Risk Assessment Policy

2026–2027

Serenity School

Author / Policy Owner	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Date of Approval	01 September 2026
Date of Next Review	01 September 2027
Operational Policy Holder	Headteacher
Approval	COO
Publication	School Website and Staff Handbook

Contents

1. Purpose and aims

Serenity School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, health and safety of pupils, staff, visitors and others who may be affected by school activities. Risk assessment is an integral part of safe, proportionate and effective decision-making.

The school will:

- identify foreseeable hazards and assess the likelihood and potential severity of harm;
- put in place proportionate control measures so far as is reasonably practicable;
- ensure risk assessments are practical, accessible and understood by the staff who need to implement them;
- enable pupils to access education, enrichment and appropriate challenge safely, rather than using risk assessment to unnecessarily restrict participation;
- take account of individual needs, including SEND, disability, medical needs, communication needs and vulnerability;
- review risk assessments when circumstances change, after incidents or near misses, and at planned intervals; and
- maintain evidence that identified controls are implemented and monitored.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all school activities, premises and persons for whom the school has responsibility. It includes risks arising during the school day, before- and after-school activities, educational visits, transport, work-related activities, contractors, visitors and activities taking place away from the school site.

The policy applies to general, activity-based and individual risk assessments. It should be read alongside the school's safeguarding, health and safety, behaviour, medical, educational visits and emergency procedures.

3. Legal and regulatory framework

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 3, paragraph 16, which requires the proprietor to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare through the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy;
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, including the duty to assess risks and the specific provisions relating to new or expectant mothers and young people;
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH);
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012;
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992;
- The Work at Height Regulations 2005;
- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992;
- The Equality Act 2010;

- the Prevent duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and current statutory Prevent duty guidance; and
- Department for Education and Health and Safety Executive guidance relevant to health and safety, first aid, security and risk management in schools.

Risk assessment is not a paper exercise. The standard is met through effective implementation of the policy and the control measures identified.

4. Definitions and principles

Term	Meaning
Hazard	Something with the potential to cause harm.
Risk	The combination of the likelihood that harm will occur and the severity of that harm.
Risk assessment	A structured process for identifying hazards, deciding who may be harmed and how, evaluating risk, and identifying proportionate control measures.
Control measure	An action, system, adaptation or safeguard used to eliminate or reduce risk.
Residual risk	The level of risk remaining after control measures have been applied.
Dynamic risk assessment	A real-time professional judgement used when circumstances change or an unforeseen hazard arises. It complements, but does not replace, a written risk assessment where one is required.

The following principles apply:

- Risk should be reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable level.
- Controls should be proportionate to the actual risk and should not create avoidable barriers to pupils' education or inclusion.
- Risk assessments should identify groups or individuals who may be particularly vulnerable.
- Where a risk concerns safeguarding, the safeguarding procedure takes precedence and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed without delay.
- Where risk cannot be adequately controlled at school level, the matter must be escalated through the leadership hierarchy.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Chair and proprietor

The proprietor has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the Independent School Standards relating to welfare, health and safety are met. The Chair provides governance oversight and receives escalation where risks are significant, strategic, persistent or cannot be adequately controlled through the normal leadership structure.

5.2 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- holds executive accountability for ensuring effective risk management arrangements are in place across the schools;
- ensures significant risks are appropriately resourced, mitigated and escalated to the Chair where required;
- provides strategic direction where a risk affects more than one school or requires organisational action.

5.3 Executive Headteacher (EHT)

- provides oversight and challenge to Headteachers in relation to significant and recurring risks;
- ensures risk management standards are applied consistently within the schools for which they are responsible;
- escalates unresolved or significant matters to the CEO.

5.4 Headteacher (HT)

- is accountable for the effective implementation of this policy within the school;
- ensures suitable and sufficient risk assessments are completed, implemented and reviewed;
- ensures staff responsible for assessments are competent and have sufficient information and support;
- ensures significant findings are acted upon and resources are allocated where required;
- escalates risks that cannot be adequately controlled to the EHT.

