



# Woodland Pathways

## Health & Safety Policy

**Date created or revised: 0925**

**Date of next review: 0926**

## **1. Policy Statement**

Woodland Pathways is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all children, young people, staff, practitioners, volunteers, commissioners, parents/carers, visitors and any other persons affected by our activities.

We recognise that our provision takes place within outdoor, woodland, meadow, river-adjacent and community environments. This requires a strong and proactive culture of risk assessment, supervision, safeguarding, communication and dynamic decision-making.

Health and safety is treated as both a legal and moral responsibility. Woodland Pathways will always aim to go beyond minimum statutory requirements to provide a safe, purposeful and enriching learning environment.

## **2. Legal and Regulatory Framework**

This policy is informed by and aligned with:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- DfE health and safety guidance for education settings
- Norfolk and Suffolk Local Authority expectations for Alternative Provision
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Outdoor Learning / Bushcraft Policy
- First Aid and Medication Procedures
- GDPR / Data Protection Policy
- Transport Policy

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All children and young people attending Woodland Pathways
- All staff, practitioners, volunteers and contractors
- All Woodland Pathways activities, including outdoor learning, off-site learning, outreach, community learning and practical activities
- Visitors, commissioners and external professionals attending provision

### **4. Core Health & Safety Aims**

Woodland Pathways aims to:

- Provide a safe and healthy learning environment
- Prevent accidents, injuries and work-related ill health
- Ensure activities are appropriately planned, risk assessed and supervised
- Maintain safe systems for equipment, tools, fire, outdoor learning and transport
- Ensure all staff are competent, trained and confident in their responsibilities
- Encourage learners to develop safe decision-making and personal responsibility
- Record, review and learn from accidents, incidents and near misses

### **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **5.1 Directors**

The Directors hold overall responsibility for health and safety and will ensure that:

- Health and safety arrangements are implemented and reviewed
- Adequate resources are provided
- Risk assessments are completed and monitored
- Accidents, incidents and near misses are recorded and reviewed
- RIDDOR-reportable incidents are reported where required
- Staff receive suitable training and induction
- Commissioners are informed of significant health and safety concerns affecting placements
- Insurance cover is appropriate and maintained

## 5.2 Session Leaders / Lead Practitioners

Session leaders are responsible for the day-to-day management of health and safety during sessions.

They must:

- Plan and lead activities safely
- Complete daily and dynamic risk assessments
- Ensure activities are suitable for the age, needs, ability and risk profile of learners
- Check equipment before use
- Ensure appropriate supervision and staffing ratios
- Respond promptly to hazards, accidents or incidents
- Ensure first aid arrangements are in place
- Adapt or stop activities where risk becomes unacceptable

## 5.3 Staff, Practitioners and Volunteers

All adults working with Woodland Pathways must:

- Take reasonable care of their own safety and the safety of others
- Follow all policies, procedures and risk assessments
- Report hazards, accidents, incidents and near misses immediately
- Use PPE where required
- Follow emergency and fire procedures
- Supervise learners effectively
- Model safe behaviour
- Support learners to understand and manage risk appropriately

## 5.4 Learners

Learners will be supported, according to their age, ability and needs, to:

- Follow safety instructions
- Use equipment appropriately
- Respect boundaries and site rules
- Wear suitable clothing and PPE where required
- Tell staff if they feel unsafe or notice a hazard
- Develop personal responsibility and risk awareness

## 5.5 Visitors and Contractors

Visitors and contractors must:

- Follow Woodland Pathways health and safety procedures
- Sign in and out where required
- Follow instructions from staff
- Be supervised where appropriate
- Report any hazards or concerns immediately

Contractors must not undertake work that could create risk to learners during active provision unless specifically agreed and safely managed.

## 6. Risk Assessment and Risk-Benefit Approach

Woodland Pathways recognises that outdoor learning involves managed risk. Our aim is not to remove all risk, but to balance risk and benefit in a way that supports learning, independence, confidence and resilience.

