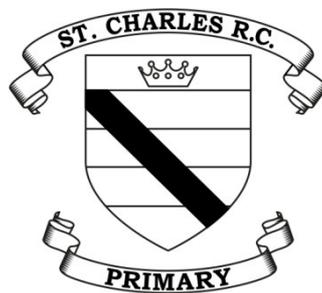


St Charles RC Primary School

Climbing and moving: Risk benefit assessment 2017-18



CHRIST IS AT THE CENTRE



Compassionate
Helpful
Respectful
Inclusive
Sharing
Truthful



St Charles RC Primary School

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Our mission at St. Charles RC Primary School is to try and centre our life in Jesus Christ, the spiritual foundation of our community.

We aim to pass on the faith we share in partnership with you.

We want the children in our care to grow and develop to their full potential within a caring Catholic community which recognises fully their true worth and God given talents. We look forward to working with you in a spirit of mutual trust and support.

We take pride belonging to St. Charles RC Primary School.

MISSION STATEMENT

As a family of God, we love to learn and learn to love

Introduction

This Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA) MUST be read alongside the introductory guidance to the assessment format which follows the guidance of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Play England. This RBA takes a balanced approach, which considers the benefits and pays attention primarily to the risks that could cause serious harm, rather than to all risks which could only cause minor injury. This RBA considers activity which would take place within school hours only and under supervision.

Description and location of facility, feature, activity or equipment:

- Climbing upon fixed wooden and rope structures
- Tree climbing on site

- Balancing on walls, fences, benches or low ledges
- Climbing on fixed and freestanding logs and boulders
- Climbing and moving on and across balance beams and mounds

Typical play activities could include:

Climbing, scrambling, running, jumping, crawling, rolling, holding on, hanging off, swinging, dangling upside down, sliding, acrobatics, gymnastics, playing chase, tag and role playing, performing in and around structures.

This assessment also takes into consideration groups of children doing these activities simultaneously and in close proximity.

This assessment neither promotes nor considers climbing on school structures such as the roofs of the school, sheds/shacks, bins, basketball hoops and football nets.

Benefits:

- Extending and developing physical abilities in a range of contexts, providing different experiences
- Excitement and opportunity for thrill and fun
- Development of balance, co-ordination, strength and flexibility
- Development of confidence in physical capabilities
- Group working, turn taking and communication to navigate and understand moving across obstacles
- Development of self awareness and ability to assess risk and to make their own judgments, or ask for support to try new things
- Communication opportunities and interactions, and opportunities to offer support to others
- Greater proximity to and sensory awareness of the natural environment
- Learning about types of materials and trees and the strength of certain species or branches
- Building of resilience through failures, pauses, contemplations and achievements
- Opportunities for writing about experiences and for extending imaginations through creative and active space for play

Risks:

- Falls to the ground resulting in serious injury either through contact with a tree or structure, either on the way down or on impact with the ground
- Hanging up by feet or limbs leading to serious injury
- Participants falling on each other with force/weight or accidentally kicked while in proximity to a climbing activity
- Strangulation from any attached rope or from rope net

- Slips trips and falls on equipment resulting in serious injury due to a fall height or body position

Local factors:

There is a real range of competency in the school community, not necessarily dependent on age. Children range from complete inexperience to high competency in climbing and management of their bodies

Precedents and or comparisons:

The following precedents have been taken into consideration during our assessment:

- That tree climbing and rope swings have existed and evolved and developed in public spaces such as streets, parks and woodland, and opportunities for this have been curtailed by public fears about health and safety.
- Climbing opportunities have been provided, managed and regulated in public and school playgrounds for many years
- Forest schools and the scouting movement use adventurous and rope-based challenge opportunities

Guidance taken from:

- The Association of Play Industries – provision of impact absorbing surfaces guidance
- Forestry commission guidance in Rope Swings, Tree houses and dens is clear about recommendations for fall heights when swinging or climbing of up to 2m and for further judgements to be made on the ground conditions and upon competencies of children
- Monkey do guidance has been incorporated for climbing and for using tree and rope swings (Guidance created with Play England)
- Grounds for Learning – The Playtime Revolution
- Growing Adventure – Forestry Commission and Tim Gill 2006
- Playgrounds – risks benefits and choices prepared bny Middlesex university for the Health and Safety Executive, 2002

Decision

- Climbing opportunities are an instinctive tendency for children and should be supported. Climbing offers huge potential for physical development and is enjoyable, memorable and promotes confidence and well-being.
- Climbing has risks, but can be well managed:
 - When children’s competencies are assessed and the capabilities of the group/child
 - When simple ground rules are agreed and implemented
 - When good group management and good judgements are made by members of staff on duty

