Outdoor Risk Assessment – Little Acorns Foundation Unit

Date of Assessment: 28th January 2026 **Assessed by: Jo Attwater**

Benefits	Children experience freedom when they play outside. Playing outside improves health, social and emotional wellbeing, improved immunity, all-round sensory development, neuro and physical development, as well as cognitive enhancement, including developing communication skills. It allows children to have an appreciation of the environment around them, stimulating their natural curiosity.

What is being assessed	What hazards may be present	What degree of injury could be reasonably expected?	What precautions have been put in place to reduce the risk of injury?	What likelihood is there of risk still occurring?	What is the risk rating?
Environment: Little Acorns Foundation Unit Outdoor Areas					

Security (Intruders / children leaving unsupervised) and Access	Perimeter Fence – breaches. Gates – trapped fingers/toes, escape / intruders. Unauthorised access through the doors/gate. Missing children, injury caused by vehicles and/or intruders/unauthorised persons.	High	Check perimeter fencing is sound. Only allow adults to open/close gates. Check gates are in working order. Ensure the gate to school is locked at all times (Padlock attached and bolts out of child reach). Ensure that during pick-up and drop off times that the gate is staffed if children are outdoors at these times. If low numbers make covering the d difficult, stop outdoor access until safe to resume.	Low	Low
Building and Access	Building is safe – check for loose tiles, brickwork falling causing injury etc. Guttering and waste pipes are sound. Windows and doors - check for broken glass causing cuts, wounds, loose fittings, fingers trapped broken handles that could cause injury.	High High	Building is sound. Building risk assessment. Daily communication between staff and site manager following visual checks if there are hazards/repairs needed fixing. Guttering and waste pipes are intact with no leaks. Windows and doors are intact and in good working order and reported so when they	Low Low	Low Low

	External tap – leaks could cause slipping and be a hazard, rust or flaking metal could cause cuts, abrasions or infection.	Medium	are not – restrict access if necessary. First Aid kit and trained member of staff to be available at all times outdoors for the care of the children. Wide gates provided for disabled access. Ensure doors are either propped open securely or they remain closed. Door protectors are in place. Check tap is in good working order and no leaks. In good condition – report if not or needs changing.	Low	Low
Evacuation	Fire, flood, gas, escape.	High	Fire evacuation policy and risk assessment updated regularly and adhered to. Regular fire drills/evacuation rehearsed and all children and adults aware of fire exits. Fire exits are labelled and kept clear at all times. All parents/carers and staff/users of the building are responsible for alerting staff/management and of any personal	Low	Low

			needs they or their children may have that could affect quick, but safe evacuation. Registers kept up to date and taken outside to check all individuals are present and accounted for.		
Safeguarding	Centre protocols, policies and procedures being breached leading to potential harm to children and staff.	High	Visitor protocol in place (see separate policy – signing in/out and badges etc). Secure entry. Staff remain at least at Ofsted minimum staff ratio and where any particular activity requires it. No personal mobile phones or photographic equipment permitted. Policies and procedures available at all times to staff and parents. Staff knowledgeable of policies and procedures – have read and signed to confirm. All staff have had up-to-date safeguarding training.	Low	Low

Adverse Weather: Rain / Hail Frost/ice/snow/cold Sun/Heat	Injury from slips trips and falls, chafing from wet clothes, injury from heavy or large hail. Slips, trips, falls, chilblains, ingestion of snow, falling sharp icicles. Heatstroke/sunstroke, sunburn, sun damage, dehydration.	Medium Medium to High	First Aid kit and a first aid trained member of staff to be available at all times outdoor. Staff to be vigilant at all times. Parents encouraged to supply appropriate clothing. Spare clothing available if needed. Areas of shelter provided. Deploy staff to support safety - reduce area of play and time outdoors if necessary. Benefits of play in all-weather reiterated where necessary. Staff mindful of icicles, Gritting and/or snow removal from pathways. Children to have permission granted for sun cream via contract – child may bring own cream. All outside to wear a hat and have access to shade. Staff to be mindful of duration of exposure and times of day as per 'sun safe' guidelines. Children and adults encouraged to drink more water – water	Low Low	Low Low

