



## **STICKS AND ROPES: POLICIES, PROCEDURES & RISK-BENEFIT MANAGEMENT MANUAL**

**Setting Location:** Newfield Spring Wood, Sheffield

**Lead Practitioners & DSL:** Will Russ (Level 3 Forest School Leader, PGCE Primary)

**Target Group:** Children aged 6–12 years

**Group Ratios:** Standard (1:6) | Whittling/Tools (1:1 to 1:2) | Fire/Pewter (1:4)

**Ofsted Register:** Compulsory Childcare Register

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## **1. INTRODUCTION & ETHOS**

### **1.1 Ethos & Educational Philosophy**

At Sticks and Ropes, we practice project-based outdoor learning emphasizing collaboration, communication, and respect for the natural environment. Our goal is to foster social and emotional well-being, building resilience, self-awareness, and confidence through nature connection.

### **1.2 Structured and Unstructured Time**

Our daily schedule draws on Forest School principals, balancing structured skill acquisition with child-led play. Unstructured exploration occurs within respectful boundaries (e.g., protecting ground-nesting birds during spring) to cultivate problem-solving, reflection, and peer interaction.

### **1.3 Leave No Trace & Site Agreement**

We operate at Newfield Spring Wood under an agreement with woodland custodian Heather Hunt. We practice a strict "Leave No Trace" ethos. Any semi-permanent structures, bird boxes, or camp layouts are agreed upon in advance, and all waste or activity remains are managed or removed after every session.

### **1.4 Practitioner Qualifications & Clearances**

- **Session Leads:** Level 3 Forest School Leader accreditation and PGCE in Primary Education.
- **First Aid:** 16-hour Outdoor First Aid / Paediatric First Aid, refreshed every 3 years.
- **Suitability:** Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks with barred list checks updated annually.

## 2. HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS

### 2.1 Risk Management Principles & Scoring Matrix

Risk is treated as a vital component of child development. Participants are actively involved in identifying hazards and co-assessing safety.

When calculating risk levels within our Risk-Benefit Assessments, we utilize the following numerical scoring system: **Probability (P: 1 to 5) x Severity (S: 1 to 5) = Risk Rating (R: 1 to 25)**

### 2.2 First Aid & Clinical Protocols

A fully stocked Outdoor First Aid Kit, burns kit, and clean wash water are always maintained on-site.

- **Thermal Burn Management:** Flood the affected area with clean, cold running water for a **minimum of 20 minutes**. Remove loose clothing surrounding the area unless stuck. Cover loosely with clean clingfilm. **Do NOT apply burn salves, creams, butter, or oils**, as these trap thermal heat. Seek immediate medical assistance for severe burns or those larger than the child's palm.
- **Bumped Heads & Concussion:** Any impact to the head requires completion of a Bumped Head Note, direct notification to parents/carers upon collection, and an immediate phone call home if the child shows signs of dizziness, confusion, or vomiting.
- **Emergency Medication:** Asthma inhalers and Auto-Injectable Epinephrine (EpiPens) supplied by parents must be clearly labelled, checked upon registration, and carried in the practitioner's emergency pack.

### 2.3 Emergency Site Access & Evacuation

- **Woodland Venue Entry:** Newfield Spring Wood Main Access Gate.
- **Emergency Location Coordinates:**
  - **What3Words:** ///[Insert exact 3 words for entrance gate]
  - **OS Grid Reference:** [Insert Grid Ref, e.g., SK 354 821]
- **Evacuation Plan:** Practitioner 1 coordinates casualty care and dials 999, while Practitioner 2 gathers the remaining children at the central gathering circle and leads an orderly evacuation to the main gate.

