Risk Assessment Policy

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

Approved by: Ms Leila Amri
Reviewed and evaluated: September 2025
Ratified by Governors: September 2025
Next Review date: September 2026

1. Introduction

Riverside Bridge School is committed to providing a safe, secure, and enabling environment for all pupils, staff, and visitors. As a special school in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, we educate pupils with a wide range of complex needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), autism spectrum conditions (ASC), medical conditions, and social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. Our vision - 'Inspire, Empower, Achieve' - underpins this policy: pupils should be given the opportunity to develop independence, resilience, and confidence, whilst being supported within safe and thoughtfully managed environments. Risk assessment is therefore not an exercise in eliminating all risk, but in balancing safety with opportunity, empowerment, and preparation for adulthood. This policy explains how Riverside Bridge School identifies, evaluates, records, monitors, and reviews risks in order to fulfil statutory health and safety duties, comply with LBBD guidance, and align with the Ofsted 2025 framework areas of safeguarding, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management.

2. Legal Framework

Riverside Bridge School recognises its legal duty to safeguard pupils, staff, and visitors under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. These require the school to identify hazards, assess risks, and put in place suitable and sufficient control measures. This duty applies equally to activities on-site and off-site, to staff activities, and to pupil-specific risks. Other relevant legislation includes the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and the Equality Act 2010, which requires reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and staff. In line with statutory guidance such as 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE 2025), risk assessment is an essential part of safeguarding practice. This policy also reflects LBBD corporate health and safety arrangements and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance, including the 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment'.

3. Why Manage via Risk Assessment

Managing health and safety via risk assessment is both a statutory obligation and a moral imperative. It enables Riverside Bridge School to anticipate potential hazards before they cause harm, to prevent accidents, to promote pupil independence in a managed way, and to provide assurance to families, governors, and the local authority. For example, when pupils access community cafés or take part in the Crave Crew enterprise project, risk assessment ensures they can engage meaningfully while controls are in place to mitigate traffic risks, allergens, handling of money, and safeguarding considerations. Effective risk assessment also protects staff, ensuring they can work in safe conditions when providing personal care, carrying out physical interventions, or working alone on site. In financial and reputational terms, good risk management reduces insurance claims, legal liability, and negative outcomes from Ofsted inspection. Most importantly, it embodies the ethos that safety and opportunity

go hand in hand: pupils learn resilience and independence because adults are confident risks have been anticipated and managed proportionately.

4. Sensible Risk Management

At Riverside Bridge School, we subscribe to the HSE principle of sensible risk management. This means focusing on real, significant risks (those most likely to cause harm or disruption) and avoiding disproportionate paperwork or unnecessary restrictions. For example, we do not prevent pupils from accessing outdoor learning or vocational tasks such as cooking simply because sharp utensils are involved; instead, we ensure staff are trained, ratios are correct, and clear procedures are in place. Sensible risk management is about balancing our responsibility to protect pupils with their right to explore, learn, and prepare for adulthood. In SEND contexts, this often involves personalisation: one pupil may safely use adapted scissors independently, while another requires close supervision. Staff are trained to make these judgements dynamically, supported by formal risk assessments and ongoing dialogue with leaders and families. The aim is to create environments that are safe, but not sterile; supportive but not limiting.

5. Who Undertakes the Assessment

Risk assessments are undertaken by staff with direct knowledge of the task, environment, or pupil. Typically, this will be class teachers, subject leaders, or activity coordinators, working alongside support staff and therapists who know pupils' individual needs. The health & safety lead is responsible for assessments relating to premises and contractors. Senior Leaders oversee high-risk activities and approve all external visits. Governors provide strategic oversight. Collaboration is essential: staff are expected to involve colleagues, parents & carers, and where possible, pupils themselves, in discussing potential hazards and control measures. For example, before arranging a swimming lesson, teachers consult therapists about medical plans, parents about seizure triggers, and the health& safety lead about pool safety. This collaborative approach ensures assessments are accurate, person-centred, and inclusive.

6. Decide How It Will Be Done

The method of risk assessment at Riverside Bridge School depends on the activity. For generic risks that apply across the school such as classroom layout, fire evacuation, or lunchtime routines, standard assessments are maintained centrally. For specific activities such as trips, enterprise projects, or vocational workshops, staff complete bespoke assessments using the school's LBBD-adapted template.

Where high-risk activities occur (such as swimming, manual handling, or lone working), Riverside Bridge School requires additional layers of assessment and oversight beyond the standard risk assessment form. This means that a generic assessment is supplemented by more detailed, personalised, or specialist documentation, as well as higher levels of approval. For example, before any swimming session, trained staff complete a pool safety risk

assessment and, in addition, individual pupil assessments that consider epilepsy management, medical protocols, safe entry/exit from the pool, and evacuation procedures. These are checked by the health & safety lead, shared with parents & carers and signed off by the health & safety lead and senior leaders.

