

# Natural, Structured and Loose Materials play Risk Assessment



Subject of risk assessment:	Natural, Structured and Loose Materials Play		
Brief description of activity, location, feature, activity and equipment used.	<p>All free play for children and adults</p> <p>Structured play (games, activities, challenges and sports) by our staff with children and adults</p> <p>Play involving imported or scavenged loose materials.</p>		
Job title and name of person making assessment	Lorna Norton	Owner/Director	
Date of Assessment	2023	Review Date	202
<p><b>Risk Management Statement</b></p> <p>Kith Homestead recognises that all risks cannot be reduced to nil, therefore this risk assessment prioritises the significant risks. Significant risks are those which pose risk of serious injury, chronic injury, disability or death, or risks that are overly common in interrupting our staff and clients normal work. For all activities, Kith Homestead staff will dynamically assess risks and put in place control measures and record as required, but always within agreed guidelines.</p> <p>Concerns, changes in risk management practice or minor injuries that are seen by Kith Homestead staff to be significant- The correct Incident Report form should be used.</p>			

Activity or feature:	<p>Running, chasing, jumping, walking, standing, balancing, sliding, swinging, dancing and sitting on features, objects or topography.</p> <p>Rough and tumble play, dancing and moving in groups, chasing, playing games (traditional and 'made up') in groups or alone.</p> <p>Climbing, standing, balancing, hanging or sitting on features both built (such as decking, balance beams, logs, stones, climbing frames, ramps, shelters, fences, steps and structures) and natural objects (trees, bushes, rocks, logs, slopes).</p> <p>Jumping on and off features, objects and topography, both natural and built.</p> <p>Building of temporary dens, structures, hollows, piles and holes (dug in sand pit or dirt), piling up of materials (both man made and natural, provided and scavenged).</p> <p>Transporting materials both man made (provided or scavenged) and natural (provided and scavenged).</p> <p>Digging dirt, sand, bark or loose materials.</p> <p>Using ropes, skipping ropes, string, elastic rope, and bungees.</p> <p>Using material such as cotton, nylon and plastic sheeting.</p> <p>Using chalk, stones, sticks, pebbles, grit, sand, dirt, grass, hay, straw, flowers and leaves.</p> <p>Using swings both constructed and temporarily built using materials provided and scavenged.</p> <p>Using water (in barrels, buckets, pipes, cups, puddles and pans, from taps or rainwater), snow and ice.</p> <p>Capturing wind, reflecting or blocking sun using materials and objects provided and scavenged.</p> <p>Using tools, both specific provided, scavenged or temporarily used.</p> <p>Breaking, snapping, pulling apart, undoing and deconstructing items provided or scavenged.</p> <p>Throwing, passing, lifting, carrying, catching, kicking, batting and hitting any of the above objects.</p> <p>Un packing and clearing or tidying away of all the objects and items listed above.</p>
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<p>How will participants benefit?</p>	<p>Pleasure and fun.</p> <p>Inclusive and mixed groups playing together, developing group working and team working skills.</p> <p>Development of imagination and creativity skills leading to improved problem solving skills.</p> <p>Development of physical literacy and learning opportunities about physical capabilities.</p> <p>Development of confidence, resilience and well-being.</p> <p>Appreciation of and engagement with natural spaces and place, including changing weather and seasons.</p> <p>Appreciation of risks and development of experience that allows them to increasingly make more decisions about physical, social and emotional risk taking.</p> <p>Taking responsibility and developing awareness of self and others.</p> <p>Opportunities to develop language and communication skills.</p> <p>Developing and ownership of playground and homestead ground spaces, preventing damage and vandalism.</p>
<p>Who will be at risk?</p>	<p>Children participating.</p> <p>Staff, other adults, children and observers may also be at slight risk.</p>
<p>Any local factors that may affect risks or controls:</p>	<p>Group competence and experience.</p>
<p>Possible hazards and risks:</p>	<p>Slips, trips and falls (both accidental and over-ambitious) leading to serious injury or harm immediately or through over repetition of the activity. Slips, trips and falls on slippery surfaces due to rain, ice, snow or mould and/or higher speed of children, increases this concern, due to increased risk of severity of injury.</p> <p>Serious injuries, fear or death from thrown or dropped objects, aggressive use of objects being hit by others.</p> <p>Serious injuries or death from falls onto, running into, jumping and bumping into sharp or hard objects.</p> <p>Serious injuries from mishandling or incompetent moving of equipment or items.</p> <p>Grit, sand or mud in eyes through rubbing, throwing or wind blowing of items.</p> <p>Serious injury or fear through other children running into, jumping over or colliding with persons.</p> <p>Serious injury or death through falls from significant height both on constructed and provided equipment and scavenged or built items (e.g. tree climbing or standing on den roof).</p> <p>Collisions with other children riding bikes, scooters, skateboards, sledges, slides or similar objects, leading to serious injury, fear or death.</p> <p>Finger, toe, leg, arm or head/neck traps in gaps between equipment (constructed and temporary, fixed and moveable, scavenged and provided) leading to serious injury or death.</p> <p>Sudden failure or collapse of fixed, built and mobile equipment or items (provided and scavenged) through lack of maintenance, damage, poor design or specification, that leads to falls, slips and impacts that result in serious injury, fear or death.</p> <p>Infection/Zoonosis from urine or faeces and dry, dusty soil.</p> <p>Ingestion of toxins through oral contact or eating of objects or materials (provided and scavenged).</p> <p>Hypothermia, sunburn and heat stroke due to adverse weather.</p> <p>Serious injuries from falling branches or blown items, due to extreme wind and/or poor maintenance of buildings, woodland and objects.</p> <p>Children running away, getting lost/separated from main group or being abducted, putting them at risk of significantly more harm than in the pre determined play area.</p> <p>Bullying or inappropriate behaviour taking place between peers, especially of varying age groups.</p>

