental Health First Aider on site to support any needs if and when they arise. Safeguarding concerns will be communicated with the school in line with HOP and school policies and procedures.

2.3 Administration of Medication

Any medication that a child has been prescribed will be administered by a school staff member and not by HOP staff.

2.4 Staff / volunteers qualifications, training and responsibilities

At each HOP session, there will be a Level 3 Forest School Leader present with an Outdoor First Aid qualification, a Mental Health First Aider and a minimum of one other adult. All staff and regular volunteers will have an Enhanced DBS check. Children will not be left unsupervised with any visitors who have not provided a DBS certificate. All staff will have regular safeguarding and health & safety training updates.

The HOP staff will aim to provide an environment that is safe. Before each session, the HOP staff will brief any volunteers on the activities planned and what is required of them to facilitate learning.

HOP Staff and Relevant Qualifications:

Jenny Amesbury:

PGCE

Food Hygiene

Mental Health First Aid

Emma Whittingham:

Level 3 Forest School Leader

Level 3 Outdoor First Aid

2.5 Equipment & Use of Personal Protective Equipment

2.5.a Equipment

Hand tools will be used occasionally to aid in the children's learning, self-discovery, practical skills and self-confidence. All use of tools will follow the relevant tool risk assessment.

- £ Adults and children using the tools will be taught to use them appropriately to minimise risk and injury to individuals.
- £ All tools will be checked by HOP staff before use to see if they are fit for purpose. If any of the handles are loose or equipment is not working properly, they will be discontinued from use.
- £ Sharp tools will be kept in a locked shed/locked tool box when not in use, which is only to be accessed by HOP or school staff. This shed is locked when not needing to be accessed.
- £ All tools will be counted out before use and counted back in at the end of the session. If any are missing, a thorough search will be made to find the missing item.
- £ Safe working distances will be taught, maintained and observed by participants and those leading and assisting the session. The term 'blood bubble' will be used to describe the area of danger that other people cannot enter when working with tools. This distance is the arm's length of the user plus the tools distance away from any other person.
- £ Tools will never be left outside unattended.
- £ When not in use, the bow saw will have its safety guard put on by an adult. Secateurs will be locked into a closed position.
- £ HOP staff and volunteers will adopt a constant vigilance around tools regarding how they are being used and how and where they are left in between uses during an activity.

2.5.b Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment must be available and stored in an appropriate manner so that it is fit for purpose when needed.

This includes items such as:

- Mats for sitting on when the ground is damp / wet
- Wellie boots and waterproof clothing
- Gloves for clearing woodland area / gathering natural resources for use in the session to protect hands
- Gloves over a plaster to be worn to protect cuts to hands from contact with soil to reduce risk of Tetanus
- Fireproof gloves when removing cooking equipment such as pans and kettles from the fire, only by HOP staff or volunteers

If gloves are used when using a hand tool, they should never be worn on the hand holding the tool as it lessens the grip on the item held which affects the control of the tool.

The adults and children need to be suitably dressed for going outdoors according to the conditions on the day. There are extra boots and clothing available on site if needed.

2.6 Bonfires

Bonfires will be lit occasionally to aid in the children's learning, self-discovery, practical skills and self-confidence. Activities and behaviour around the fire will follow the fire risk assessment (see fire risk assessment document).

- Fire safety rules will be discussed with children to teach them to behave appropriately around the fire and whilst cooking
- Only trained adults will be responsible for lighting the fire, controlling the fuel being added to the fire and extinguishing the fire
- A water bucket and first aid kit will be available
- HOP staff and volunteers will adopt a constant vigilance around the fire

2.7 Welfare Requirements

2.7.a Toileting Procedure:

Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before the HOP session, if children do need to go to the toilet during the session they will let a member of the HOP staff know and then take themselves to the nearest toilets in the school.

2.7.b Hygiene

General

Children will be asked to wash their hands after a HOP session before returning to class or break/lunchtime.

