



Risk/Benefit Assessment for Tree Climbing/Swinging

The benefits from engaging in Forest School activities are numerous and compelling; for the pupils, for the staff working with the pupils and for the school as a whole. The intent of Forest School provision is to offer the pupils an acceptable risk activity to enhance their learning opportunities and begin to develop their own risk management strategies. If we only provide a sanitised environment and risk adverse activities, pupils will not explore and discover the world for themselves, they will only experience a safety conscious environment.

Name of Activity: Tree Climbing (including logs and stumps) Location: Forest School area in Early Years; Nursery climbing tree in outdoor area			Assessment conducted by: S.Gaied Position: L3 Forest School Leader (trainee)		Date of assessment: 02 February 2022				
The Benefit			Learning to make risk judgements and manage risk, as well as how to behave/move safely on, around, under, on top of and through trees, logs, tree stumps, roots etc Developing balance, co-ordination, strength and general physical literacy, as well as confidence in own physical capabilities. Improving core strength and control, essential pre-requisite skills for early writing Building trusting relationships, team work and self-confidence: group working and social skills, including turn taking and socially supporting each other verbally and physically. Learning about tree types and properties (strength, flexibility and rooting) Builds resilience and then confidence through success and challenge. Showing respect for, enjoyment of and responsibility for the natural environment. Supports Early Years outcomes in Physical Development, Communication & Language, PSED, Mathematics, Literacy, Understanding the World Enhances characteristics of effective learning: resilience, perseverance, cooperation, problem-solving, independence, self-control, concentration etc An opportunity to learn new skills outdoors; feeling the freedom, wonder and awe that only nature can provide.			Who will benefit?		Pupils Staff Wider school community Families	
The Hazard		What might happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls		Level of Risk after controls	Responsibility		
Falls from a height from the tree to the ground		Serious injury: concussion, broken bones	High	* Staff to supervise the trees/areas being used for tree climbing. *In every forest school session, pupils will be given rules and safety advice regarding tree climbing: *One pupil per branch, log, stump.		Medium to Low	FS Leader All Staff Pupils		



			<p>*Pupils are taught to assess branches for strength. For example, the branch must be thicker than their arm before climbing on it, and must be a live branch.</p> <p>*Pupils will usually only climb to a distance of their own height from the ground.</p> <p>*Pupils are NEVER put up into a tree. If they cannot climb up themselves they do not possess the necessary strength or coordination to be remain safe.</p> <p>*Pupils must ask before climbing a tree and an adult must be actively supervising.</p> <p>*Safe tree climbing rules to remember:</p> <p><i>The Rule of Three</i></p> <p>There are four points on your body that come in contact with the tree's branches: two hands and two feet. At least three of these points should be supported by branches at all times. [Reason: If one of the three branches breaks, then at least two branches will still be supporting you.]</p> <p><i>Keep Close to the Trunk</i></p> <p>Always step onto or grab a branch at the point closest to the tree's trunk. [Reason: This is where the branch can support the most weight.]</p> <p><i>Stay off the Dead</i></p> <p>Avoid using dead branches when climbing. If you must use a dead branch, be sure to follow the "Keep Close to the Trunk" rule. [Reason: Dead branches can easily snap; living branches will bend before they break.]</p> <p><i>Test Weak Branches</i></p> <p>If you're not sure if a branch will support your weight, test it out by stepping on it (or grabbing it) at a point far away from the tree's trunk. Be sure that you follow the Rule of Three as you do this. If it passes the test, then step on it (or grab it) at a point close to the trunk.</p> <p><i>If It Doesn't Feel Right, Don't Do It</i></p> <p>If for any reason you feel uncomfortable with what you're doing, then stop.</p> <p>*Smaller trees will be selected, reducing possibility of excessive height being gained. Beech/Yew trees will not be used.</p>		
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Falling over natural obstacles such as tree stumps, logs, tree roots etc	<p>Serious injury: concussion, broken bones</p> <p>Minor injury: bumps, bruises, grazes</p>	High	<p>*ongoing control from Emmaus staff, supervision of traversing over and around stumps, logs, roots at all times, although with group competence this may become more subtle.</p> <p>*log stumps used in fire circle/social circle are for seating not climbing</p> <p>*pupils are encouraged to make their own prior assessment of the risk of climbing over or on top of natural obstacles</p> <p>* if wet or icy, natural obstacles will not be used for climbing purposes</p>	Low	<p>FS Lead</p> <p>All staff</p> <p>Pupils</p>
Ropes: collision into other obstacles, fall from rope swing hammock, ladder	<p>Serious injury: concussion, broken bones</p> <p>Minor injury: bumps, bruises, grazes, rope burn</p>	High	<p>* ropes, knots & fixings checked by Emmaus staff before every session</p> <p>*ensure the swing area is free from other children/staff</p> <p>*hammock not to be tied above 1m or touching the ground</p> <p>*1 person on the swing/in the hammock at a time</p> <p>*ongoing control from Emmaus staff, supervision of swinging on hammock or rope ladder or monkey swing at all times, although with group competence this may become more subtle.</p> <p>* children trained in how to get into hammock safely (bottom first, two feet on the floor, swing legs in) and out again (swing legs out, two feet on floor to push out)</p> <p>*children trained in awareness of hazards around them that they could crash into & show awareness of swinging with control</p> <p>*rope ladder installed at low level with floor</p>	Medium to Low	<p>FS Lead</p> <p>All staff</p> <p>Pupils</p>
Sharp pointy branches or twigs	Eye injury, scrapes, scratches	High	<p>*Staff and pupils to assess the tree prior to climbing. Pupils are taught to:</p> <p>Recognise dead branches</p> <p>Test before they climb</p> <p>Assess the branches around before making their next move.</p> <p>*Close supervision to prevent risky or dangerous moves or positions</p> <p>*Broken branches that may snag on pupil clothing or otherwise cause injury may be removed by staff.</p>	Low	<p>FS Lead</p> <p>All Staff</p> <p>Pupils</p>
Adverse Weather conditions	Serious injury from falling trees/branches in windy weather	Medium	<p>*FS Lead to check weather forecast prior to the session to check for wet, windy, icy or stormy weather conditions</p> <p>* FS Lead to dynamically assess weather conditions during the session.</p>	Low	FS Lead



	Serious injury from lightning strikes Serious injury from slips and falls in wet/icy conditions		* Forest School sessions will be suspended in case of storms or if wind conditions exceed Beaufort Scale number 6 (strong breeze) * Trees will not be used for climbing in icy or wet weather conditions.		
<p>Tree climbing/obstacle climbing is an enjoyable, memorable, confidence building activity that can develop physical literacy and risk management skills in all ages. The risks posed are manageable when related to the competence of the group, simple ground rules, and an Emmaus/Forest School staff member who makes good judgement and has good group management.</p> <p>Providing the safety procedures listed above are put into place to manage the potential risk of tree climbing, the risk level is LOW for all activities, with the benefits outweighing the risks by far.</p>					
Signed: S.Gaied FS Trainee Leader				Date: 22/02/22	