

The St Michael Steiner School

Risk Assessment Policy

Risk-taking is a normal part of life and one of the ways in which children learn to orientate themselves in the world. One of the basic tenets of Steiner Waldorf Education is that children do not learn by being told things, but through experience; giving children instructions and guidelines about how to be safe is largely ineffective. A child who always has an adult to tell him when it's safe to cross the road will never learn to assess the situation for himself and will be in danger when he eventually finds himself alone. By assessing and negotiating risks themselves, children become confident problem solvers and prepare themselves for the many and varied risks they will encounter in their lives.

While we do not believe that eliminating all risk from children's lives makes them safer, in schools we are dealing with large groups of children. In a group situation, the normal level of social interaction means that the children are more distracted by each other and also more likely to just follow the herd than make their own assessments of risky situations. This being the case, we assess the risks that may be encountered by children, staff, visitors and the public in the activities and environments that we plan, and manage or limit them where necessary.

This policy is drawn up with regard to the statutory requirements of the Health & Safety at Work Act and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.¹

What needs to be risk assessed?

The purpose of risk assessment is to identify hazards that may be encountered during the school day and evaluate any associated risks. The level of detail contained in a risk assessment should be sensible and proportionate to the level of risk involved. In many cases, a conversation with colleagues and some notes made is all that is needed.

As a general rule, all rooms and spaces (indoor or outdoor) used by the school should be risk assessed and then reviewed annually or if there are significant changes. Written risk assessments should be done for trips and off-site activities and any activities that involve potentially hazardous materials or equipment. Even so, you do not need to carry out a risk assessment every time you undertake the same activity, for example, if you regularly take pupils to the swimming pool or the park. This can be done once and then a regular check to ensure the precautions remain suitable is all that is required.

Sometimes the process of doing a risk assessment will lead to clarification and documenting of procedures that are already in place and can also help to identify the need for further training of supervising staff, higher adult/child ratios, dissemination of information to participants or parents, etc.

In addition, some specific risk assessments are required by legislation, for example, those concerning fire safety, pupil supervision, school trips, substances hazardous to health, use of tools and equipment and security. (See Health and Safety Policy)

Risk assessments should identify: i) what the risks are, ii) who is at risk, iii) how serious the risk is and iv) any measures that have been or need to be taken to manage or minimise it. Guidance for what to consider is given on the relevant forms. Any significant findings (e.g. a broken window, a crumbling cliff) while carrying out the assessment must be recorded.

¹ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/index.htm>

Responsibilities

- All staff are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for the lessons they teach and for any activities or trips they organise.
- Class Teachers and Kindergarten Teachers are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for their own classrooms
- Early Years Teachers are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for their children's outdoor play
- Subject teachers who have a designated room/area (e.g. Woodwork, Eurythmy, Art, Handwork, Science) are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for these rooms/areas. Where more than one teacher uses the space, they are collectively responsible.
- Admin staff are collectively responsible for carrying out risk assessments for offices and staff rooms.
- The Receptionist is responsible for carrying out risk assessments for visitors to the school (e.g. prospective parents, inspectors, student teachers)
- The Caretaker is responsible for carrying out risk assessments for all common areas including corridors, toilets, the kitchen, boundaries and the school grounds. In the case of school boundaries, there are legal requirements regarding security.
- The Caretaker is also responsible for carrying out risk assessments for contractors and service providers while they are on-site.
- Staff working with hazardous substances, tools or equipment are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for their use. In these cases, there is specific legislation that must be followed.
- The Lower and Middle School Class Teachers are collectively responsible for carrying out risk assessments for break times and outdoor play, both in the school grounds and in the park.
- The High School Class Guardians are collectively responsible for carrying out risk assessments for the High School students' break times.
- Where there is collective responsibility, each individual is responsible for ensuring that the risk assessments have been carried out in each case.
- All risk assessments must be shown to at least one other member of staff including at least one College member before the trip or activity takes place.
- In the case of trips and activities involving hazardous substances, tools or equipment, parents and older students (High School) should be made aware specifically that a risk assessment has been carried out and is available on request.

Forms

Risk Assessment Forms are given to all staff members and are available from the Administrator.

Communication

This policy and the relevant forms are given to all staff members.

Parents are made aware, via the Parents' handbook and, where appropriate, specifically by the teacher concerned, that risk assessments have been carried out and are available from reception on request.

Review

This policy and all risk assessments are reviewed annually.

Individual risk assessments for trips and activities are reviewed after use and updated as needed.

Useful links

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335111/DfE Health and Safety Advice 06 02 14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335111/DfE_Health_and_Safety_Advice_06_02_14.pdf) page 4

<https://www.stowe.co.uk/getmedia/84abe829-3810-4d2d-9d4e-45771f46e9a3/Risk-Assessment-Policy-review-Jan-15>