5.5 Head of School (HOS)

- supports the day-to-day implementation and monitoring of risk assessments;
- checks that staff understand and apply required controls;
- ensures emerging risks, incidents, near misses and changes in circumstances are promptly reviewed;
- escalates concerns to the Headteacher.

5.6 Chief Operating Officer (COO) and central support

The COO is the policy owner and provides central assurance, operational challenge and coordination where risks relate to estates, health and safety, organisational systems or require central action. Relevant central leads may support schools within their professional remit.

5.7 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL leads on safeguarding risk where a concern relates to abuse, exploitation, radicalisation, peer-on-peer harm, missing education or other safeguarding matters. Safeguarding concerns must be recorded and managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

5.8 Staff, volunteers, pupils and parents/carers

- Staff and volunteers must familiarise themselves with relevant risk assessments, apply identified controls and report hazards, incidents, near misses or changes promptly.
- Pupils should be supported, at an appropriate developmental and communication level, to understand safety expectations and report concerns or hazards.
- Parents/carers should provide relevant information that may affect a pupil's safety and follow reasonable school safety arrangements.

5.9 Contractors

Contractors must provide suitable risk assessments and method statements where required, comply with site arrangements and immediately report changes or hazards. The school remains responsible for ensuring contractor activity does not create uncontrolled risk to pupils, staff or visitors.

6. When a risk assessment is required

A risk assessment must be completed where there is a foreseeable risk that requires controls beyond ordinary safe practice. This includes, where relevant:

- premises, equipment, fire, asbestos, hazardous substances, manual handling and work at height;
- educational visits, off-site activities, transport and community access;
- curriculum activities, practical subjects, vocational provision and physical activities;
- individual pupils where needs, behaviours, medical conditions, mobility, communication or vulnerability create a foreseeable risk requiring specific controls;
- new or expectant mothers, young workers and other staff who may be particularly vulnerable;
- lone working, security, violence or aggression, and emergency arrangements;
- first aid provision and specific medical or healthcare risks;
- Prevent and radicalisation risk, including online risk;
- significant changes to premises, activities, staffing, equipment or pupil needs; and
- any area where an incident, near miss, concern, audit or professional judgement identifies a need for formal assessment.

7. Risk assessment process

Step 1 – Identify the hazard

Consider what could reasonably cause harm. Use observation, incident information, staff knowledge, pupil information, manufacturer's guidance, statutory guidance and professional advice where relevant.

Step 2 – Identify who may be harmed and how

Consider pupils, staff, visitors, contractors and others. Identify anyone who may be more vulnerable because of SEND, disability, medical needs, pregnancy, age, communication needs, sensory needs, mobility or other relevant circumstances.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risk

Assess likelihood and severity before controls. Consider existing measures and whether they are reliable, consistently implemented and sufficient.

Step 4 – Decide and record control measures

Apply proportionate controls using the hierarchy of control where appropriate: eliminate the hazard where possible, reduce exposure, introduce physical or procedural controls, provide information/training, and use personal protective equipment where required.

Step 5 – Assess residual risk

Re-score the risk after controls. If the remaining risk is not acceptable, further action is required before the activity proceeds.

Step 6 – Assign responsibility and timescales

Every outstanding action must have a named owner and completion date. Immediate risks must be controlled immediately.

Step 7 – Communicate and implement

Relevant staff must be informed of the assessment and must understand the controls that apply. Information should be accessible to the pupil where appropriate.

Step 8 – Review

Review at the specified date and earlier if there is an incident, near miss, significant change, new information, control failure or reason to believe the assessment is no longer suitable.

8. Pupils with SEND, medical needs and communication needs

Risk assessment must reflect the individual profile of pupils and must not assume that all pupils understand, perceive or communicate risk in the same way.

- Assessments should consider developmental level, cognition, sensory processing, mobility, emotional regulation, communication, health conditions and known triggers.
- For pupils who are non-speaking or have limited functional communication, staff must consider how distress, pain, fear or a safeguarding concern may be communicated through behaviour, body language, AAC, symbols, signing or other communication systems.
- Pupils should be involved in risk assessment wherever practicable using communication methods appropriate to them.
- Risk controls may include visual supports, predictable routines, environmental adaptation, staffing arrangements, sensory regulation strategies, communication aids, increased supervision, medical arrangements or individual plans.
- The existence of SEND or disability must not in itself be treated as a reason to restrict participation. Restrictions must be justified by the assessed risk and kept under review.