Risk assessments are completed for:

- Sites and environments
- Individual learners
- Outdoor learning and bushcraft activities
- Tool use
- Fire use
- Water-adjacent activity
- Weather conditions
- Transport and off-site activity
- Lone working
- Outreach provision

Our risk assessment process follows five steps:

1. Identify hazards
2. Identify who may be harmed and how
3. Evaluate risk and existing controls
4. Record findings and actions
5. Review regularly and after incidents

## 7. Dynamic Risk Assessment

Because Woodland Pathways operates in outdoor and flexible environments, staff must conduct dynamic risk assessments throughout every session.

This includes consideration of:

- Weather changes
- Learner behaviour, regulation and emotional presentation
- Terrain and environmental hazards
- Tool or equipment use
- Water, fire or animal-related risks
- Staffing levels
- Medical or safeguarding concerns
- Public access or unexpected visitors

Activities will be adapted, paused or stopped where risk becomes unacceptable.

## **8. Outdoor Learning, Tools, Fire and Practical Activities**

Woodland Pathways uses outdoor and practical learning to support engagement, confidence, curriculum access and wellbeing.

Specific controls include:

- Activity-specific risk assessments
- Clear instruction before tool use
- Appropriate PPE
- Close supervision
- Safe storage of tools and equipment
- Fire safety procedures for any campfire or bushcraft activity
- Burns kits available where fire is used
- Only competent staff leading higher-risk activities
- External qualified providers used where specialist accreditation is required

Learners are taught how to assess and manage risk as part of their learning.

## **9. First Aid Provision**

Woodland Pathways ensures appropriate first aid provision at all times.

This includes:

- Trained first aiders available during sessions
- Accessible first aid kits
- Outdoor first aid provision where appropriate
- Vehicle / go-bag first aid kits for outreach or off-site activity

- Burns kits available for fire-based activities
- Regular checking and replenishment of first aid kits
- Emergency contact details available for all learners

First aid records will be stored securely and reviewed for patterns or further action.

## **10. Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses**

All accidents, incidents and near misses must be:

- Responded to promptly
- Recorded accurately
- Reported to the session leader / Directors
- Shared with parents/carers and commissioners where appropriate
- Reviewed to identify learning and reduce future risk

Records should include:

- Date, time and location
- What happened
- Who was involved
- Injuries sustained
- First aid or actions taken
- Witnesses
- Parent/carer and commissioner notification
- Follow-up actions

Serious incidents will be reported under RIDDOR where required.

## **11. Emergency Procedures**

Emergency procedures will be communicated to staff and learners as appropriate.

In the event of illness, accident or emergency:

- First aid will be administered within the competence of trained staff
- Emergency services will be contacted where required
- Parents/carers and commissioners will be informed promptly
- No child will be sent to hospital unaccompanied where staff support is required
- Staffing ratios and safeguarding must be considered when arranging transport or hospital attendance

Emergency arrangements are included in risk assessments for each site and activity.

## **12. Fire and Evacuation Procedures**

Woodland Pathways will maintain fire and emergency procedures for all sites used.

Procedures include:

- Identified assembly points
- Clear evacuation routes where applicable
- Fire drills and evacuation practice where appropriate
- Roll call / attendance check
- Visitor and staff registers where applicable
- Fire equipment checked and maintained where relevant
- Staff trained in fire procedures

Anyone discovering a fire must raise the alarm immediately.

Staff must not put themselves at risk by attempting to fight a fire. Firefighting equipment should only be used if safe, appropriate and without delaying evacuation or emergency response.

## **13. Medication and Medical Needs**

Medical information is gathered during referral and pre-placement planning.

This may include:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- ADHD medication
- Emergency medication
- Healthcare plans

Medication will only be administered where:

- Written consent is in place
- Medication is prescribed and clearly labelled
- Instructions are clear
- Staff are competent and authorised
- Administration is recorded

Medication must be stored securely and separately from first aid supplies. Emergency medication must remain accessible in line with the learner's care plan.

Refusal to take medication will be recorded and reported to parents/carers and commissioners.