			bottles and/or water cups easily accessible and available at all times.		
Wind	Injury from falling/flying debris, slips, trips and falls, irritation to eyes/ears.		Building maintained and risk assessment to cover loose tiles etc. Resources not to be placed on top of sheds etc, any falling trees or other plants risk assessed. Fences etc checked on an on-going basis. Areas to be swept regularly.		
Fog	Supervision and safeguarding – potential harm caused.		Deployment of staff to support safety for all. If fog is too thick to allow full visual of all children, reduce the play area size. If fog is severe and visibility of all children is unsafe, outdoor play to end.		
Electrical Storm	Risk of injury, burns, electrocution.		No outdoor play in the event of an electrical storm.		

			In all cases: Possibility of using other play areas. Business Continuity Plans. Emergency Evacuation Procedures. Reduction of continuous time spent outdoors. Outdoor play ends.		
Ground/surface	Uneven ground can cause slips, trips, falls leading to injuries, including wet conditions and stagnant water causing potential infection.	Medium	First Aid kit and a first aid trained member of staff to be available at all times outdoors children and staff. Variety of ground to promote physical development and challenge. Stagnant water is disposed of. Wipe/dry equipment before use.	Low	Low
	Sharp needles, drug paraphernalia -causing injuries or infections.	High Low	Do not approach or touch. Call County Council immediately for safe removal. No outdoor play until removed. Regular daily checks and report immediately.	Low	Low

	Debris, litter, foreign objects – causing injuries or infections. Animal faeces – infections. Manhole covers or holes in ground – slips, trips, falls causing injuries.	Low	Dispose of safely any litter/debris/faeces if able to do so using appropriate gloves/safety wear and disinfect area. Ensure coverings are secure. Any holes have been suitably covered e.g. tarmacked.	Low	Low
Hut/shed	Slips, trips, falls, cuts, bruises, bumps, injuries to staff from lifting and dragging out heavy items, health and hygiene.	Medium	Staff to remain vigilant at all times. Door to shed/hut to be closed at all times unless safe access to resources is clear. Children not to access shed/hut independently where appropriate. Resources sorted and cleaned regularly. Items stacked safely. Any hazardous items to be stored at a higher level out of reach of children. All staff to ask for help when required.	Low	Low
Animals/insects	Insect bites, stings and allergies or anaphylaxis.	High	Hygiene routines in place. Respect for animals discussed where necessary. Appropriate access to any animals. Report significant number of bees/wasps to pest	Low	Low

	Disease or infection from rodent, bird/animals faeces.		control if a nest is present/suspected. Restrict access to area if bees/wasps are swarming or if there is an excessive number present. Known allergies to insects or bees listed. Staff will be aware of any children with specific allergies and medication labelled clearly and administered if permission granted. First Aid trained staff and kit available at all times. Dispose of safely any faeces if able to do so using appropriate gloves/safety wear and disinfect area.		
Group needs	2 – 5-year-olds with mixed abilities and children in groups of various ages and abilities – injuries caused by older or younger children. New equipment or new children – unfamiliar with resources and play area.	Low	Ensure that staff are vigilant. Ratios are considered to meet children's individual needs. Deployment of staff supports safety – reduction in area of play if necessary. Knowledge of the children's developmental	Low	Low

			needs and abilities through key person system. Children taught/modelled how to use equipment and area safely. Rules explained and reminded.		
Environment: Equipment/Activities/Resources					
Vehicles area (tricycles, bikes, scooters, pull along toys, ride on toys etc)	Broken parts, flat tyres, rusting or flaking metal. Children falling off or tripping on a vehicle.	Low Low	Vehicles to be checked daily to ensure they are in working order; no broken parts, good condition etc. Adult supervision - correct ratios outside. Ensure the children are clear about the expectations and routines for using the wheeled toys before the children can access them independently. Helmets to be used when riding the vehicles (if Nursery policy/rules).	Low Low	Low Low

