



# Forest School Handbook of Policies & Procedures

To be read by all adult leaders, volunteers, and visitors to Free Rangers at Orchard Organic Farm.

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## Introduction and Background

Emma and Jerry Saunders have owned and run Orchard Organic Farm since 2010 and Free Rangers was established in 2023 by Emma to provide children, together with their parents and carers, the opportunity to spend quality time in nature building self-esteem, independence, emotional resilience, autonomy and motivation, as well as a personal knowledge, respect and care for our environment.

Our approach is learner-led, play-centred, holistic and experiential. When taking part in our Forest School programme a child is engaging with nature in wild spaces in an exploratory, sensory and physical way. We believe it's important to create, where possible, a long-term relationship between a location and a group of children - giving all participants a chance to get a feel for how an environment changes over time.

Children will be encouraged to take constructive risks in order to develop skills, good judgment and to learn and develop through managing their own and others' risks. In planning activities we consider not only the risks but also the potential benefits for the learner.

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of the children but may include:

- Countryside management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations



# Learning and Development Policy

*Date Created: September 2023*

*Reviewed date: September 2026*

The contemporary forest school movement was brought to the UK from Scandinavia in the 1990s but it is predated by many British traditions, such as the Woodcraft Folk, Scouting and Guiding. It draws inspiration from these traditions, along with various educational philosophies, including Rousseau, Froebel, Steiner and Montessori.

## **Our Ethos**

Free Rangers at Orchard Organic Farm would like our forest school programme to build self-esteem, independence, emotional resilience, autonomy and motivation, as well as a deeply personal knowledge, respect and care for our environment.

The approach of Free Rangers is learner-led, play-centred, holistic, and experiential. When taking part in our forest school programme a child is engaging with nature in wild spaces in an exploratory, sensory and physical way. We believe it's important to create, where possible, a long-term relationship between a location and a group of children - giving all participants a chance to get a feel for how an environment changes over time.

Children will be encouraged to take constructive risks in order to develop skills, good judgment and to learn and develop through managing their own and others' risks. In planning activities we consider not only the risks but also the potential benefits for the learner.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

As staff we are conscious that Forest School is an exploratory experience for the group: allowing the group to play and learn as independently as possible, often without demonstrating or suggesting. If invited to provide support, we do, but otherwise merely observe therefore allowing the experience to be learner-directed. It is the role of staff to take a lead in planning, delivering and evaluating the forest school programme. They also take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are adhered to. Volunteers and other adults may help with these responsibilities where they wish to and are able and/or qualified to. Evaluation forms will be completed after each session and a reflective report is compiled after each programme of sessions.



# Environmental Policy

*Date Created: September 2023*

*Review date: September 2026*

The main purpose of our Environmental policy is to set out how we will interact with our environment every day.

## **We aim to:**

- Educate the children about the environment – for them to develop a sound base of knowledge, understanding and skills that children will need to make sense of environmental issues.
- To provide education in the environment – to give children first-hand experience of the natural environment we provide.
- To provide stimulus for learning a wide range of skills through education through the environment.
- Education for the environment focuses on sustainable solutions to environmental problems, taking into account that there are conflicting interests and different perspectives.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

It is important for the Free Rangers community to have an awareness and understanding of the effects of their actions upon the environment in which we play each day. In order to do this, we need to take responsibility for our own actions, and we need to have a sense of duty and care for the world in which we live.

We encourage both our educators and our children to continually think about their environment and how their actions and play may impact upon it. To this end we encourage and reinforce environmental education in all aspects of everyday life in the forest.

The ways in which we will strive towards this goal is to reduce the amounts of materials we use and waste we produce, recycle and re-use materials wherever possible, restore what is deemed to have been destroyed and respect our neighbours and our environment.

## **Re-use, recycle and restore:**

We aim to reuse, recycle and restore when using appropriate materials at Free Rangers wherever we can. We also accept donated materials to limit our need to buy from new.

## **Energy**

- When using the toilets, we will switch off lights when they are not in use.



- Free Rangers will hang washing up to dry, rather than using tumble dryers where this is possible.

#### Water

- We will make sure we turn off taps when they are no longer needed
- We will not waste water while on site and will transport water in reusable containers.

#### Paper

- We use a limited amount of paper on site but when we do use it, we encourage the children to use both sides of the paper. We recycle all paper materials wherever we can.
- We will choose natural and re-usable materials above paper when appropriate.

#### Plastic

- Daily litter picking of the area where we will recycle any plastic we find.
- We try to avoid the use of too many plastic toys in the forest.
- We use reusable wipes/towels for hand drying.

#### Transport

- We will continue to encourage our families to walk to Free Rangers or use an economical form of transport wherever possible.
- We will encourage our staff and visitors to share transport whenever realistic and possible.

#### Waste

- We try and keep non-recyclable waste to a minimum.
- Food waste will be composted where possible.

#### Wildlife & Environment:

- Children are encouraged to be gentle and kind with all things on the farm and to return all living creatures to their original habitat.
- Litter picking of the area takes place on a regular basis to reduce any waste.
- Free Rangers site is closely monitored to ensure there is no damage left behind and that we leave the area as we find it or if possible, in a better condition.
- Children are encouraged to treat all of our equipment with respect. All equipment will be repaired wherever possible.
- We will respect our environment and all living creatures.



