



HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

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Policy Reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson
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Changes since last review	-
Next Review Date	September 2027

1. PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT

The Ark Smallholding Ltd ("The Ark") is committed to managing health, safety and wellbeing as an integral part of its provision. The Ark will take reasonably practicable steps to protect employees and others who may be affected by its undertaking, including pupils, volunteers, contractors, visitors and members of the public. Risk will be managed sensibly and proportionately so that pupils can benefit from meaningful outdoor, animal-care and forest-school experiences without avoidable harm.

- provide and maintain safe systems of work, equipment and a safe working environment so far as reasonably practicable;
- identify hazards, assess significant risks and implement proportionate controls using the principles of prevention;
- provide appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision;
- consult employees on health and safety matters and encourage prompt reporting of hazards, near misses and learning;
- integrate safeguarding, SEND, equality and medical considerations with health-and-safety planning;
- monitor performance and act on incidents, trends, audit findings and changes in law/guidance.

2. SCOPE AND LEGAL / GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK

This policy applies to The Ark's premises, staff-controlled activities and foreseeable effects of its undertaking. It covers normal smallholding operations, animal care, woodland/forest-school activities, practical tasks, tools/equipment, substances, weather exposure, site access and emergency arrangements. It does not create a school's statutory functions where those do not apply to The Ark.

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).

- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended).
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), where applicable.
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended).
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 as amended by the 2022 Regulations, where applicable.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and current fire-safety guidance.
- Equality Act 2010, including reasonable-adjustment duties where applicable.
- Current HSE guidance, including HSG65, education/SEND guidance, zoonoses, work equipment, manual handling, contractors and lone working.
- DfE Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools, First aid guidance and medical-conditions guidance, used proportionately as relevant benchmarks.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 for the safeguarding interface and commissioning-school context.
- Leeds SEND Commissioning due-diligence expectations, Leeds for Learning Health, Safety and Wellbeing resources and LSCP procedures where relevant.

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACT

The Ark will use a proportionate Plan–Do–Check–Act approach. This is the framework for day-to-day management, not a separate paperwork exercise.

Stage	The Ark will
Plan	Identify significant hazards; consider who may be harmed and how; maintain risk assessments/risk register; allocate responsibilities; set standards and safe systems; plan resources, competence and emergency arrangements.
Do	Implement controls; communicate assessments; train/instruct staff; provide supervision, suitable equipment and PPE where required; manage contractors/visitors; apply individual pupil plans and reasonable adjustments.
Check	Complete routine/pre-use and periodic inspections according to risk; monitor accidents, near misses and safeguarding interfaces; review training and action logs; audit risk assessments and test emergency arrangements.
Act	Investigate significant events; correct defects and unsafe systems; update risk assessments/support plans; learn from patterns; formally review performance and policy at least annually and sooner where needed.

4. COMPETENT HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSISTANCE

Under regulation 7 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, The Ark as employer will appoint or identify one or more competent persons to assist it in complying with health-and-safety law. Competence means having sufficient training, knowledge, experience and other qualities for the risks and tasks concerned. The Directors will record who provides competent assistance and ensure that person has adequate time, information and resources. Where specialist competence is not available internally, The Ark will obtain external advice, for example from Leeds for Learning Health, Safety and Wellbeing or another suitably competent adviser. Appointment of a competent person does not transfer the employer's legal responsibility.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors / senior management have overall accountability for The Ark's health-and-safety arrangements, resources, approval of this policy, review of significant risks and assurance that corrective actions are completed.

The person with day-to-day health-and-safety oversight coordinates the risk register, inspections, action tracking, training/competence records, incident review and liaison with competent advisers. The Lead Coordinator ensures day-to-day controls are implemented during pupil sessions and that changing pupil/activity risks are escalated.

Employees must take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions; cooperate with The Ark; follow information, instruction and training; use equipment/PPE properly; and report hazards, defects, incidents and situations of serious and immediate danger promptly.

Volunteers must follow the safety information, supervision and activity restrictions given to them and report concerns. Their duties and permitted activities will reflect their role, competence and legal status.

Contractors must be competent for the work, cooperate with The Ark, provide relevant risk/method information, follow site controls and stop work where safety cannot be maintained. Safeguarding vetting/supervision is addressed separately where contact with children may occur.