Tunnels, tyres, wooden blocks and crates, slide or climbing equipment.	Children falling from the tunnel, crates, slide, frame. Children falling onto a hard surface. Loose fixings causing injury. The tunnel and non-waterproof equipment being affected by the weather e.g. frozen, wet and slippery, or too hot causing heat related injury.	Medium – High (depending on height) Low Low	Ensure children are clear about the expectations and routines for using the equipment. This to be the focus of an adult led activity before the children can access it independently. The equipment is on a level surface.	Low Low Low	Medium Low Low
DIY Tools and Woodwork	Children getting hit by a tool – injuries. Cutting body e.g. finger with the saw or other sharp tool., splinters.	High	Model good playing – adult to keep a close eye on this area to ensure children are playing and using equipment appropriately. First Aider and kit always in outside area.	Low	Medium

Wooden benches	Falling off, injury scrapes, bruises, grazes and cuts.		Staff to be vigilant at all times. Seats are secure with no loose screws, nails or splinters. Report if contain and do not use.		
Growing plants	Trips/falls on wet grass, bees/wasps/insect bites or stings, stinging nettles, touching and handling plants, soil - risk of tetanus, hay fever allergies, ingesting or inserting into orifices seeds or bulbs – toxic and blockages.	Low	Staff will inspect the area before using - visual and/or outdoor daily check. Staff will supervise whilst children use the garden. Staff will make sure that children wash their hands after gardening. Provide hand washing facilities. Gardening or plastic gloves can be provided especially if child has cuts on his/her hands. Any cuts to children's' hands to be covered by a plaster. Setting asked to check that children have received tetanus immunisation. Known allergies to insects or bees listed. Staff will be aware of any children with specific plant allergies or hay fever, and carry the necessary medication and permission to administer. All staff first aid trained and kit available at	Low	Low

			all times. Any plants, seeds or bulbs to be closely supervised – ensure children understand the importance not to put them in their mouth. Check against toxic items list. Procedures in place when using hazardous plants for educational purposes (i.e. daffodil bulbs).		

Exploring natural materials including mud kitchen	Eye injury, cuts, scrapes, bruises and grazes, trips, slips and falls risk of choking, insertion into children's orifices. Debris, litter, foreign objects. Animal Faeces – infections (see above) Wooden equipment can be slippery in icy or damp weather. Bees/wasps/insect bites or stings, stinging nettles or cuts from brambles, touching and handling plants, soil - risk of tetanus, hay fever allergies, ingesting seeds or bulbs - toxic.	Low	Resources are age appropriate. Staff vigilant at all times. Ratios are maintained and the needs of the children are met. Children supported to access activities appropriately. Procedures in place when using hazardous plants for educational purposes (i.e. daffodil bulbs). Children's equipment labelled & accessible. Adults equipment stored safely in separate area. Visual and/or outdoor daily check. Remove if safe to do so and dispose of safely. Staff will make sure that children wash their hands after gardening. Provide hand washing facilities Stagnant water is disposed of. Check for damp or icy conditions if outdoor wooden furniture is a slip/trip hazard –	Low	Low

			refrain from using. Any cuts to children's' hands to be covered by a plaster. Setting asked to check that children have received tetanus immunisation. Known allergies to insects or bees listed. Staff will be aware of any children with specific plant allergies or hay fever, and carry the necessary medication and permission to administer. All staff first aid trained. Any plants, seeds or bulbs to be closely supervised – ensure children understand the importance not to put them in their mouth. Check against toxic items list. Clear away nettles and brambles		
Sand play	Sand on the floor – can be a slip hazard. Bacteria from others in the sand as well as insects. Sand being flicked or thrown into eyes or other body parts causing pain, discomfort and irritation, sprains and strains or back	Medium	Staff ensure that the area is kept free of sand spillages through good housekeeping and by encouraging children to be tidy. Floor surface should be non-slip and easy to clean/sweep.	Medium	Medium

	injuries caused by filling trough/ sandbags/containers, emptying heavy containers and travelling with the sand.		Sand is changed periodically or when known to be contaminated. Visually look for insects that may have found their way in. Only sterilized play sand is used. Model for children how to play in the sand appropriately and being mindful of others – discuss rules. Containers for sand and water are cleaned with a suitable mild detergent. First Aid trained – sterilised eye bath. Staff manual handling training. Sand pit covered at the end of the day or wheeled under the sheltered area overnight. Staff to work together when lifting the lid on/off and when moving the tray to prevent staff injury. Filling to be completed using smaller containers. Empty first using smaller containers/buckets to reduce weight prior to emptying completely.		