# Positive Behaviour Policy (including anti-bullying Policy)

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*Review date: September 2026*

Free Rangers believes in promoting positive behaviour.

We aim to encourage self-discipline, empathy, consideration for others, our surroundings and property.

The aim of this policy is to promote good choices which lead to effective relationships so that everyone can support each other, work together and learn well. It aims to promote relationships which are happy, safe and secure. This policy aims to help children to become positive, responsible and increasingly independent members of the group. Our aim is to use challenging behaviour as an opportunity to help children to develop self-regulation skills.

There are two key reasons for using the language of 'choice':

- it promotes self-management of behaviour and enables some reflection of what behavioural choices exist ie there are always different behavioural options (we don't accept / expect that some children will always behave in such a way) and;
- it avoids labelling children - instead, we refer to the choices we all make and that we should always try to make the right choices.

We offer choices and encourage children to make the right choices, at all times and with everybody in Free Rangers. This will lead to positive behaviour and meaningful relationships and includes using positive language (including body language).

## The Role of the leaders

As leaders, our role is to recognise that behaviour – be it positive or negative – is a child's way of communicating and so the behaviour reflects how a child might feel. Conflict with groups of children can often arise when their unique feelings do not match with each other and children may then feel frustrated or upset. Tensions may also arise when children are unable to express themselves clearly or others do not understand what it is they want.

We understand the critical role all adults have in modelling behaviour and therefore we consistently encourage positive behaviour that promotes children's welfare and development. We also recognize that we cannot have a one size fits all approach to behaviour as children are individuals and therefore respond differently. We aim to work towards a situation in which children can develop their independence, self-discipline, and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement. We allow children to flourish, learn and make a positive contribution.

In order to achieve this our educators will:

- Act as good role models;
- Use praise and positive reinforcement;
- Praise group behaviour as well as individual;
- Use positively phrased sentences when guiding children on what is expected of them;
- Encourage sharing, negotiation and self-regulation;
- Ensure that the rules are applied consistently, so that children have the security of knowing what to expect
- Provide a positive role model for the children with regard to friendliness, care and courtesy;
- Praise and endorse specific behaviour such as kindness and a willingness to share;
- Consult with the children when creating boundaries and rules;
- Help children understand the consequences of their behaviour;
- Help children challenge bullying, harassment and name-calling;
- Reassure children they are valued as individuals even if their behaviour is sometimes unacceptable;
- Take positive steps to avoid a situation in which children receive adult attention only in return for undesirable behaviour;
- Create a positive and stimulating environment with age appropriate and challenging activities;
- Where unwanted behaviour persists, give one to one adult support to children who display challenging behaviour to understand what was wrong and work towards a better pattern of behaviour;
- Will always make it clear to the child or children who are misbehaving, that it is the behaviour and not the child that is unwelcome or undesired;
- Will not humiliate, isolate , withhold food or use a 'naughty chair' in managing children's behaviour, as this is detrimental to their self-esteem;
- Will not shout, or raise our voices in a threatening way;
- Will neither use or threaten physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking;
- Will handle any behaviour problems in a developmentally appropriate way, respecting individual children's level of understanding;





- Will tackle recurring problems in partnership with the child's parents, using objective observation records to establish an understanding of the cause or analyse possible triggers.
- Are aware that some kinds of behaviour may arise from a child's special needs and therefore we endeavour to understand the needs of the child and what strategies might be appropriate.
- Will where possible, ignore unwanted behaviour and focus on praising the wanted behaviour instead;
- Will allow children to move away to a quieter area to calm down. Once calm we talk to the child about their behaviour and listen to what the child has to say;
- Support children to learn ways to deal with their feelings;
- Do not use any form of physical intervention unless it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children, an adult or serious damage to property;
- Will record any incidents where physical intervention is used using our Free Rangers incident form.

During sessions we discuss with the children ways of acting kindly to each other and encourage the children to think about the forest rules which reinforce the expected levels of behaviour. These rules help to ensure that children are safe and that every child has a fun and stimulating time in the forest.

There may be occasions when parents will be informed if their child is persistently unkind to others, may be persistently displaying challenging behaviour or if their child has been upset. In all cases inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with in Free Rangers at the time. Parents may be asked to meet with staff to discuss their child's behaviour and what may be triggering the behaviour so that if there are any difficulties we can work together to ensure consistency between home and Free Rangers.

### **Anti Bullying Policy**

Our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment, so that every one of our pupils can develop his/her full potential. We expect the children to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed; but orderly, atmosphere. All children should care for and support each other.

We do not tolerate any form of bullying by either a member of staff, child or parent.

Our staff will not tolerate physical or verbal abuse or intimidation from parents.

It is important to remember that the potential for bullying can exist in all nurseries and schools in some form or other. We must therefore aim:-

- (i) to encourage and enhance the security of the children
- (ii) to recognise that bullying disrupts learning
- (iii) to recognise that bullying can have a knock-on effect on absence

#### Warning Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a child is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to nursery;
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
- Diminished levels of self- confidence;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Choosing the company of adults;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping or experiences nightmares.

How do cases of bullying come to light?