### 2.4 Adverse Weather & Wind Speed Action Matrix

Sessions run in all typical weather conditions provided children are suitably clothed. Extreme weather triggers the following operational changes:

- **Force 0–4 (<18 mph gusts):** Calm to Moderate Breeze. Full access across all woodland zones.
- **Force 5 (19–24 mph gusts):** Fresh Breeze (small trees sway). Shift activities to open canopy/tarp zones; increase branch sweeps.
- **Force 6 (25–31 mph gusts):** Strong Breeze (large branches move). **Woodland Canopy Entry Suspended.** Move to open meadow area or cancel session.
- **Force 7+ (32+ mph gusts) or Amber Warning:** High Winds / Gales / Squalls. **Session Cancelled / Immediate Evacuation.**

## 2.5 PPE & Suitable Clothing Guidelines

Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as fire gloves or safety goggles is provided for specific activities. Parents are advised to dress children according to season:

- **Summer:** Light base layers, removable outer layer, sturdy closed-toe footwear, waterproof coat, sun hat, and sunscreen.
- **Autumn/Spring:** Warm base layers, fleece/jumper, waterproof jacket and trousers, sturdy boots or wellies, warm hat, and gloves.
- **Winter:** Thermal base layers, heavy jumper, fleece-lined waterproof coat, woolly hat, neck warmer, thermal gloves, and thick socks with wellies.

### 3. SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

#### 3.1 Safeguarding Framework & Statutory Referrals

We are committed to creating a secure environment where children feel heard, valued, and safe. Any disclosure, suspicion, or indicator of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect is recorded immediately in exact detail.

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):**
  - William Russ (Tel: 07415950189)
  - Email: sticksropes@gmail.com - Subject: FAO: DSL)
- **Statutory Contact Details:**
  - **Sheffield Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) Hub:** 0114 273 4855
  - **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** 0114 273 4855
  - **Police (Immediate Physical Danger):** 999

#### 3.2 Managing Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

If an allegation is made against a practitioner or volunteer:

1. The matter must be reported immediately to the co-lead practitioner or referred directly to the **LADO within 24 hours**. To make a referral complete a [LADO referral form](#) and email to LADO@sheffield.gov.uk
2. The individual concerned will be suspended from child-facing duties without prejudice while LADO and social care guidance is obtained.
3. Internal inquiries will never take place prior to receiving formal LADO direction.

#### 3.3 Missing Child Protocol

1. **Whistle Call-Back:** Practitioner sounds 3 long blasts on the emergency whistle. Practitioner 2 gathers the group for headcount.
2. **Boundary Search (Max 10 Mins):** Practitioner 1 searches site boundaries, paths, and water hazards.
3. **Police Call:** If the child is not located within 10 minutes, Practitioner 1 dials 999, giving What3Words coordinates, child description, and last known position.
4. **Parent Contact:** Parents are notified immediately following the 999 call.

#### 3.4 Digital Safety, Cameras & Mobile Phones

- Mobile phones are carried by staff strictly for emergency contacts, What3Words positioning, and register checks.
- Photos are taken only on dedicated club devices with explicit written parental consent. Personal phone use for personal social media during contact hours is prohibited.

#### 3.5 Adult-to-Child Ratios & Attendance Management

Ratios are dynamically assessed based on participant age, prior experience, and tool competence:

- **Standard Session Group Ratio:** 1:6

- **Whittling & Sharp Tools:**
  - **Ages 6–7 / Beginners:** 1:1
  - **Ages 8–11 (Competent):** 1:2 to 1:4
  - **Ages 12–15 (Experienced):** 1:6 to 1:8 in designated tool zones
- **Campfire & Outdoor Cooking:**
  - **Ages 6–7 / Beginners:** 1:4
  - **Ages 8–11:** 1:4 to 1:6
  - **Ages 12–15:** 1:6
- **Pewter Casting:**
  - **Ages 8–11:** 1:2 to 1:4
  - **Ages 12–15:** 1:4 to 1:6 (Mandatory PPE)

## **4. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **4.1 Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

Parents/carers with informal concerns are encouraged to speak directly with Will Russ before or after a session, or contact us via email (sticksropes@gmail.com) or phone (07415950189). We aim to resolve most operational issues conversationally.

### **4.2 Stage 2: Formal Written Investigation**

If a complaint is not resolved informally, the parent/carer should submit a formal complaint in writing to sticksropes@gmail.com.

- **Acknowledgment:** Within 3 working days.
- **Written Response:** A full written investigation response will be provided within **28 calendar days** (as required by Ofsted).
- **Record Keeping:** Formal complaint records are retained securely for a minimum of 3 years.