- All safety checks are completed appropriately

Actions taken:

Fixed Climbing structures – management controls:

- Climb area installed and maintained by experienced, specialist play contractors – Eight Space playgrounds and Wilkinson Grounds Maintenance
- A thorough annual inspection and termly maintenance inspection carried out
- School staff carry out daily safety check patrols to check for damage, wear and tear or any changes to the usual conditions of the structures
- Climbing structure is checked by staff
- The soft surfaces and natural ground underneath the jump areas or beside climb structure are checked for sharp edges or objects prior to any playtime use
- Areas under jump zones are checked to ensure appropriate level of soft landing area

Supervision controls:

- Climb area supervised continuously by 1 staff member per 20 children and also by a roaming supervisor.
- *NB These supervision levels will be modified as competence and confidence increases in both children and adults*
- There is positive communication between staff and children through the fixed and roaming supervisors about how to manage movements around and between different surfaces and different levels. e.g: between grass, hard standing and boulders and running, jumping or bouncing around others using the climbing area
- Through safety check process prior to playtimes, a dynamic risk assessment process is undertaken by staff on the day, taking the effect of the weather and/or wind conditions into consideration which would trigger a range of control measures (e.g. suitable shoes and clothing for climbing in wet weather) or an age limit or closure of an area if extremely icy
- Staff continuously monitor the group conditions and number and flow of children using the climb area and regulate as required

Ground rules

These ground rules have been agreed with staff and communicated to children during their learning period of using the climb area:

- Children choose freely what they climb, without external pressure from adults or children
- Children are free to choose what and when they try new challenges and are supported when they feel ready
- Children do not receive any physical support (such as hand-holding) children climb up only what they feel they can climb down
- Children that get stuck are talked through ways to get themselves out of their position without causing themselves harm

- Children are not helped down but are highly supervised and verbally guided
- Initially children are guided to climb a distance of their own height to the ground with guidance given on the suitability of the surface underneath
- 10 children on the boulders at once
- Handwashing is encouraged after every playtime
- Only children wearing wellies are allowed in the moat

Tree climbing routines

- The same climbing ground rules apply as above and have been communicated to staff and children
- Positive and on-going communication is given between adult-child (at level appropriate to age) about the particular hazards posed by branches (through running into, or by cuts particularly head and eyes) by dead or growing branches on trees and branches and twigs on the ground.
- Staff will learn the path ways and footholds within trees to be able to verbally support and guide children
- Local factors: Not all staff are competent climbers at St Charles we do not promote adult climbing to support sport or talk to children
- Adults communicate and supervise from the ground and are trained to assist by being able to place a rope line into a tree to offer support to any child if needed

Climbing/Tree maintenance

- A daily visual check takes place in areas of overhanging trees and branches, and in favoured climbing trees, and/or after any instances of high winds (see also tree management RBA for ongoing annual inspection and maintenance practices)
- Grounds underneath favoured tree climbing areas are checked for sharp or irregular objects and anything found removed. Impact surfaces will be maintained and improved as required.
- Trees popular for climbing are assessed daily for use and damage. This includes for small, broken or spiky branches that could cause serious injury such as a puncture wound or eye injury

Related Actions and training

- Staff training on risk benefit assessment for climbing – completed April 2017
- Staff training to conduct a visual tree inspection – completed April 2017
- A tree assessment and report was carried out in April 2017 (report kept in Health and Safety file)
- Induction for any new staff including training and an annual refresher given to all staff

Further actions:

It is planned that hand-washing areas are to be provided outside of school during 2018-19

Ongoing management and monitoring:

- Daily checks and monitoring of all activity with logs of actions arising.
- Monitoring and sign off of any associated actions by headteacher
- Weekly review by staff team of behaviours or controls that need moderating

- Procedures, maintenance issues ground rules discussed amongst whole school community and subject to ongoing review
- Annual tree inspection to be carried out
- On-going education of staff through CPD and of children through conversation about hazards of natural environment and about routine hand washing after playtime

Equalities Statement:

St Charles RC Primary School is committed to valuing diversity and to equality of opportunity. We aim to create and promote an environment in which pupils, parents and staff are treated fairly and with respect, and feel able to contribute to the best of their abilities. The Governing Body recognises that it is unlawful to take into account anyone's gender, marital status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religious beliefs, age or sexual orientation. Full consideration has been given to this during the formulation of this policy as it is the governors' aim that no-one at St Charles RC Primary school should suffer discrimination, either directly or indirectly, or harassment on any of these grounds.