9. Individual pupil risk assessments

An individual pupil risk assessment should be used where a pupil presents or is exposed to a foreseeable risk that cannot be adequately managed through whole-school or activity-level controls.

Individual assessments should, as applicable:

- identify the specific risk and circumstances in which it arises;
- be informed by the EHCP, healthcare plan, behaviour/support plan, safeguarding information and professional advice where relevant;
- set out prevention, early intervention and de-escalation strategies;
- identify staffing, supervision, environmental and communication controls;
- identify emergency or contingency arrangements;
- state when parents/carers and relevant professionals have been consulted;
- avoid unnecessary sensitive information and be shared only with those who need it to keep the pupil or others safe;
- be reviewed after relevant incidents and when the pupil's needs or circumstances change.

A risk assessment does not replace an EHCP, healthcare plan, safeguarding plan or behaviour support plan. These documents should align and cross-reference one another where appropriate.

10. Dynamic risk assessment

Staff may need to make an immediate dynamic risk assessment when circumstances change unexpectedly. Staff should consider the immediate hazard, who may be harmed, what can be done safely at that moment, and whether additional support is required.

Where a dynamic assessment identifies a significant or continuing risk, the matter must be recorded and the relevant written risk assessment created or updated as soon as practicable. Dynamic assessment must never be used to avoid completing a formal assessment where one is reasonably required.

11. Educational visits, transport and off-site activities

Educational visits and off-site activities must be planned in accordance with the school's Educational Visits Policy and any approved procedures. The assessment must consider the activity, environment, travel, supervision, accessibility, medical needs, behaviour, communication, safeguarding, emergency arrangements and any individual pupil-specific risks.

Transport risks must be assessed where necessary, including boarding/alighting, seating, harnesses or specialist equipment, behaviour, medical needs, communication, handover arrangements and emergencies.

12. Contractors, visitors and premises risks

- Site-specific risks must be communicated to contractors and visitors where relevant.

- High-risk work must be appropriately segregated from pupils and school activities.
- Contractor risk assessments and method statements must be reviewed by a competent person where required.
- Premises risks, including fire, asbestos, water hygiene, security, work at height and hazardous substances, must be managed under the relevant specialist procedures and assessments.
- Security risk assessments should reflect current DfE guidance and local circumstances, including access control, emergency response and foreseeable internal and external threats.

13. Recording, sharing and retention

Significant findings must be recorded. Risk assessments should be stored in the school's agreed system or location so that they are accessible to relevant staff and can be monitored.

- Only information necessary for safe implementation should be included.
- Sensitive personal information must be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.
- Current versions must be clearly identifiable; superseded versions should be archived where retention is required.
- Risk assessments and related records will normally be retained for at least three years after they cease to apply, unless a longer period is required because of the nature of the risk, an incident, legal requirement, insurance requirement, safeguarding need or other record-retention rule.

14. Review and escalation

Risk assessments must be reviewed:

- at the review date stated on the assessment;
- when there is a significant change to the activity, environment, equipment, staffing or pupil needs;
- after an accident, incident, near miss, safeguarding event or control failure;
- when new information or professional advice becomes available; or
- where staff, pupils, parents/carers, audit or monitoring identify a concern.

Operational concerns should normally be escalated:

HOS → HT → EHT → CEO → Chair

Escalation should be immediate where the risk is serious or imminent. A matter does not need to progress through every level before reaching the person with authority to act. Safeguarding concerns must always be referred to the DSL in parallel.

15. Monitoring and quality assurance

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that risk assessment arrangements within the school are effective. Monitoring should be evidence-based and proportionate.

Assurance may include:

- sampling current risk assessments for quality and implementation;
- checking high and significant risks and overdue actions;
- reviewing accidents, incidents, near misses and emerging trends;
- checking that staff understand relevant controls;
- checking that assessments have been reviewed following significant changes or incidents;
- reviewing pupil-specific controls alongside relevant plans and provision;
- reporting significant or recurring themes through the leadership hierarchy.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner if there is a significant legal, regulatory or organisational change.