- A member of staff noticing that things are not as they should be;
- The victim talking to a member of staff;
- Other children talking to a member of staff;
- Parents contacting Free Rangers, sometimes requesting that the source of information be kept secret.

#### Response Procedures

How do we react to parents or children reporting bullying?

- Make them feel at ease;
- Give them time to explain the situation: listen;
- Make notes;
- Pass no immediate judgement;
- Make it clear that the problem will be treated seriously and looked into as a matter of urgency.



# Health and Safety Policy

*Date Created: September 2023*

*Review date: September 2026*

**Objective:** Free Rangers will ensure that it does all that is reasonably practicable to achieve the highest standards of Health, Safety and Welfare in carrying out its activities.

Free Rangers is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its visitors, volunteers and employees and it will, so far as is reasonably practicable, establish procedures and systems necessary to implement this commitment and to comply with its statutory obligations on Health and Safety.

Free Rangers is committed to ensuring that all setting practices are carried out within the requirements of the Health and Safety and Work Act 1974 and the Management of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1999.

Free Rangers recognises that a systematic approach to health and safety, based on risk assessment procedures (see Risk Assessment policy for more information) will provide and maintain a healthy and safe working environment with the objective of minimising the number of instances of occupational accidents, incidents and illnesses.

Free Rangers is committed to:

- Maintaining the workplace in a safe condition and providing adequate facilities and arrangements for welfare at work
- Developing the appropriate setting structure and culture, that supports the concept of risk management by all members of the staff team
- Providing a safe means of access to and from the workplace
- The provision and maintenance of equipment and systems of work which are safe
- Arrangements for ensuring safety to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- The provision of such information, instructions, training and supervision, as is necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of its employees and other persons.
- Continual monitoring and evaluation of health and safety requirements in line with current legislation, including the review of all policies and practices to ensure that Little Forest Folk continues to improve standards of performance.

We also recognise our duty to protect the health and safety of all visitors to Free Rangers, including contractors, temporary workers and members of the public (visitors and volunteers) who might be affected by Free Rangers work operations.



This policy will be viewed by all staff as part of the induction process.

It is the responsibility of all staff, parents and visitors to adhere to this policy.

## Responsibility

While Free Rangers will take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of its employees, health and safety at work is also the responsibility of the employees themselves.

It is the duty of each employee to take reasonable care of their own and other people's health, safety and welfare and to report any situation which may pose a serious or imminent threat to the well-being of themselves or of any other person.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to ensure that health and safety regulations are adhered to and that the health and safety of the children and other members of staff are not compromised in any way.

It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that the health and safety of the setting as a whole remains within legislative requirements and that the health and safety of all setting users, including children, staff and parents and carers is not compromised in any way.

If an employee is unsure how to perform a certain task or feels it would be dangerous to perform a specific job or use specific equipment, then it is the employee's duty to report this as soon as possible to the manager.

Disciplinary action, as detailed in employment contracts, may be taken against any employee who violates health and safety rules and procedures or who fails to perform their duties under health and safety legislation. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to potential gross misconduct rendering the employee liable to dismissal.

## Supervision Requirements

Children are supervised at all times whilst in the setting. Free Rangers uses three levels of supervision dependent upon the activities that are taking place and the location that they are occurring.

- **Constant Supervision:** Being with the children at all times, actively supporting them using a physical presence or playing with them directly. This level of supervision is most often required when the children are playing high-risk games or using equipment or materials that have a high-risk assessment. This type of supervision is most likely to be required at our risk assessed outdoor setting.
- **General Supervision:** Being in vicinity of the children but not having an active part in their play, being on hand to support if the children require help or guidance. Being on hand to respond to play cues and observant of the behaviour of the children. This is the most common form of supervision and allows for an overview of the play setting, most commonly used with play activities that have a medium level of risk.



- **Low Supervision:** Keeping a watchful eye on the children from a distance and making sure that they are playing safely but freely. Keeping an overview of what the children are doing while not interfering. This is most commonly used with low -risk activities.

Summer waterproof trousers are encouraged to be worn by children in warmer weather together with long sleeved tops to prevent sunburn, insect bites, bramble/nettle scratches and to support children's physical health and wellbeing while engaging in messy/water play. When temperatures rise, managers will assess and make the decision for waterproof clothing to be removed and t-shirts/shorts to be worn to avoid a risk to children's physical health and comfort. However, we do insist on fully enclosed footwear being worn at all times when children are playing in the Free Rangers site.

### **Child Protection / Safeguarding**

All members of staff will receive training in child protection as part of their induction training.

All members of staff are instructed in the specific procedure for Free Rangers, especially as regards to disclosures and suspicions of child abuse. (See the Safeguarding Policy for further information).

### **Accidents and Incidents**

The manager, who is always on site has a paediatric and outdoor first aid qualification. In addition, all members of staff are instructed in the correct procedures for dealing with accidents and incidents including completion of documentation. Accident and injury forms must be completed appropriately.

### **Emergency Procedure**

There is a procedure for emergencies which is displayed in the shelter and hand washing area.

All members of staff are trained in the emergency procedure and fire drill evacuations.

### **Illnesses**

Children will not be admitted if they are showing signs of an illness or ailment which may be contagious.