Water play	Water - Spillages, slippery surfaces – slips, trips and falls, sprains and strains or back injuries caused by filling trough/ water containers, emptying heavy water containers, communal use/ stagnant water-risk of infection, drowning. Risk of legionella from stagnant water Risk of skin irritation from additives to water such as bubbles, soap flakes, glitter and colouring. Children drinking the water. Temperature of water – too hot could cause burns, too cold – could cause frostbite during prolonged used. Ice – can cause slips/trips and falls.	Low	Water play is positioned in an area with good drainage. Surfaces are non-slip. Staff to be vigilant. Staff to work together when lifting the lid on/off and when moving the tray to prevent staff injury. Filling to be completed using hose or smaller containers. Empty first using smaller containers/buckets to reduce weight prior to emptying completely. Fresh water to be used each session. Numbers of children accessing activity to be limited where necessary. Water in tray at a suitable heigh to avoid drowning. Adult supervision required. Stagnant water is disposed of. Children will wear protective aprons during the activity. Staff to inform parents and seek their advice when adding new possible irritants. Adult direction given so children clearly understand the safety rules proper behaviour expected particularly	Low	Low

			in relation to drinking or putting their face into the water. Check that the temperature if using warm water is safe, limit the time spent if water has turned to ice.		
Soap/shampoo/foam/bubbles /slime/perfumed products	Risk of skin irritation and allergies from additives to water such as bubbles, soap flakes, glitter and colouring Children ingesting products – potential toxins or poisoning.	Low	Children will wear protective aprons during the activity. Staff to inform parents and seek their advice when adding new possible irritants. Adult direction given so children clearly understand the safety rules and behaviour expected particularly in relation to ingesting the ingredients/products. List of children with known product allergies, sensitive skin or eczema – all staff are aware. All staff are first aid trained. Age-appropriate activity and adult supervision at all times.	Low	Low
Playing with food such as – oats, beans, cream, pasta, rice,	Food safety and hygiene issues including germs.	Low	Children wash hands in warm soapy water before handling food and as required if	Low	Low

pulses, cereals, spaghetti, sugar, flour, ice	Choking from swallowing food. Allergic reaction to foods.		fingers go in noses, mouths or trousers. Tables cleaned with a fresh cloth and disinfectant before and after use. Children are reminded not to put uncooked food in their mouths. Children will be regularly reminded of good hygiene rules and the reasons for these. Food played with in a communal area to be disposed of as soon as activity has finished. Children with SEN to have extra support. Adult supervision throughout the activity. All food and drink is stored appropriately at the end and kept inside. List of children with known food-related allergies – all staff are aware. All staff are first aid trained.		
Loose and small parts play	Injury from toys being thrown or used inappropriately, eye injury, cuts, scrapes, bruises and grazes, trips, slips and falls	Low	Children instructed on how to use the loose parts correctly. Children under 3 years of age not to play with small items due to	Low	Low

	risk of choking and swallowing, insertion into children's orifices, trapped fingers caused by holes in small parts, sharp edges or broken pieces – causing cuts or wounds.		choking hazard. Small parts to be stored out of reach for under 3's. Children instructed to put away a set of loose parts before getting a new set out. Close adult supervision at all times. All staff first aid trained. Age-appropriate materials and materials inspected for sharp edges or if broken – these to be removed and disposed of safely. Children with SEN to have extra support.		
Paint	Throwing or using the paintbrush incorrectly causing injury to themselves or others, flicking paint in the eye, ingesting paint, dripping paint and or water on the floor causing slips/trips/falls, objects such as glitter or other textures are added to the paint causing a swallowing hazard or stomach upset.	Low	Children are taught and reminded how to hold the paintbrush correctly and safely inside and outside, adult supervision at the painting area. Children are taught to manage quantities and reminded how to use the paints, spillages are cleaned up quickly and surfaces are dried. Resources are age appropriate. Staff vigilant at all times. Ratios are maintained and the needs of the children	Low	Low

			are met. Children supported to access activities appropriately. Non-toxic and washable paint is used only. Aprons are worn.		

Ratios:

2 years – 1:5

3 and over: 1:13 (Directly with children QTS, Level 6)

1:8 (Level 3)