Similarly, in manual handling, a whole-school assessment of equipment such as hoists is supported by individual pupil handling plans that include diagrams, guidance on techniques, and staff sign-off to confirm training and competence. These plans are monitored and updated regularly, especially when a pupil's physical needs change.

For lone working, a generic assessment of the building and site security is layered with specific staff arrangements such as logging in/out, text-based welfare checks, and escalation procedures if staff cannot be contacted. These measures ensure that no one is left vulnerable.

By embedding these additional layers, the school demonstrates that higher-risk activities are always matched by proportionately higher levels of planning, personalisation, and monitoring.

Staff are guided to keep assessments proportionate, avoiding unnecessary duplication but ensuring risks are addressed fully. The process includes consultation, hazard identification, control planning, and sign-off by line managers. This systematic approach ensures consistency and accountability.

7. How Detailed

Risk assessments must be 'suitable and sufficient' as required by law. At Riverside Bridge School, this means focusing on significant risks and capturing enough detail to demonstrate that hazards have been identified, those at risk considered, and effective controls put in place. For example, in a risk assessment for cooking, it is not necessary to list every utensil, but it is important to note risks from hot surfaces, allergens, cross-contamination, and sharp equipment. Detail is added where complexity or vulnerability demands it; a pupil with severe epilepsy will require a much more detailed swimming risk assessment than a pupil without medical needs. Assessments are expected to evidence proportionality, clarity, and practicality.

8. When to Assess

Risk assessments are carried out whenever new activities are planned, significant changes occur, or hazards are introduced. They are also reviewed annually as standard. Examples include new pupils joining with specific medical needs; curriculum changes such as the introduction of new vocational workshops; site changes such as installation of outdoor play equipment; or staffing changes impacting supervision. Dynamic risk assessments are carried out by staff in real-time where unexpected risks arise, for example during a trip when a venue is busier than anticipated. These are supplemented by formal reviews post-activity. The principle is to ensure assessments remain current, valid, and responsive to evolving needs.

9. Prioritising Actions

Where assessments identify multiple risks, priorities must be determined. At Riverside Bridge School, risks with the highest potential for harm or likelihood of occurrence are addressed first. For instance, a faulty hoist would be prioritised over minor trip hazards, as the consequences could be life-threatening. Action planning includes immediate controls, medium-term adjustments, and longer-term solutions. The health & safety lead is responsible for ensuring actions are assigned, deadlines set, and progress monitored. Staff are encouraged to suggest practical interim solutions -for example, reallocating staff to reduce ratios during a high-risk period while awaiting permanent measures. Prioritisation ensures resources are targeted effectively and risk reduced in line with legal and moral duties.

10. Risk Assessment Programme

The school operates a rolling programme of risk assessment review, ensuring every activity, area, and individual risk is revisited annually or more frequently as required. This programme is coordinated by the health & safety lead and reported to the Governing Body. High-risk areas such as fire safety, manual handling, and lone working are reviewed termly. Classroom and trip assessments are monitored through lesson observations, planning scrutiny, and Evolve trip submissions. A central register of all assessments is maintained, enabling senior leaders to track compliance, identify gaps, and plan training. Governors receive termly reports as part of their health and safety monitoring role.

11. Five Steps to Risk Assessment

Riverside Bridge School follows the HSE's Five Steps:

- identify hazards;
- decide who might be harmed and how;
- evaluate the risks and decide on precautions;
- record findings and implement them and update.

Each step is contextualised for a SEND setting. For example, Step 1 may involve considering hazards such as challenging behaviour, medical emergencies, or sensory overload. Step 2 requires identifying vulnerable groups, including pupils with limited mobility or communication. Step 3 involves weighing likelihood and severity using the LBBD matrix. Step 4 requires recording assessments using the school template and ensuring staff awareness. Step 5 involves annual review and immediate review after incidents. Embedding these steps ensures consistency and compliance.

Details on what to consider when following the HSE's five steps:

Step 1 - Identify the hazard

One of the most important aspects of your risk assessment is accurately identifying the potential hazards in your workplace.

A good starting point is to:

- walk around your workplace and think about any hazards.
- discuss with employees and/or their representatives; what is it about the activities, processes or substances used that could injure your employees or harm their health.
- ask your employees what they think the hazards are, as they may notice things that are not obvious to you and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks.
- check manufacturer's instruction and data sheets as they may help to spot hazards associated with specific types of equipment or tools.
- accident reports and any incidences of ill health related to work may be useful too.