Visitors will follow sign-in, boundary, emergency and safety instructions and remain supervised where required.

Pupils are not given adult legal responsibilities. In an age-, communication- and ability-appropriate way they are expected to follow safety instructions, remain within agreed boundaries, use equipment/animals only as instructed, wear required protective equipment and tell staff about hazards, injuries or concerns.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT AND HIERARCHY OF CONTROL

The Ark will ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are completed for significant risks. Assessments must identify hazards, who may be harmed, existing controls, further action, ownership and review. Controls should follow the general principles of prevention: avoid risk where possible; evaluate unavoidable risk; combat risk at source; adapt work to the individual; use safer alternatives; prioritise collective protection over individual protection; and provide appropriate information, instruction and training.

Risk assessments may be completed by a suitably competent employee or external adviser and will be approved by the responsible manager/Director according to significance. Material controls must be communicated to affected staff before the work/activity proceeds. Staff may use dynamic risk judgement to respond to changing conditions, but this does not replace planned assessment for foreseeable recurring risks.

Assessments will be reviewed at least annually unless a more frequent risk-based interval is appropriate, and sooner after an incident/near miss, change in equipment/substance/site/activity, new guidance, change in pupil/staff needs, evidence controls are ineffective, or a significant change in environmental conditions.

7. RISK-ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK AT THE ARK

- organisational risk register;
- site and local-area risk assessment;
- animal-care / livestock and species/task-specific risk assessments;
- forest-school and woodland activity assessments;
- COSHH assessments and safety-data information;
- manual-handling assessments;
- DSE assessments where applicable;
- fire risk assessment;
- individual learner risk assessments and support arrangements;
- Prevent risk assessment;
- lone-working assessments where relevant;
- work-equipment/task-specific assessments under PUWER or other specialist legislation;
- event/change-specific assessments where a new activity or hazard is introduced.

8. INDIVIDUAL LEARNER RISK ASSESSMENT AND COMMISSIONING-SCHOOL INFORMATION

Before a placement starts, the commissioning school or other responsible commissioner should provide current safeguarding, SEND, medical, behaviour/support and relevant risk information needed for safe planning. The Ark will review that information rather than assume a school-based assessment covers the smallholding environment.

The Ark will create or update its own site-specific or activity-specific individual learner risk assessment where the pupil's needs interact materially with Ark-specific hazards or controls. This may include animal access, tools/fire, terrain/weather, boundaries or missing risk, allergies/medical emergencies, sensory/communication needs, behaviour creating immediate risk, self-harm, restrictive intervention considerations or risk to/from other pupils, staff, visitors or animals.

The Lead Coordinator will ensure the assessment is operationally usable; the DSL/deputy must be involved where safeguarding risk is material. Significant changes, incidents and learning relevant to the commissioning school's plans will be fed back promptly so shared plans remain current. Risk controls will not be used as a substitute for safeguarding action or reasonable adjustments.

9. SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH-AND-SAFETY INTERFACE

The same event may require health-and-safety, first-aid, behaviour and safeguarding responses. Immediate physical safety comes first, but a health-and-safety response must never replace a safeguarding referral or allegation process where one is required.

- unexplained, inconsistent or repeated injuries;
- self-harm, suicidal behaviour or possible medical neglect;
- behaviour creating immediate risk to the pupil or others;
- restrictive intervention or injury associated with it;
- missing/absconding or unsafe boundary access;
- unsafe conduct around animals, tools, fire or hazardous areas that may indicate unmet need or deliberate harm;
- unsafe supervision, staff conduct, low-level concerns or allegations;

- patterns of accidents that suggest neglect, exploitation, bullying or another safeguarding concern.

Staff must follow the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and contact the DSL/deputy without avoidable delay where safeguarding is indicated. Emergency services or statutory safeguarding agencies must be contacted immediately where the situation requires it.

10. SUPERVISION OF PUPILS

Supervision will be proportionate to foreseeable risk and the pupil's ability to understand and follow safety instructions. The Ark will not use a single fixed staffing ratio as a substitute for risk assessment. Staffing and positioning of adults will consider age, maturity, SEND, communication, behaviour, medical needs, individual risk, activity complexity, group composition, staff competence, proximity to animals/tools/fire/roads/boundaries, visibility in woodland and the ability to summon help.

A planned activity must be adapted, relocated, postponed or stopped if the available supervision cannot safely manage the assessed risk.