Free Rangers uses guidance from Public Health England (PHE) to determine the exclusion guidance for contagious illnesses.

If a child becomes unwell during the course of the session, members of staff will ensure that the child is comfortable but does not pose any risk to the other children in the setting. The member of staff will ask the child's parent / carer to take their child home.



## **Risk Assessment of Activities**

All activities that take place both within the confines of Free Rangers and Orchard Organic Farm have been assessed for risk and controls have been put in place to ensure that any hazards have been minimized (see Risk Assessment Policy for further information).

## **Personal Hygiene**

All members of staff and children are encouraged to maintain an acceptable level of personal hygiene.

## **Maintenance and Storage of Equipment**

Free Rangers has a wide variety of equipment and materials that are used by the children in the course of their play and enjoyment at the setting. All equipment is well maintained and checked on a regular basis to ensure that it presents no risk to the health and safety of the children. Equipment and materials which do pose a hazard but which have an evidenced benefit for the development of children are used under constant supervision and stored securely after use.

## **Tool use**

We use a variety equipment, resources and tools during all our forest school sessions to enhance and extend knowledge, skills, interests and aptitudes. We provide a sufficient quantity of equipment and resources for the number of children. We provide equipment and resources which promote continuity and progression, provide sufficient challenge and meet the needs and interests of all children. Our activities include made, natural and recycled materials which are safe and well-maintained.

- We check all resources and equipment regularly. We repair and clean, or replace any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment.
- We plan the provision of activities and appropriate resources so that a balance of familiar equipment and resources and new exciting challenges is offered.

Our tools include: potato peelers, loppers, small hacksaws, bow saws and sheath knives. All forest school participants will be introduced to the tools in a structured way with the emphasis on teaching tool safely.

The following guidelines in tool safety will be followed:

- All staff and children will be trained in correct and safe use of all tools and handsaws etc
- All children will be supervised by adults whilst using tools
- All tools to be returned to the tool bag after use and checked



## **The Premises**

Internal audits are completed regularly by members of staff. Members of staff check the setting each day to ensure that there are no risks or hazards that would compromise the health and safety of the children, parents and carers or staff. Due to the outdoor nature of Free Rangers, risk assessment forms are completed for the site before children arrive. Please refer to the Free Rangers Site Risk Assessment form.

At the end of the session members of staff ensure that the premises are left clean, safe and tidy.

## **Smoking**

Free Rangers operates a strict no smoking policy, this means that there is no smoking at any time on any part of the premises.

The no smoking policy also applies to parents, carers and visitors to the setting. Free Rangers has this policy in the best interests of the children and staff.

## **Accident Reporting & Investigation (RIDDOR)**

All injuries, however small, sustained by a person at work must be reported to the manager and recorded on an accident form. Accident records are crucial to the effective monitoring of health and safety procedures and must therefore be accurate and comprehensive. The manager will inspect the accident forms on a regular basis and all accidents will be investigated and a report prepared, with any necessary action being taken to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

The manager will investigate any accidents if necessary, and the appropriate enforcing authority will be notified under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), where necessary.

## **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)**

As an employer, we have a duty under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 to prevent employees from coming into contact with substances hazardous to health.

### Chemicals and Material:

It is company policy to, wherever possible; avoid the use of substances that have the risk of being hazardous to health. Safety data sheets under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) or Chemical Hazard Information Packaging (CHIP) information supplied by manufacturers will be held on file for all substances and available for staff reference purposes and risk assessment. Staff who use these chemicals and materials have the duty of care to make themselves aware of the potential hazard, contraindications, and treatments.

### Measures and Provisions:



We have conducted a risk assessment in relation to all substances used on our premises and concluded that no substance presents a high risk.

1. The majority of substances used are of domestic standard for household use and therefore do not present any threat to health and are safe to use
2. Free Rangers has general hygiene measures in place, together with the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to further ensure the safety of employees
3. Cleaning substances are of domestic standard
4. All substances are correctly stored in clearly labelled containers
5. Cleaning substances are safely stored in child-safe cupboards
6. Adequate washing facilities are available within Free Rangers
7. PPE Aprons and rubber gloves are provided where required
8. All waste products, including medical waste is disposed of safely in accordance with statutory regulations
9. COSHH information sheets are accessible to all staff and provide information such as:
  - Product name;
  - Ingredients;
  - First Aid information and Safety requirements.

### **First Aid**

All staff are made aware of where the First Aid kit is stored. Emergency medication, such as epi-pens, must be stored somewhere out of reach of children, but easily accessible to staff.

All employees will be shown the location of the nearest first aid box and will be given the names of the designated first aid personnel identified through signage.

In the event of an accident or incident:

- Notify a First Aider immediately
- The First Aider will assess the situation and take the necessary action
- Notify the Manager

All accident/incident forms to be completed as soon as is safe to do so. The procedure for such events is:

- all accidents / incidents are recorded by the member of staff who witnessed the event





- Parents / guardians are notified
- The manager will review accident/incident forms on a monthly basis, in order to implement any further actions or highlight any trends or problem areas

### **Hood hygiene**

#### **Food Handling / Serving:**

- Long hair has to be tied back
- Hands washed, ensuring nails are clean
- All food should be served using appropriate utensils
- The food waste will be collected and used for compost wherever possible or put into the general waste.
- During some sessions, we may cook items such as popcorn, damper bread or marshmallows over the fire. At least one member of supervising staff will hold a current Food Hygiene Certificate and will ensure that safe procedures are undertaken accordingly.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

As an employer we have a duty under the PPE Regulations, to provide suitable equipment and clothing to protect employees from the risk of harm or injury during the course of their employment.