Some examples:

- Hazardous substances and hot liquids
- Vehicles
- Working with machinery
- Tools and equipment
- Human factors
- Electricity
- Dust/fumes
- Manual handling
- Noise
- Poor lighting
- Working at height
- Work related stress
- Asbestos

Remember, the greater the hazard the more robust and reliable the measures to control the risk of an injury occurring will need to be.

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of controlling the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (e.g. people working in the storeroom or passers-by). Remember, some employees may have particular requirements, e.g. new and young employees, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers, people with disabilities, temporary employees, visitors, contractors/maintenance workers, homeworkers and lone workers.

Ask your employees/employee representatives if there is anyone you may have missed.

If you share a workplace with another service/business, consider how your work affects others and how their work affects you and your employees. Talk to each other and make sure controls are in place.

Step 3 - Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Consider how likely it is that each hazard may cause harm, taking a sensible approach. This will determine whether you need to do more to reduce the risk. Things to consider:

- Are the risks adequately controlled?
- Do you meet legal requirements and council standards?

- Are you following relevant guidance?
- Is the practiced method to a good standard?
- Have risks been reduced as far as reasonable practicable?
- Have adequate instructions and training been provided?
- Are the systems and procedures adequate?
- Could the current system be improved for efficiencies?

Look at what you're already doing and the control measures you already have in place. Ask yourself:

- Can the hazards be eliminated? (sensibly)
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

Practical steps may include:

- trying a less risky option e.g. substituting a hazardous substance with one that causes less harm
- preventing access to the hazards;
- organising your work to reduce exposure to the hazard e.g. job rotation
- issuing protective equipment;
- providing welfare facilities such as first aid and washing facilities
- involving and consulting with workers.

Reference to other documents and manuals such as the council's health and safety policies, procedures and guidance is acceptable if it helps with simplicity of work and understanding. Manufacturer's instructions may also provide information. These may already list hazards and precautions so you won't need to repeat the contents again.

Involve your employees, so you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

Where the nature of your work changes fairly frequently or the workplace changes and develops (e.g. a construction site), or where your employees move from site to site, your risk assessment may have to concentrate more on a broad range of risks that can be anticipated.

Step 4 - Record the findings and implement them

Record your findings using the risk assessment template. The risk assessment should be simple and focus on controls.

You need to ensure you effectively communicate the risk assessment to employees, and potentially others who may be affected by the outcomes/controls such as contractors. It is very important that employees affected by the risk assessment are informed of the findings and any action measures that need to be taken if a problem is identified.

Your risk assessment must be suitable and sufficient. It should show that:

- a proper check was made
- you asked who might be affected
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account those involved
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- you involved your employees or their representatives in the process

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Step 5 - Review you risk assessment and revise if necessary

You need to make sure your risk assessment stays up to date. At a minimum, you should consider reviewing your risk assessments annually to ensure they are still effective. You should review your risk assessment sooner that the planned review date if:

- it is no longer valid
- there has been a significant change
- an accident, incident or a case of ill health has occurred

On review ask yourself and consider:

- Have there been any significant changes?
- Are there improvements you still need to make?
- Have your employees spotted a problem?
- Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?

Remember your workplace will change over time. You are likely to bring in new equipment, substances and procedures. There may be advances in technology. You should review your assessment if any of these events happen. Remember to amend your assessment as a result of your review.

How to complete a risk assessment form

Select a risk rating to reflect the overall risk once controls are in place.

Add details of the work activity or person being assessed and location details if applicable.

School	Riverside Bridge School	
Reason for Risk Assessment		
Location		
Line Manager		Telephone:
Date of Activity		

Resultant Risk Rating Please tick	
High	
Medium	
Low (normal)	

Hazards	Risk associated with hazard	Initial Risk Rating	Controls required for reduction of risks to low	Revised Risk Rating

Break down the task into it main components. This does not need to be extensive. Make a note of the hazards that may be present e.g. slippery floor.

Make a note of any measures that are taken to reduce or remove the hazard. Refer to other guidance, procedures or training.

Make a note of who could be affecting by the work activity e.g. employees, visitors and what risks they may encounter.

Simple steps to undertake an assessment

The simple steps will take you through how to go about completing a risk assessment.

