

## Risk Assessment Policy 2026

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| <b>Last Review</b><br>May 2026 | <b>Next Review</b><br>May 2028 | <b>Review Frequency</b><br>Every 2 years | <b>Coordinator</b><br>Head of Group<br>Living | <b>Nominated Trustee</b><br>EC&T<br>Committee |
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### Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to staff on how risks are identified, assessed and managed across the Mulberry Bush School. Risk assessment is central to everyday practice and underpins how staff make thoughtful, informed decisions that balance safety with children's developmental needs.

Working with children who present with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties involves managing risk daily. Much of this work is dynamic and responsive, informed by staff knowledge of each child, the environment, and the situation at hand. This policy aims to support staff to carry out risk assessment in a reflective, consistent and child-centred way, ensuring children are safeguarded while being enabled to grow, learn and develop independence.

### Aims of this policy are to: -

- Ensure children, staff and others are protected from avoidable harm
- Promote a shared understanding of how risk assessment is carried out at the Mulberry Bush
- Support staff to manage risk in ways that are proportionate and responsive
- Encourage **positive risk-taking** as a meaningful part of children's development
- Ensure that risk assessments are clearly recorded, communicated and reviewed
- Meet all relevant legal, regulatory and safeguarding requirements

### Levels of Risk at the Mulberry Bush

All children placed at the Mulberry Bush have a history of significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and may present with behaviours that increase levels of risk to themselves or others. The overarching aim of the organisation is to support children, over time, to develop the skills and emotional capacity necessary to manage safely within their families, schools and local communities.

To achieve this, staff work to create a carefully planned environment: -

- That feels as normalising as possible, reflecting both home and school life
- Where children can practise living and learning alongside others in real and meaningful ways
- Where expectations promote growth, emotional development and responsibility

- Where trust, self-esteem and a sense of being trusted can be safely developed

Children need opportunities to encounter and learn from risk within this environment so that they can develop judgement and resilience. It is therefore essential that risk is not eliminated entirely, but managed in a way that is thoughtful, planned and supported by appropriate levels of supervision. Staffing levels, experience and training are carefully planned to reflect the level of risk present at any given time, and managers hold responsibility for monitoring risk within their areas of practice.

### **What Is a Risk Assessment?**

A risk assessment is a structured way of identifying situations where harm might occur and considering what needs to be in place to reduce that risk to an acceptable and manageable level. At the Mulberry Bush, risk assessments draw together: -

- Knowledge of the child and their history
- Professional judgement
- Therapeutic and clinical understanding
- Environmental factors
- Learning from previous incidents

Risk assessments should be clear, proportionate and practical, supporting staff to make safe decisions in real situations.

### **Types of Risk Assessment**

#### **Individual Child Risk Assessments**

An Individual Child Risk Assessment is completed for each child as part of the referral process and developed throughout the placement. These assessments draw on information from placing authorities, care and education planning, clinical input, and staff observations. They are reviewed regularly through Internal Case Conferences and updated whenever there is a significant change in circumstances or behaviour.

#### **Activity and Trip Risk Assessments**

Activity and Trip Risk Assessments are completed for activities or venues that pose an increased level of risk. Assessments for regularly used venues are held centrally on SharePoint and should be checked for currency before use. Trips involving unfamiliar settings or higher risk activities require more detailed planning and assessment in advance.

#### **Environmental Risk Assessments**

Environmental risks relate to buildings, equipment and the wider physical environment. Maintenance and administrative staff hold specific responsibilities, but all members of staff are expected to report hazards promptly so that risks can be minimised.

#### **Locality Risk Assessments**

Locality risk assessments consider risks within the surrounding community, including crime, exploitation, missing from care patterns and other contextual safeguarding

concerns. These are reviewed by senior managers to ensure practice reflects changing external risks.

### **Key Areas of Risk**

Where relevant, risk assessments should take account of: -

- Individual behaviour patterns and emotional needs including
  - Violence & aggression
  - Sexualised behaviour
  - Allegations
  - Damaging property
  - Self-harm and risk-taking behaviour
  - Harm to animals
- Bullying, discrimination and peer dynamics
- Missing from care
- Child sexual or criminal exploitation
- Substance misuse
- Online safety
- Use of tools or equipment
- Environmental hazards
- Medical risks

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for: -

- Reading and following this policy
- Familiarising themselves with children's Individual Risk Assessments and relevant plans
- Using existing Activity and Trip Risk Assessments and updating these where necessary
- Informing line managers of any significant risks
- Contributing to ongoing, dynamic risk assessment in day-to-day practice

Managers are responsible for monitoring risk within their areas, ensuring assessments are completed, reviewed and shared appropriately, and supporting staff through supervision and guidance.

The Registered Manager and Headteacher maintain overall oversight of risk management across the organisation and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Trustees maintain oversight through policy monitoring and governance processes.

### **Reviewing and Recording Risk**

Risk assessments are living documents and must be reviewed: -

- When circumstances or behaviour change
- Following significant incidents or safeguarding concerns
- After missing from care episodes
- As part of scheduled case reviews

All risk assessments must be clearly recorded, accessible to relevant staff, and updated promptly to reflect new information.

### **Positive Risk-Taking**

The Mulberry Bush recognises that appropriate risk-taking is essential to children's development. Risk assessments should support children to participate in learning, play and community activities and to gradually take on responsibility, rather than placing unnecessary restrictions on their lives. Managing risk well means enabling growth while maintaining safety.

### **Role of the Trustee Body**

Oversight through the Education, Care & Treatment Board of Trustees and monitoring of policies during Trustee visits.