Employees are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the PPE is worn at all relevant times;
- PPE is kept clean and in good order;
- Defects/losses are reported immediately and repairs/replacements put in place;
- The PPE is correctly stored in the designated area.

### **Waste Disposal**

Waste disposal within the company is managed by procedures in accordance with the COSHH Regulations as follows. Free Rangers seeks to minimise the generation of waste as much as practicable and recycle wherever possible.

General business waste: This is collected by BIFFA on a weekly basis.

Kitchen food waste: Where possible, food waste is used to make compost which is then used in the garden. If this is not possible, the food waste is disposed of as green waste or general waste.

Free Rangers recycles paper, plastic, tin, card and glass which is collected weekly by BIFFA.

# Risk Assessment Policy

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*Review date: September 2026*

Free Rangers believes that the health and safety of children is of paramount importance. We make our setting a safe and healthy place for children, parents, staff and volunteers by assessing and minimising the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

Risk assessment means taking note of aspects of your workplace and activities that that could cause harm, either to yourself or to others, and deciding what needs to be done to prevent that harm, making sure this is adhered to and is updated when necessary.

The law does not require that all risk is eliminated – but that ‘reasonable precaution’ is taken. This is particularly important when balancing the need for children to be able to take appropriate risks through physically challenging play. Children need the opportunity to work out what is not safe and what they should do when faced with a risk.

Free Rangers uses risk assessment processes to ensure the health and safety of our children and staff. Our risk assessment process covers adults and children and includes:

- checking for and noting hazards and risks in our site and in areas which we visit;
- assessing the level of risk and who might be affected;
- deciding which areas need attention; and
- taking action when required. These are all done by the manager;
- Written risk assessments are regularly reviewed by the manager.
- Daily site risk assessments are carried out on the site and any new risks highlighted to the farm manager for action.
- Visual risk assessments are constantly carried out by practitioners, so risks are assessed on an on-going basis.

## Legal framework

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974,
- Health and Safety at Work Act (1996),
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1992

## Further Guidance

1. Five Steps to Risk Assessment (HSE 2006): [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf) . Risk Management in Early Years Settings (2007) and the Early Years Alliance



# Missing Child Policy

*Date Created: September 2023*

*Review date: September 2026*

## Statement of intent

We believe that the health & safety of children is of paramount importance. Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

We take every care to ensure children cannot leave the security of the setting unattended and have strict procedures and policies (see Free Rangers Health and Safety Policy and other related documents) in place to ensure as much as possible that this cannot happen.

Any outing away from the regular setting is thoroughly planned and only undertaken after risk assessments have been completed and when the appropriate adult to child ratios are present (see Free Rangers Health and Safety and Outings and Visits Policies and Procedures).

As an additional layer of safeguarding on the farm, our children are required to wear high visibility vests, on top of their waterproofs, if they take part in activities which require them to leave the main Free Rangers site.

In the unlikely event that it is found that a child is missing we will act in accordance with the following procedures.

## If a child goes missing whilst at the Free Rangers site:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff tell the person in charge (usually Emma or Jerry) and the children are to stand with an adult. A headcount is carried out to ensure that no other child has gone astray;
- The person in charge will nominate as many staff as possible to thoroughly search the immediate vicinity of the last place the child was seen;
- The site leader talks to the key person to establish what happened;
- All staff will be extra vigilant to any potentially suspicious behaviour or persons in and around the Free Rangers site.
- The staff will be careful not to create an atmosphere of panic and to ensure that the other children remain safe and adequately supervised.



- If after 5 minutes of thorough searching the child is still missing, the person in charge will inform the police and then the child's parent / carer;
- While waiting for the police and the parent/carer to arrive, searches for the child will continue. During this period, other staff members will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children attending the setting.

The key person/ staff will write an incident report detailing:

- the date and time of the report;
- what staff/ children were in the group/outing;
- when the child was last seen in the group/outing;
- what has taken place in the group/outing since you then; and
- the time it is estimated that the child went missing.

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

#### The Investigation

In the first instance, the owners of Free Rangers will carry out a full investigation of the missing child. This will include taking written statements from all the staff present at the time.

There may be action taken against any member of staff who they believe is found to be at fault.

If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff will cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements and is recorded in the incident book; the Local Authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

# Safeguarding Policy



*Date Created: September 2023*

*Review date September 2026*

Free Rangers fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children. The Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) for Free Rangers is **Emma Saunders**.

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

Safeguarding means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development. It is noteworthy to also mention, in line with section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) an impairment can also result from seeing or hearing harm happening to others - for example, in a case of Domestic Violence.
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

## Statement of intent

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the safety of children in our care.

The key commitments of this policy for safeguarding children:

1. We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm.
2. We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused'. March 2015.
3. We are committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues through staff training. We are also committed to empowering young children, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.
4. We wish to see our staff use and make the most of benefits of modern technology to support children's learning and development, whilst ensuring children are kept safe.
5. Working in partnership with agencies such as the Local Authority to keep children safe.