16. Related policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Positive Handling / Restrictive Interventions Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Emergency / Critical Incident procedures
- Data Protection Policy
- Accessibility Policy

Appendix 1: Risk assessment schedule

The table below identifies common assessments that will be required or considered. It is not exhaustive. Some assessments are required only where the relevant activity, hazard or circumstance exists.

Risk assessment / area	When required	Typical lead	Review
General premises / site	For foreseeable premises hazards	HT / HOS / site lead	At least annually and on change
Fire	Required	Responsible person / competent fire adviser	As required by fire safety arrangements and on significant change
Asbestos	Where the duty to manage applies	Dutyholder / competent person	In accordance with asbestos management plan
COSHH	Where hazardous substances are used or present	Relevant manager / competent staff	On change and periodically
Manual handling	Where hazardous manual handling cannot be avoided	Relevant manager	On change / incident
Work at height	Where work at height is undertaken	Relevant manager / contractor	Before work and on change
Display screen equipment	For users/workstations covered by the regulations	Relevant manager / staff member	On significant change
New or expectant mothers	Where applicable following notification	Line manager / HR	As circumstances change
Young workers	Where applicable	Line manager / HR	Before work and on change
First aid needs	To determine adequate first aid provision	HT / HOS	At least annually and on significant change
Prevent / radicalisation	Required as part of Prevent duty arrangements	DSL / HT	At least annually and when threat/risk changes
Security	Based on site and local circumstances	HT / HOS / site lead	At least annually and on significant change
Educational visits / off-site activities	For visits and activities as required by procedure	Visit leader / EVC	For each visit or approved series
Transport	Where transport presents specific or individual risks	HT / HOS / transport lead	On change / incident
Individual pupil	Where individual needs create foreseeable risk requiring specific controls	Relevant lead with HT/HOS oversight	As stated and on any significant change/incident
Lone working	Where staff work alone and a foreseeable risk exists	Line manager	On change / periodically
Violence / aggression	Where foreseeable risk exists	HT / HOS / relevant lead	On change / incident
Swimming / water activity	Where undertaken	Relevant lead / provider	For activity and on change
Vocational / practical activities	Where activity creates specific risks	Curriculum / vocational lead	Before activity and on change

Appendix 2: Risk scoring matrix

The following matrix may be used where a numerical rating supports decision-making. Professional judgement remains essential.

Likelihood

Score	Descriptor	Guide
1	Rare	Not expected to occur
2	Unlikely	Could occur but not anticipated
3	Possible	Might occur
4	Likely	Will probably occur
5	Almost certain	Expected to occur frequently or imminently

Severity

Score	Descriptor	Guide
1	Minor	Minor injury or short-lived impact
2	Moderate	Injury/impact requiring treatment or short absence
3	Significant	Serious injury, significant welfare impact or prolonged absence
4	Major	Major injury, serious safeguarding/welfare impact or hospital treatment
5	Critical	Fatality, life-changing injury or catastrophic impact

Risk score = Likelihood × Severity

Score	Rating	Required response
1–4	Low	Manage through existing controls; monitor.
5–9	Moderate	Ensure controls are effective; consider further action.
10–16	High	Further controls and senior oversight required; activity should not proceed unless risk is adequately controlled.
17–25	Very high	Immediate action required. Stop or do not start the activity unless/until risk is reduced to an acceptable level.

Appendix 3: Risk assessment template

Assessment title:		**School / location:**	
Activity / area:		**Assessor:**	
Date completed:		**Review date:**	
Persons at risk:		**Relevant pupil(s), if applicable:**	
Approved / reviewed by:		**Version:**	

Hazard	Who may be harmed and how	Existing controls	L	S	Initial score	Further action / controls	Residual score

Action required	Owner	Due date	Completed / evidence

Communication / staff briefing required:	
Pupil / parent involvement or communication:	
Linked plans / documents:	
Reason for review / changes made:	

Escalation: HOS → HT → EHT → CEO → Chair. Safeguarding concerns must also be referred to the DSL.