### **4.3 Direct Contact with Ofsted**

Parents may contact Ofsted directly regarding any concern that the provider is not meeting Childcare Register requirements:

- **Ofsted Contact Center:** 0300 123 1231
- **Email:** enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- **Address:** Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

## 5. INTEGRATED RISK-BENEFIT ASSESSMENTS (RBAs)

### 5.1 Environmental & Site RBAs

#### Hazard: Cold & Rain

- **Benefits:** Builds personal resilience and adaptability.
- **Controls:** Kit list sent to parents; warm-up games; tarp shelters utilized.
- **Probability: 2 | Severity: 2 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### Hazard: Sun Exposure

- **Benefits:** Fosters self-care and seasonal awareness.
- **Controls:** Sun hats and loose layers encouraged; self-application of sunscreen.
- **Probability: 2 | Severity: 2 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### Hazard: Deadwood & High Winds

- **Benefits:** Teaches canopy risk assessment.
- **Controls:** Pre-session tree inspection; Beaufort scale wind closures.
- **Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### Hazard: Uneven Ground & Bogs

- **Benefits:** Develops motor planning and balance.
- **Controls:** Path boundaries set; group self-assesses shoe grip on wet soil.
- **Probability: 2 | Severity: 2 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### Hazard: Waterways & Rivers

- **Benefits:** Promotes risk judgment around water hazards.
- **Controls:** Water boundary briefings; no entry without permission and wellies/waders.
- **Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### Hazard: Insects & Poisonous Flora

- **Benefits:** Develops ecological knowledge.
- **Controls:** Briefings on high-risk flora/insects; check EpiPens/allergy records.
- **Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### Hazard: Jagged Litter / Needles

- **Benefits:** Encourages social responsibility.
- **Controls:** Daily sweep; rule enforced NEVER to touch litter, only alert adults.
- **Probability: 3 | Severity: 1 | Risk Rating: 3**

#### Hazard: Toileting & Hygiene

- **Benefits:** Teaches sustainable sanitation.

- **Controls:** Handwashing station set up; mandatory hand wash before eating.
- **Probability: 2 | Severity: 2 | Risk Rating: 4**

## 5.2 High-Value Activity RBAs

### Hazard: Campfire Burns & Spills

**Benefits:** Promotes fire safety, cooking, physical science, and team unity. Builds risk management and fire literacy across key developmental stages.

#### Controls:

- Ages 6–7: 1:4 ratio. Direct adult guidance within the fire circle; 2-foot rule enforced.
- Ages 8–11: 1:4 to 1:6 ratio. Active monitoring during fire lighting and fuel placement.
- Ages 12–15: 1:6 max ratio (Zone oversight). Teens manage fires independently under direct line-of-sight supervision.
- Fire blanket, dousing water bucket, and 20-minute cold running water burn protocol established prior to ignition.

**Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

### Hazard: Pewter Melting

**Benefits:** Explores metallurgy, physical chemistry, tool design, and casting craft. Fosters intense focus and respect for extreme heat.

#### Controls:

- Ages 6–7: Not recommended or strictly 1:1 with adult holding ladle.
- Ages 8–11: 1:2 to 1:4 ratio. Adult directly supervises every pour inside 2m fire boundary.
- Ages 12–15: 1:4 to 1:6 max ratio. Teens work in small casting pairs; adult approves all mould setups before pouring.
- Leather safety gloves and goggles mandatory for all ages; batches capped under 5g; no acrylic clothing worn.

**Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

### Hazard: Knives & Bow Saws

**Benefits:** Enhances fine motor control, hand-eye coordination, spatial awareness, craft skills, and self-regulation.

#### Controls:

- Ages 6–7 / Beginners: 1:1 ratio.
- Ages 8–11 (Competent): 1:2 to 1:4 ratio after practical assessment.
- Ages 12–15 (Experienced): 1:6 max ratio within a designated Tool Zone.
- Complete "Tool Talk" given; "Blood Bubble" arm's-length space maintained; whittling performed seated, cutting away from body/thighs. All idle tools locked in storage box.