11. ANIMALS AND LIVESTOCK

Detailed controls will be set out in current animal-specific risk assessments and safe systems. At policy level The Ark will ensure animal contact is supervised according to risk; access to enclosures/restricted areas is controlled; animal temperament, health and welfare are considered before pupil contact; gates/fences are kept secure; and pupils are taught safe behaviour around animals.

Risk assessments will consider bites, scratches, kicks, butting, crushing/trapping, allergies, zoonoses, contamination from faeces/urine, feed/bedding dust and task-specific manual handling. Handwashing with soap and water after relevant animal contact and before eating/drinking will be promoted; reliance on hand gel alone is not a substitute where visible/biological contamination requires washing. Injuries and suspected infection exposure will follow First Aid and medical escalation arrangements.

12. FOREST SCHOOL, WOODLAND AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Forest-school and woodland activities will be delivered under activity-specific assessments and by staff with competence appropriate to the activity. Controls will consider tool use, fires/heat, climbing, uneven or slippery ground, tree/branch hazards, boundaries, visibility, ticks/insects, poisonous plants/fungi where relevant, weather exposure, communication coverage and emergency-service access.

Staff will conduct pre-use/environmental checks appropriate to current conditions and stop or modify activities when conditions differ materially from the assessment.

13. INFECTION PREVENTION, BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS AND ZOOZOSES

Biological agents capable of causing disease can fall within COSHH. The Ark will assess and control foreseeable exposure arising from animal contact, manure/urine, contaminated surfaces, bedding/feed, soil, bites/scratches, waste and cleaning tasks. Controls may include

hygiene, handwashing, cleaning/disinfection, task separation, suitable PPE, safe waste handling, covering cuts, exclusion from particular tasks where clinically indicated and access to medical advice after exposure.

Individual vulnerability, including medical conditions, immunosuppression, pregnancy or allergies, will be handled sensitively and proportionately with occupational/medical advice where needed. Personal medical information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

14. TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND PUWER

Work equipment used at work will be selected and managed in accordance with PUWER where applicable. Equipment must be suitable for its intended use and environment, maintained in a safe condition, inspected where necessary, and used only by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training. Safety guards/controls must not be bypassed. Defective equipment must be taken out of use, clearly identified and repaired or disposed of safely.

Pupil access to tools/equipment will be determined by activity risk assessment, age/maturity, SEND, competence and supervision. Storage will prevent unauthorised access. Specialist equipment subject to additional legislation will be managed under the relevant legal regime and competent advice sought.

15. COSHH AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

The Ark will maintain proportionate COSHH arrangements for cleaning products, live-stock/animal-care products, dusts, biological agents and other hazardous substances. Current safety data and supplier information will be available where relevant. Assessments will address purchase/substitution, storage, labelling, exposure control, ventilation, PPE where required, spill/emergency response, waste/disposal and pupil access restrictions.

Only trained/authorised persons may handle substances where the assessment requires it. Training and refresher intervals will be determined by risk, changes and competence; this policy does not impose an automatic annual COSHH refresher where the law does not require one.

16. MANUAL HANDLING

Manual handling will follow the avoid–assess–reduce hierarchy. Hazardous handling will be avoided so far as reasonably practicable; unavoidable tasks will be assessed and risk reduced using changes to the task, load, environment, frequency, storage or mechanical aids. The law does not set a universal safe weight limit. Individual capability and health factors will be considered.

Examples relevant to The Ark include animal feed/bedding, water/containers, tools/equipment, deliveries and heavy materials. Pupils will not be expected to carry out unsafe lifting or moving. Pupil participation in practical handling tasks will be limited by individual capability, instruction and supervision.

17. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND SUITABLE CLOTHING

PPE will be provided where risk assessment identifies it as necessary after higher-level controls have been considered. PPE must be suitable for the hazard, user and task; compatible with other PPE; maintained, stored and replaced appropriately; and supported by information, instruction and training. Examples may include protective gloves, eye protection, task-specific protective clothing or protective footwear.

Ordinary weather-appropriate clothing, sturdy footwear or sun/rain clothing may be required for comfort and safe participation but is not automatically "PPE" under the workplace regulations. The distinction will be recorded where relevant.