1. Discuss with your team the hazards associated with their work. This could be via team meetings, one to one's or walking around the workplace to identify hazards
2. Pull together a list of hazards; think about who may be harmed as a result and how (risk)
3. Formalise your assessment using the Risk Assessment Form and decide on control measures
4. Circulate the draft risk assessment for comments, including employee representative
5. Make necessary amendments and finalise
6. Implement controls
7. Evaluate, with your employees, whether the controls work
8. Review your assessment at regular intervals or when changes have occurred

Risk matrix

Consequence					
Catastrophic - Death	15	19	22	24	25
Major - More than 7 days absence	10	14	18	21	23
Moderate - Up to 3 days absence	6	9	13	17	20
Minor - Minor injury requiring first aid	3	5	8	12	16
Insignificant - No injury	1	2	4	7	11
Likelihood (Probability)	Very unlikely (rarely occurs, less than once per week)	Unlikely (once per week)	Fairly likely (more than once per week, but not daily)	Likely (daily)	Very Likely (more than once per day)

Likelihood x Consequence	
20-25	Stop activity and take immediate action
10-19	Take immediate action
6 - 9	Action to be taken
3-5	Monitor
1-2	No action

Most assessments will not need to use risk matrices. However, they can be used to help you work out the level of risk associated with a particular issue. They do this by categorising the likelihood of harm and the potential severity of the harm. This is then plotted in a matrix (please see above). The risk level determines which risks should be tackled first.

Using a matrix can be helpful for prioritising your actions to control a risk. It is suitable for many assessments but in particular to more complex situations. However, it does require expertise and experience to judge the likelihood of harm accurately. Getting this wrong could result in applying unnecessary control measures or failing to take important ones.

12. Further Assessments

Certain areas require specialist risk assessments beyond the generic approach. At Riverside Bridge School, this includes asbestos management; COSHH for cleaning chemicals and art/science resources; display screen equipment assessments for administrative staff; stress risk assessments for staff well-

being; fire risk assessments including evacuation plans and PEEPs; water system assessments for legionella; and specific assessments for new and expectant mothers. Each is conducted in line with LBBD and statutory requirements, and findings are integrated into operational planning. For example, new and expectant mother assessments ensure adjustments to duties and environments to safeguard both mother and child. These assessments demonstrate our commitment to comprehensive safety.

13. Recording, Monitoring and Review

All risk assessments are recorded on the school's LBBD-adapted template and stored centrally. Staff are required to familiarise themselves with assessments relevant to their role. Monitoring takes place through line management, health and safety walks, and governor audits. Reviews occur at least annually, but also following incidents, near misses, or significant changes. Findings are reported to SLT and governors, and lessons learnt are disseminated through staff briefings and training. For example, if a trip incident occurs, the assessment is revised and future planning adjusted. This cycle of recording, monitoring, and review ensures risk management is a live, dynamic process rather than a paper exercise.

14. Training and Competency

Risk assessment is only effective where staff are confident and competent in applying the procedures consistently. At Riverside Bridge School, all staff, including teachers, support staff, site team, and leaders, receive training on the principles of health and safety and risk assessment.

Training is central to ensuring assessments are meaningful. Staff receive annual training in completing and implementing risk assessments, supplemented by specific modules on manual handling, COSHH, fire safety, positive handling, and first aid. Leaders are trained in evaluating and approving assessments. Competency is monitored through observations, reviews of documentation, and professional dialogue. Staff are encouraged to reflect on and share good practice, such as innovative ways to enable independence safely. For example, staff supporting the Crave Crew enterprise project are trained in food hygiene, cash handling risks, and managing pupil interactions with the public. This ensures assessments are not abstract but embedded in daily practice.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team, or sooner if significant changes occur in legislation, guidance, or school operations. The review process includes consultation with staff and, where appropriate, families. Findings from incidents, audits, and inspections are used to strengthen the policy. The aim is to ensure the document remains current, comprehensive, and reflective of best practice in SEND education. The Governing Body formally approves the policy

and holds leaders to account for its implementation. Regular review ensures Riverside Bridge continues to meet its statutory duties and Ofsted expectations while keeping pupils and staff safe.

Appendix A – Master Risk Assessment Template

This appendix provides the standard blank risk assessment template to be used for all activities across Riverside Bridge School. The template includes sections for: Activity/Person/Location; Hazards; Risks; Controls already in place; Further actions required; Responsible person; Timescales; and Review date. Staff must complete the template before activities and ensure it is signed off by their line manager.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment template based on the LBBD Health and Safety Executive model.

School	Riverside Bridge School	
Reason for Risk Assessment		
Location		
Line Manager		Telephone:
Date of Activity		

Resultant Risk Rating	
High	
Medium	
Low (normal)	

Hazards	Risk associated with hazard	Initial Risk Rating	Controls required for reduction of risks to low	Revised Risk Rating

Consequence					
Catastrophic - Death	15	19	22	24	25
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Likelihood x Consequence	
20-25	Stop activity and take immediate action
10-19	Take immediate action
6 - 9	Action to be taken
3-5	Monitor
1-2	No action

Risk Assessment completed by: **Date:**

Senior Leadership: **Date:**

Health & Safety Lead: **Date:**