**Probability: 1 | Severity: 3 | Risk Rating: 3**

#### **Hazard: Scissors**

- **Benefits:** Develops precision cutting skills.
- **Controls:** Tool talk; glove worn on non-cutting hand; Carry closed and holding the blade end.
- **Probability: 3 | Severity: 1 | Risk Rating: 3**

#### **Hazard: Personal Knives**

- **Benefits:** Reinforces personal boundary rules.
- **Controls:** Explicit policy against personal knives; any items surrendered to locked box.
- **Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### **Hazard: Tree Climbing**

- **Benefits:** Builds agility, balance, and boundary assessment.
- **Controls**
  - **Ages 6–7 & Beginners:** Climbing height remains strictly capped at child's shoulder height. Direct supervision required.
  - **Ages 8–11 (Competent):** Unroped climbing capped at head height plus reach (approx. 2 meters), provided the ground below is clear of rocks/stumps and an adult is within spotting distance.
  - **Ages 12–15 (Teens):** Unroped climbing permitted up to 3 meters following a dynamic site and branch assessment. Climbing above 3 meters (up to the insured 5-meter limit) is strictly reserved for structured, low-ratio activities where the landing zone is assessed and active spotting/ground-management is enforced.
- **Universal Rules:** No climbing in wet/icy conditions, no climbing above deadwood, and children must be able to climb down unassisted.
- **Probability: 3 | Severity: 1 | Risk Rating: 3**

#### **Hazard: Stick Handling**

- **Benefits:** Teaches spatial control and teamwork.
- **Controls:** Drag large sticks or carry in pairs; carry short sticks heavy-end down.
- **Probability: 2 | Severity: 2 | Risk Rating: 4**

### **5.3 Safeguarding & Operational RBAs**

#### **Hazard: Lost Child / Ratios**

- **Benefits:** Teaches group awareness and boundary compliance.
- **Controls:** 1:6 ratio; registers & headcounts; practice call-and-response whistle.
- **Probability: 1 | Severity: 4 | Risk Rating: 4**

#### **Hazard: Public Interaction**

- **Benefits:** Builds public space navigation skills.
- **Controls:** Children instructed to step back and notify staff immediately if approached.

- **Probability:** 1 | **Severity:** 3 | **Risk Rating:** 3

**Hazard: Volunteer Helpers**

- **Benefits:** Expands learning support and community links.
- **Controls:** DBS checked; full policy briefing; never left unmonitored with children.
- **Probability:** 1 | **Severity:** 4 | **Risk Rating:** 4

## 6. APPENDICES & DOCUMENT TEMPLATES

### 6.1 Parental Registration & Consent Checklist

(Maintained via Google Form)

1. Child's Full Name & Date of Birth
2. Parent/Carer Primary Contact Number & Secondary Contact Number
3. Home Address(es)
4. Medical Conditions, Accessibility Requirements, Inhaler/EpiPen details
5. Food, Plant & Animal Allergies
6. Photo Consent Checkboxes (Private group chat / Public promotional / No photo)
7. Risky Play & Outdoor Learning Consent Acknowledgment
8. Confirmation child can understand and follow safety rules

### 6.2 Attendance Register Template Example

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: Newfield Spring Wood

Practitioners Present: Will Russ + \_\_\_\_\_

| Child Name | Present (Y/N) | Medical/Allergy Check | Inhaler/Med on Site | Emergency Contact |
|------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1.         |               |                       |                     |                   |

### 6.3 Emergency Procedure Checklist

- **Primary First Aider:** Manage casualty, keep calm, delegate emergency call.
- **Secondary Adult:** Manage remaining group, secure site, prepare gate access.
- **Call Protocols:** Dial 999, quote What3Words coordinates, provide clear access instructions.

### 6.4 Incident & Accident Report Form Example

Date & Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Incident / Near Miss: \_\_\_\_\_

First Aid Administered: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Notified (Time & Method): \_\_\_\_\_

Practitioner Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6.5 Bumped Head Notification Note Template Example

#### STICKS AND ROPES - BUMPED HEAD NOTE

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Bump: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child sustained a bump to the head during today's session. First aid treatment was administered on site. They were monitored for signs of concussion and appeared well before collection.

PLEASE MONITOR YOUR CHILD FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS. Seek urgent medical advice (call 111 or 999) if you notice any of the following:

- Severe headache or dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Unusual drowsiness or difficulty waking
- Confusion or slurred speech

First Aider Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_