Animals

Safe working practices in relation to on-site animals, will be shared with staff, volunteers and children to minimise risk and the school's on-site animals risk assessments will be followed.

Staff and children to wash hands with soap after any animal contact and on return to the classroom.

Food

In some sessions, food may be eaten or cooked over the fire.

When food and drink are being prepared and consumed during a HOP session, there will be water and soap available to wash hands and clean surfaces on which to prepare food.

Sensible precautions will be adhered to by all those handling food items which will be overseen by HOP staff.

A food safety management plan will be completed for all food-related activities to cover cross-contamination, cleaning, chilling of certain foods, cooking, allergens and opening and closing management of site.

2.7.c Allergies

Any allergies will be recorded on the session register and information shared with staff members and volunteers. If necessary, EpiPens will be collected prior to the session.

When food or drink is being prepared or consumed within a HOP session, the HOP team will check medical records for any known allergies within the group and ensure that they are not given anything to eat or drink that will cause an allergic reaction. Food will not be shared beyond the group without further checks.

Plans will be made in advance to cater for any food intolerance or allergies or any cultural food requirements. An alternative will be provided for those who are allergic to an ingredient in the food/drink being prepared e.g. hot chocolate that does not have milk product in for those who are lactose intolerant.

In the context of animals and plants, medical records will be checked for any known allergies within the group and appropriate action will be taken to manage risk.

If, in the unlikely event, that a child has an allergic reaction, the first aid procedure will be followed.

2.8 Contingency and Cancellation

HOP sessions may need to be moved indoors if there is severe weather such as snow, ice, high winds or thunder and lightning storms. The activities will be adapted to suit the new surroundings. Sessions may need to be postponed but sessions will be delivered at the next convenient time as agreed with school.

2.9 Emergency and Incident Management

Although every care is taken to ensure that no serious accidents occur, there may be a time when this does happen.

A first aid kit will be accessible on site for immediate use within sessions. Trained HOP staff will administer minor first aid.

If an injury is sustained that results in a tetanus-prone wound which can include cuts and grazes from contaminated objects, burns or animal bites, the school will be informed to seek medical advice regarding the need for a tetanus booster.

In the event of an emergency such as a serious accident, where a child or adult is seriously injured, the following procedure will be followed:

- The HOP staff will make an assessment of the situation whilst keeping calm and helping to help keep the rest of the group calm.
- A member of the school staff will be sent for (via walkie talkie or in person).
- First aid will be administered if needed. While the first aid is being administered, the other adults should ensure that the rest of the children and adults in the group are kept safe. This may mean taking the group back into the main school building where reassurance will be given to them.
- If the incident requires the emergency services, they will be contacted whilst the First Aider attends to the injured person(s).

All accidents and incidents will be recorded in accordance with the school policy.

All accidents and incidents will be recorded and reviewed by HOP Directors.

2.10 Reporting near misses

Due to the nature of HOP activities being led in an environment where there can be unknown factors that could cause serious injuries, there is a need not only to report accidents but also incidents that are 'near misses' where serious injury or death could have been the result.

These occurrences are likely to be few due to the precautions that will have already been put in place to prevent them, but if an incident like this does occur these will be documented in accordance to school policy and existing policies, procedures and risk/benefit analysis needs to be reviewed.

Near misses will be recorded and reviewed by the HOP Directors.

2.11 Insurance

HOP is insured by QBE UK Limited (Authorised Insurer): Policy Number CA02019863

Individual children are covered by the school's insurance which states that risk assessments are up-to-date and comprehensive.

HOP staff trained for Forest School (Level 3) qualification or Qualified Teacher Status are allowed to lead sessions for insurance to be valid.

Approval and Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Directors annually, as part of the financial planning cycle.

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Directors	July 2024	Initial draft approved	Annually

2.0	Directors	September 2025	General updates in line with best practice. Addition of bonfire section.	Annually