## Aims

Our aims are to meet the key commitments of this Policy by:

- promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, cultural traditions and home background.
- promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- helping children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- working with parents to build their understanding of and commitment to the principles of safeguarding all our children.

## Primary legislation

The legal framework for this work is:

- The Children Act 1989 - s 47
- The Children Act 2004 (Every Child Matters)
- Children and Young Persons Act 2001
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

## Guidance

- What to Do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abuse - 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children - 2018
- London Safeguarding Children Procedures. 2022

## Method to meet Key Commitments

- To ensure there is a Designated Safeguarding Person and that all staff and volunteers know the names of the designated officer and their role.
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers understand the nature of abuse, and the correct procedures, should concern over a child in our care arise.
- To provide a safe environment for the children to learn and develop.



- To identify children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and take appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and at Free Rangers.
- To support children who have been abused in accordance with their agreed child protection plan,
- To prevent unsuitable people working with children at Free Rangers.

### **Designated Safeguarding Person (Child Protection Officer) - DSP**

The DSP for Free Rangers is **Emma Saunders**. She is up to date with relevant safeguarding training.

#### Responsibilities of the DSP

- Arranging training for all staff in accordance with inspecting safeguarding guidance, volunteers and members of staff as part of their induction training.
- Producing and updating Free Rangers Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Keeping all staff and volunteers updated with current procedure through induction training and annual refresher training.
- Providing support and advice for staff and volunteers.
- Maintaining accurate and secure child protection records.
- Remedying any deficiencies or weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements without delay.
- To report to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), within one month of leaving Free Rangers any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or a student) whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children.

### **Staffing at Free Rangers**

Free Rangers operate safe recruitment procedures. In order to minimise the risk of employing or engaging an individual who poses any risk to the children at Free Rangers, the following procedures are followed:

- Free Rangers apply to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for all staff, including the Proprietors and regular volunteers (including parents) to verify their declaration concerning any convictions, cautions or bind overs, which they have incurred. If a disclosure comes back the DSP will assess whether the disclosure will affect the role the applicant has applied for.



- Staff identity is checked by seeing the applicant's passport, or if unavailable, other photographic identification. All identification is checked that it is valid in date.
- References are always taken up and are always obtained directly from the referee. Two written references are followed up, one of which includes the last employer. The referee is asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children and to give any details of disciplinary procedures the applicant has been subject to.
- Adequate supervision at all times within Free Rangers;
- Constant supervision of the children when outside Free Rangers.
- Supervision of children is by DBS checked members of staff. Any parental volunteers will undergo DBS checks and contract workers are never left unsupervised with the children. DBS checks are obtained for any adult who could potentially have unsupervised access to children during the session.

### **The Prevent Duty**

Free Rangers is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Although we are not required to be OFSTED registered we aim to provide as safe an environment as possible. From 1st July 2015 all schools, registered early years childcare providers and registered later years childcare providers are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent duty and to ensure that we adhere to and achieve the Prevent duty we will;

- Provide appropriate training for staff as soon as possible. Part of this training will enable staff to identify children who may be at risk of radicalisation.
- We will build the children's resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views.
- We will assess the risk, by means of a formal risk assessment, of children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology.
- We will ensure that our staff understands the risks so that they can respond in an appropriate and proportionate way.
- We will be aware of the online risk of radicalisation through the use of social media and the internet.
- As with managing other safeguarding risks, our staff will be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection (children at risk of radicalisation may display different signs or seek to hide their views).



- We will not carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life but we will take action when we observe behaviour of concern. As a small setting we already have a rapport with our families so we will notice any changes in behaviour, demeanour or personality quickly.
- We will build up an effective engagement with parents/carers and families.
- We will assist and advise families who raise concerns with us. It is important to assist and advise families who raise concerns and be able to point them to the right support mechanisms.
- We will ensure that our staff will undertake Prevent awareness training (as a minimum) so that they can offer advice and support to other members of staff.
- We will ensure that any resources used on site are age appropriate for the children in our care and that our staff have the knowledge and confidence to use the resources effectively.

#### Staff Responsibilities

- All practitioners must be able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.
- There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to a terrorist ideology, but staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, including even very young children, which could indicate they may be in need of help or protection.
- These behaviours can be evident during free circle time, role play activities and quiet times. Quiet times is a good time for children to make disclosures as this is the period that children are closest to the adults.
- People from any walks of life can be drawn into radicalisation and not necessarily from a particular religion or ethnicity. Terrorism is not promoted by any religion.

The Prevent duty does not require childcare providers to carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life but we are required to take action when observe behaviour of concern. People dress codes like hijabs, nikabs, abayas and jilbabs are not indicative factors that they are at risk of being radicalised.

#### What to do if you suspect that children are at the risk of radicalisation

- Follow the setting normal Safeguarding Procedures including discussing with the nursery DSP, and where deemed necessary, with children's social care. In Prevent priority areas, the local authority will have a Prevent lead who can also provide support.
- The DSP can also contact the local police force or dial 101 (the non-emergency number). They will then talk in confidence about the concerns and help to access support and advice.

## Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

- What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

The forms abuse children may experience are:

- Physical Abuse eg shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
- Emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.  
Sexual Abuse
- Sexual abuse. This involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in England and Wales under the FGM Act 2019. It is a form of child abuse and violence against women. It is not an acceptable practice and is a form of child abuse under UK law.
- Domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between one adult and another in their family or who are in a relationship with. Children who witness domestic violence are also victims of this form of abuse.

## Following up on an allegation

1. The DSP will assess the situation and decide whether the information needs to be shared with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies. This will occur where the DSP considers a child is being abused or at significant risk of being abused; or in need of enhanced preventative services.
2. The DSP will lead the processing of referring a child to MASH within 24 hours of a disclosure or suspicion of abuse.



3. A referral will be followed up in writing within 48 hours. Where possible, concerns will be discussed with the parents unless this may place the child at harm. If the parents are not informed, the DSP will record reasons for this.
4. MASH will then decide whether the child is in need or at risk of significant harm.

Free Rangers primary concern at all times is to safeguard the child's welfare.

**Urgent referrals** should be made if anyone suspects actual physical injury, disclosure of abuse, or clear evidence of neglect. It is vital that members of staff do not seek to take on the role of investigators and that the school's procedures are followed strictly.

#### **Allegations against Free Rangers members of staff and volunteers**

If any allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or volunteer, whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere, we shall regard the guidelines on practice and procedure found in 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' (DfES publication).

We ensure that all parents and members of staff know how to complain about staff or volunteer action within the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse;

Allegations may involve behaving in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child; possibly committing a criminal offence against or related to a child; or behaving towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children. The following procedures are followed:

- We respond to any disclosure by children, parents, volunteers or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident
- A member of staff or volunteer receiving an allegation of abuse should report this immediately to the DSP
- Reports will be in the strictest confidence so that information can be given freely and without fear of victimisation and in a way that protects the child, facilitates the enquiries, manages disciplinary/complaints aspects and protects the rights of the alleged perpetrator.

Action:

- The DSP (or manager) will contact the following within **4 hours** of the allegation being made (Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5pm):

**We refer any such complaint immediately to the Multi- agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 0345 155 107**

### *Escalation process*

- If we feel that a referral made has not been dealt with properly or that concerns are not being addressed or responded to, we will follow the local safeguarding partners.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns.
- **Free Rangers DSP will not investigate the allegation** however will record any information and follow instructions as directed by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Where a referral is made because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm or the alleged abuse is a criminal offence the appropriate procedure will be followed. We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by Devon Child Protection Services.
- After liaison with Early Help Devon, a strategy meeting is usually held, which the DSP will attend. This meeting would decide whether it's a Child Protection issue or a practice issue, and in discussion with the DSP a decision would be made whether the staff member needed to be suspended.

### Disciplinary Action Against a Member of Staff

The 'alleged' person may be suspended on full pay, after careful consideration if this is deemed the best course of action until the allegation is resolved. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as children and families throughout the process;

Where an allegation is proved to be without foundation DSP will decide whether disciplinary actions are required. Child protection enquiries take priority over disciplinary investigations and the disciplinary process must be clearly separated from the child protection enquiries.

Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from the setting or internally disciplined because of misconduct from the setting or internally disciplined because of the misconduct relating to the child, we notify the DBS to provide information about individuals working with children or vulnerable adults where we consider them to have caused harm or pose a risk of harm.

### Safeguarding Staff Training

All staff are trained to understand the safeguarding policy and procedures, this training is updated regularly. This enables staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. These may include:

- Significant changes in children's behaviour;
- Deterioration in children's general well-being;
- Unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect;



- Children's comments which give cause for concern;
- Any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, for example in the child's home; and/or
- Inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person working with the children. For example, inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images.

#### Mobile phones and cameras

Free Rangers have a strict policy regarding the use of mobile phones and cameras which has been formulated with the absolute objective to safeguard children. The policy applies to staff members, parents and other visitors to the setting.

Staff must put away their own personal phones and cameras for the duration of their working day. Only phones and cameras provided to staff by Free Rangers can be used.

Visitors to the site will be asked to put away their personal phones when on the Free Rangers premises.

The only photographs taken of children will be with Free Rangers equipment and with the express written consent of the child's parent or carer.

#### Additional safeguarding on the farm

As an additional layer of safeguarding on the farm, our children are required to wear high visibility vests, on top of their waterproofs.

# Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Diversity Policy



*Date Created: September 2023*

*Review date: September 2026*

Staff at Free Rangers are fully committed to ensuring that all of the children within their care have equality of access to the curriculum on offer regardless of their gender, religion, cultural, linguistic or social-economic background or any special educational needs they might have.

Our aim is to provide a learning environment in which all children feel safe and secure and where they can play and work together in harmony.

Children are encouraged to be kind and considerate towards each other and towards the adults at Little Forest Folk.

Staff sensitively support children in developing an awareness of the consequences of their actions and words upon both themselves and others.

Our team of educators are aware of the existence of discrimination towards particular groups of people within our society and of its damaging and has negative effects. At Free Rangers we work hard to create an atmosphere and ethos of tolerance and mutual respect among our children and their families.