	<p>Vandalism or damage to equipment, that accidentally (or by design) puts children at risk significantly more than the norm.</p>
<p>Precautions and control measures to reduce the risk severity or likelihood:</p>	<p>Kith Homestead resources, experience and corporate knowledge that inform our customers. Staff training and sharing of good practice is part of this process.</p> <p>Play policies that reflect adults' thoughts and expectations should be in place. Central to these will be a policy that is not reliant on paperwork, but should engage with staff, children and parents to create a culture of play, in which judged risks are expected and simply managed.</p> <p>Good design, construction, management of playground area and equipment, informed by experience and policy. Particular effort will be made concerning fall heights, fall zones, entrapment risk and risk of collapse. This extends to selecting specific areas, within a larger space, to use for a specific play activity.</p> <p>Simple inspection and maintenance of the playground/swamp, equipment and items, with hazards being central to this. Inspections should include conditions of equipment and inspection for dangerous items, damage and vandalism, faeces and urine, risks from flora and fauna (as seasons change). This can be done formally (diarised and recorded) and on a session by session basis (informal and only recorded where concerns are raised).</p> <p>Simple visual inspection of other local issues or factors such as neighbouring buildings or condition of trees, especially during times of inclement weather.</p> <p>Simple systems for reporting and acting on concerns, including staff and children being able to dynamically risk assess and communicate clearly.</p> <p>Initial group discussion facilitated by staff introducing each resource available and identifying the potential risks involved. Agree rules amongst the group regarding safe handling and agree the consequence for inappropriate behaviour. All adults involved will interact with the pupils and observe play behaviour throughout play session.</p> <p>Behaviour of the children demonstrates responsibility and competence, and adults should monitor and intervene where necessary to ensure play can continue, without unacceptable risk or inappropriate behaviour that causes accident, harm or fear. Behaviour standards may be agreed in advance, and relate strongly to existing controls in a school, nursery or other setting.</p> <p>Climbing to any height above ground to be monitored, in accordance with the risks posed. This will mean that we advise climbing to be within the capacities of the individual concerned and when climbing that their feet are no higher than their head height from the ground.</p> <p>Throwing of objects and substances to be monitored, particularly sand, dirt and gravel; and where others are not expecting to catch or dodge thrown items; and where items are hazardous when thrown to others avoiding or catching (because of sharp edges, weight, speed or other).</p> <p>Carrying of items that are heavy, awkward or sharp enough to injure should be managed carefully, with good lifting practice (share the weight, straight backs etc) shown by staff and then employed by all.</p> <p>Stacking or building of items or digging holes or piling of materials, onto which children will climb or under which they will shelter or move, should also be dynamically risk assessed, and steered where required by the responsible adults. Maximum depth of 1m down and height of participants upwards.</p> <p>Awareness of how ropes (or similar items) are being used will be of great importance, with observation for opportunity for accidental strangulation or similar being a priority.</p> <p>The weather's impact on a session will be assessed at the start and ongoing during a session, with care taken over cold and heat injuries, where an adult will insist on clothing or protection as needed. Wind should also be factored into observation, with children likely to make use of the wind.</p> <p>Staff delivering training sessions will hold a relevant emergency first aid qualification, appropriate to the sessions being led, and carry a first aid kit.</p>

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<p>Precedents or comparisons:</p>	<p>All playgrounds and play practices offer a level of risk, and there is a clear history and evidence for children experiencing 'free play' over generations.</p> <p>Kith Homestead providing break and lunch times, to allow for physical exertion, social interaction and mental stimulus is a standard practice worldwide.</p> <p>We have taken guidance from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Play Safety Forum</b> 'Managing Risk in Play Provision'</li> <li>● <b>Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents</b> – 'Play Safety Advice', guidance on inspection and construction of play grounds &amp; statistics on playground accidents.</li> <li>● <b>Health and Safety Executive</b> – 'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balance Approach'</li> <li>● <b>Forestry Commission</b> guidance on rope swings and tree climbing.</li> </ul>
<p>Judgement:</p>	<p>Free play and structured play offers real benefits to the children participating.</p> <p>Good preparation in choice or design, inspection, management and maintenance of play sites is, as well as assessment of a group and individuals competence, is central to a session that has acceptable risks.</p> <p>Continual dynamic risk assessment will also support children in making good decisions, especially when a 'light touch' approach is adopted.</p> <p><b>In light of our experience and good judgement, free play, loose materials play and structured play offers an acceptable level of risk compared to the benefits.</b></p>