Our Rock Academy

Risk Assessment Policy

" A nurturing, ambitious and inclusive school where every child feels known, valued and connected."

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Introduction

At Our Rock Academy, effective risk management is fundamental to safeguarding and supporting every pupil to learn, develop and thrive in a safe environment. We believe that young people learn through challenge, exploration and new experiences. The purpose of risk assessment is therefore not to eliminate risk altogether, but to identify foreseeable hazards, reduce risks to an acceptable level and enable pupils to participate safely in all aspects of school life.

Our approach reflects our vision of creating a school where every child thrives academically, socially and emotionally, leaving equipped with the confidence, knowledge and skills to positively shape the world. Risk assessment is underpinned by our commitment to ensuring every pupil feels known, valued and connected.

Purpose

This policy sets out how Our Rock Academy identifies, assesses and manages risk to protect the health, safety and welfare of pupils, staff, visitors and others affected by the school's activities.

It provides a consistent framework for undertaking suitable and sufficient risk assessments and supports compliance with health and safety legislation and the Independent School Standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all school activities, whether they take place on the school site or elsewhere.

Risk assessments may be required for individual pupils, curriculum activities, educational visits, therapeutic interventions, work experience, premises, equipment, events and any other activity where there is the potential for significant harm.

All staff have a responsibility to identify hazards, report concerns and contribute to effective risk management.

Principles of Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a continuous process rather than a one-off exercise. The school adopts a proportionate and common-sense approach that focuses on significant foreseeable risks rather than attempting to eliminate every possible hazard.

Every risk assessment follows the same five-stage process:

Identify

Identify any hazards that could reasonably cause harm.

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Assess

Consider who might be harmed and how likely the harm is to occur.

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Control

Identify measures that will reduce the likelihood or impact of the risk.

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Record

Document significant findings and communicate them to relevant staff.

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Review

Review the assessment regularly and whenever circumstances change.

Risk assessments should always seek to balance safety with enabling pupils to develop independence, resilience and confidence.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Proprietor has overall responsibility for ensuring that suitable arrangements are in place for the management of risk across the school.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy, ensuring appropriate risk assessments are completed, monitoring compliance and ensuring that staff receive appropriate training.

Staff are responsible for undertaking or contributing to risk assessments relevant to their roles, following agreed control measures, reporting hazards promptly and using professional judgement to respond to changing circumstances.

Pupils are encouraged, where appropriate to their age and ability, to develop an awareness of risk and participate in making safe choices.

Types of Risk Assessment

The school undertakes a range of risk assessments to support the safe operation of the school.

These include assessments relating to:

- the school premises and grounds;
- curriculum activities;
- science, food technology and practical subjects;
- educational visits and off-site learning;
- work experience;
- fire safety and emergency procedures;
- individual pupils;
- medical needs;
- positive handling;
- transport;
- contractors and visitors;
- significant events and activities.

Individual Pupil Risk Assessments

As an independent specialist school, many pupils require individual risk assessments to ensure their needs can be met safely and effectively.

Risk assessments may be developed where pupils present risks associated with behaviour, emotional regulation, communication, medical conditions, sensory processing, absconding, self-injury, aggression or other identified needs.

These assessments are informed by information gathered during admission, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), professional reports, discussions with parents and carers, previous educational settings and ongoing observations within school.

Individual risk assessments are working documents. They are reviewed regularly and updated whenever a pupil's needs, presentation or circumstances change.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Whilst written risk assessments provide the foundation for safe practice, staff are expected to continually assess risk throughout the school day.

Dynamic risk assessment involves recognising changing circumstances, evaluating potential risks and responding appropriately using professional judgement.

This is particularly important when supporting pupils whose emotional regulation, behaviour or wellbeing may change rapidly. Staff should always take the least restrictive approach necessary to maintain safety and should seek assistance whenever additional support is required.

Educational Visits and Off-Site Learning

Educational visits form an important part of the curriculum at Our Rock Academy and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop independence, confidence and real-world learning.

All visits will be appropriately planned and risk assessed before they take place. The level of planning will be proportionate to the nature of the activity, the environment, the needs of the pupils and any significant foreseeable risks.

Individual pupil risk assessments will be considered alongside visit-specific assessments to ensure appropriate supervision, staffing, transport and emergency arrangements are in place.

Where external providers are used, the school will satisfy itself that appropriate safety arrangements and insurance are in place before activities commence.

Specialist Activities

Additional risk assessments may be required for activities that present increased levels of risk or require specialist knowledge.

These may include practical curriculum areas, therapeutic interventions, outdoor learning, work experience, physical activities and the use of specialist equipment.

Staff leading these activities must ensure that appropriate control measures are implemented before the activity begins.

Recording and Reviewing Risk Assessments

Risk assessments will be recorded using the school's approved templates and stored securely so they are accessible to relevant staff.

Risk assessments will be reviewed:

- annually;
- following an accident, incident or near miss;

- where a pupil's needs change;
- where there are significant changes to an activity or environment; or
- following changes to legislation or guidance.

Reviews should ensure that control measures remain effective and continue to reflect current practice.

Training

Staff will receive appropriate training in risk assessment as part of their induction and ongoing professional development.

Additional training will be provided where staff undertake specialist activities or have responsibilities for educational visits, positive handling or other higher-risk areas.

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher will monitor the implementation of this policy through routine management oversight, review of completed risk assessments and investigation of accidents, incidents and near misses.

The Proprietor will receive assurance that appropriate arrangements are in place to identify and manage risk across the school.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where legislation, guidance or operational requirements change.