We expect full cooperation from parents and carers in our work in this very important area. Any parents, carers or other family members or friends who make a comment or carry out an act which may be considered discriminatory or offensive in nature towards either an individual or particular group of people will be asked to attend a meeting with the manager.

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## **Celebrating Diversity at Free Rangers**

Free Rangers believes that we all have a responsibility to ensure equality of access and opportunity and valuing diversity for all children and adults with whom we have contact. This includes the staff, the children and families attending and volunteers. We ensure that we are fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children, regardless of their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability.

We aim to provide an environment which ensures a non-discriminatory environment for all where individual differences are acknowledged and valued. We aim to support parents and the wider community to adopt an approach of equal opportunities, making clear that discrimination against

individuals on the grounds of difference will not be tolerated and will be challenged in a constructive manner.



### **Recruitment:**

- All applicants are judged against an explicit and fair criterion for a particular position.
- Applications are welcome from all backgrounds.
- The applicant who best meets the criteria is offered the post, subject to references and checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- All job descriptions include a commitment to us being an equal opportunities employer.
- We update and monitor our recruitment procedure to ensure it is fair and accessible.
- Line managers will act and react towards staff in a manner which respects their dignity and upholds the principles of this policy. They shall work to ensure that those under their management and supervision act in a similar way in their relationships with each other.
- Discrimination, harassment, abuse, victimisation or bullying of staff, children, families or any others in the course of their work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct. Condoning such behaviour could also be treated as a disciplinary offence.

### **Our staff:**

- Provide a secure and accessible environment in which all children can flourish and in which all contributions are considered and valued.
- Include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity.
- Provide positive non-stereotyping information about gender roles, diverse ethnic and cultural groups and disabled people.
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of issues of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity.
- Make inclusion a thread that runs through all of the activities of the setting.
- Celebrate a wide range of festivals.
- Making appropriate provision within the curriculum to ensure each child receives the widest possible opportunity to develop their skills and abilities



Free Rangers believes that the values and attitudes that child develop are influenced by many things, but that education plays a significant role in providing children with experiences that may shape their values and attitudes. We therefore believe that by providing children with a wide range of books, resources, activities, play experiences and opportunities to talk about what they feel, that we can help children in developing understanding, consideration and empathy for the diverse world that we live in.

Whilst we believe that we are doing many things to encourage equality and diversity we are always looking for new ways to tackle inequality and embrace diversity. We welcome ideas and suggestions from families and staff as to what more we can do to support and encourage our community to ensure a world where discrimination of any kind is stopped. If you have any suggestions or ideas then please do let us know.





# Data Protection Policy

*Date Created: September 2023*

*Review date: September 2026*

Here at Free Rangers we take your privacy seriously and will only use your personal information to process your bookings and to provide the products and services you have specifically requested from us. We will never sell or rent your information to third parties for their marketing purposes.

This policy aims to inform you:

- Why we collect your personal data;
- How we use and store your personal data;
- How to amend or delete your personal data that we hold (your rights);
- Other services that we use and their privacy policies.

## **For session bookings made through anytimebooking.com – How we use your information:**

Any information submitted, by you, when booking at Free Rangers will only be used for the administration of the sessions and to ensure your health and safety when you attend a Free Rangers session.

By submitting a booking with Free Rangers you consent to us using your personal information for safety purposes and, if necessary, consent to us sharing the personal data submitted with the Emergency Services and our Public Liability Insurance provider (Birnbeck Finance Ltd – 129 High Street, Worle, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 6HQ – <https://www.birnbeckinsurance.co.uk/>).

## **The personal data we hold for our Free Rangers sessions includes:**

- Your name (the name of the adult making the booking);
- Your child's name (the name of the child attending the session)
- Your address
- Your telephone number;
- Your email address;
- The name of an emergency contact;
- The telephone number of an emergency contact;
- The details of any pre-existing medical conditions or allergies you have advised us of;
- The details of any Special Educational Needs you have advised us of.



By submitting a booking you are consenting to us holding your own personal data, and are also giving parental consent to us holding the personal data of your child (who is attending the session) on their behalf. However, your individual rights under the General Data Protection Regulations are the same.

Your permission will be sought before photographs are taken of children, either as individuals or in groups.

Your personal details will be recorded, processed and kept securely in both paper and digital formats by Free Rangers in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. We will continue to hold your personal data after the sessions for insurance purposes.

Your booking was made through <https://www.anytimebooking.co.uk/> who will also hold your personal information – a copy of anytime bookings privacy policy can be found here: <https://www.anytimebooking.co.uk/privacy-policy/> Payment for your booking was made through Stripe who will also hold some of your personal data – a copy of Stripes Service's privacy policy can be found here: <https://stripe.com/gb/privacy>

#### **Your rights to amend or delete your data**

You may ask us to amend or delete your personal data we that hold at any time, by email to [freerangers@orchardorganicfarm.co.uk](mailto:freerangers@orchardorganicfarm.co.uk) .

However, if you request the deletion of your data prior to attending a session that you have booked, we will have to cancel your booking for health and safety reasons.

**Any requests regarding your data will be processed in 30 days.**

**The person maintaining your data is Emma Saunders**

**(trading as Free Rangers, Orchard Organic Farm).**