#### **14. Safeguarding Link**

Health and safety concerns may also be safeguarding concerns.

Examples include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Neglect indicators
- Unsafe clothing or lack of food/water
- Absconding
- Substance misuse
- Unsafe behaviour that may indicate emotional distress
- Domestic abuse or exploitation indicators

Where a health and safety incident raises safeguarding concerns, staff must follow the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and inform the DSL immediately.

#### **15. Missing Child / Absconding**

If a learner goes missing or absconds during a session:

- Staff will follow the missing child procedure
- Immediate dynamic risk assessment will be completed
- Parents/carers and commissioners will be informed without delay
- Police will be contacted where risk indicates this is necessary
- The incident will be recorded and reviewed
- Risk assessments will be updated before further sessions

Emergency grab bags / response equipment should be available where appropriate.

## **16. Substance, Alcohol and Smoking/Vaping Policy**

Woodland Pathways is a smoke-free, vape-free, alcohol-free and drug-free provision.

Smoking, vaping, alcohol and illegal substances are not permitted during provision or on site.

Staff must remain vigilant to signs of substance misuse, including:

- Changes in mood, behaviour or attendance
- Unexplained tiredness or agitation
- Smell of substances
- Possession of suspicious items
- Rumours or disclosures
- Peer concerns

Any concern relating to substance misuse will be treated as a safeguarding concern and reported to the DSL.

## **17. Manual Handling**

Staff must avoid unsafe lifting and handling.

They should:

- Assess the load before moving it
- Use appropriate aids where available
- Ask for help where needed
- Avoid unnecessary lifting
- Report risks or injuries

Training will be provided where duties require regular manual handling.

## **18. Equipment and Resources**

All equipment must be:

- Suitable for purpose
- Checked before use
- Maintained appropriately
- Stored safely
- Removed from use if damaged or unsafe

This includes tools, outdoor learning equipment, ICT equipment, first aid supplies, PPE and transport-related equipment.

## **19. Lone Working**

Lone working is avoided wherever possible.

Where lone working is necessary:

- A specific risk assessment must be completed
- Session location and timings must be known
- Communication systems must be in place
- Emergency procedures must be clear
- Safeguarding and behaviour risks must be considered

Lone working arrangements must link with the Safeguarding and Lone Working policies.

## **20. Off-Site, Outreach and Community Learning**

Woodland Pathways may deliver outreach learning and community-based sessions.

Before off-site activity:

- Risk assessments must be completed
- Emergency contacts must be available
- Transport arrangements must be clear
- Learner-specific needs must be considered
- Commissioners must be informed where appropriate

Staff must carry suitable communication equipment and first aid supplies.

## **21. Training and Induction**

All staff receive induction covering:

- Health and safety responsibilities
- Accident and incident reporting
- First aid arrangements
- Fire and emergency procedures
- Risk assessment expectations
- Outdoor learning safety

- Safeguarding links
- Lone working
- Medication procedures where relevant

Training records will be maintained.

## **22. Insurance**

Woodland Pathways maintains appropriate insurance cover, including public liability and employer liability insurance where applicable.

Insurance arrangements will be reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate for the nature of provision, including outdoor learning, practical activities and outreach.

## **23. Monitoring, Review and Quality Assurance**

Health and safety arrangements are monitored through:

- Risk assessment reviews
- Accident and near miss analysis
- Staff feedback
- Learner feedback where appropriate
- Equipment checks
- First aid kit checks
- Site checks
- Review after incidents

Patterns and trends will be used to improve practice.

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following serious incidents
- Following changes in legislation or guidance
- Following changes to provision, site use or activity type

## **24. Key Terms**

**Accident:** An event resulting in injury or ill health.

**Incident:** An event that raises concern about potential harm.

**Near miss:** An event that did not cause harm but had potential to do so.

**Dangerous occurrence:** A reportable event as defined under RIDDOR.

**Dynamic risk assessment:** An ongoing assessment of changing risks during an activity or session.

## **25. Contact Details**

### **Woodland Pathways**

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