18. ADVERSE WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Weather and ground conditions form part of daily/activity risk management. Staff will consider heat, cold, heavy rain, snow/ice, storms, high winds, lightning, flooding/water levels, mud/unsafe ground and tree/branch risk. Activities will be adapted, relocated, postponed or stopped where controls cannot reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Reopening/resumption after severe weather will follow an appropriate site check.

The Business Continuity / Emergency Plan contains detailed communication and continuity arrangements. Any alternative venue must be suitable, safeguarded, insured/authorised as appropriate and risk assessed before pupils are relocated there.

19. FIRST AID, MEDICATION AND MEDICAL NEEDS

The Ark will maintain adequate first-aid arrangements based on its needs assessment, with suitably trained personnel, accessible equipment/portable provision, accident recording and emergency-service access. Detailed arrangements are in the First Aid Policy.

Medical conditions, allergies and emergency medication will be identified through pre-placement planning and managed under the Medication Policy and pupil healthcare/emergency plans. This includes, where relevant, asthma, anaphylaxis, epilepsy, diabetes and other conditions. Routine medication procedures will not be duplicated in this policy.

20. SITE SECURITY, VISITORS AND CONTRACTORS

The Ark will control access to the site through suitable gates, barriers, sign-in arrangements, visitor identification and restricted areas. Pupil boundaries will be taught and supervised according to individual risk. Unauthorised persons will be managed without staff placing themselves or pupils at avoidable risk; police assistance will be sought where required.

Contractor selection and management will consider competence, insurance where relevant, risk/method information, site induction, segregation from pupils, supervision, permits or specialist controls where required, and cooperation/co-ordination with The Ark. Safeguarding induction/vetting is separate from health-and-safety competence and will be applied according to the Safer Recruitment / safeguarding procedures.

21. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Ark will maintain and periodically test proportionate emergency arrangements. Detailed contacts, command arrangements and continuity actions are held in the Business Continuity

/ Emergency Plan and other specialist procedures. Scenarios considered will include serious injury/medical emergency, fire, escaped or dangerous animal, significant property damage, criminal activity/intruder, severe weather/flooding, public-health incident, local disaster/environmental hazard, utility failure, site evacuation, lockdown/invacuation where appropriate, missing pupil, serious behavioural incident and loss of safe staffing or essential facilities.

Emergency arrangements must include accounting for pupils/staff, communication, support for SEND/disability/medical needs, access for emergency services and a safe decision about closure/reopening. Drills/tests will be proportionate to the scenario and learning will be recorded.

22. ACCIDENT, INCIDENT AND NEAR-MISS REPORTING

All staff must promptly report accidents, injuries, near misses, dangerous conditions and relevant animal-related incidents. Appropriate first aid or emergency action must be taken first. Records should be proportionate and distinguish first-aid treatment, accident/incident investigation, safeguarding records and RIDDOR assessment.

Significant incidents will be investigated to identify underlying causes and whether controls, supervision, training, equipment, environmental conditions or pupil plans require change. The depth of investigation will reflect actual and potential severity. Trends will be reviewed rather than records simply being filed. Significant learning will be shared with the commissioning school where relevant to the pupil's support/risk arrangements.

23. RIDDOR

The Ark will comply with RIDDOR 2013 and current HSE criteria. The Director or nominated Responsible Person will decide whether an incident is reportable and submit any required report. Staff must not assume that every serious-looking accident or hospital visit is reportable.

For employees/workers, reportability may include work-related death, specified injuries, qualifying over-seven-day incapacitation, occupational disease or listed dangerous occurrences. Pupils, volunteers and other people who are not at work are generally considered under the non-worker test: a work-related accident must result in injury and direct transfer from the scene to hospital for treatment, or death. Diagnostic examination alone is not "treatment". Legal status must be checked in unusual cases such as work experience or training schemes.

24. LONE WORKING AND ONE-TO-ONE WORK

Where staff work alone on site or with animals outside pupil sessions, The Ark will assess the additional risk from isolation, communication, medical suitability, violence, rural location, animals, equipment and emergency response. Controls may include prohibited lone tasks, check-in/out, charged phone/radio, escalation contacts and limits on higher-risk work. HSE guidance will be followed where a task requires more than one person.

One-to-one work with a pupil is not the same as staff lone working and must also comply with safeguarding, staff-conduct, supervision and individual-risk arrangements. No health-and-safety measure should create an avoidable safeguarding blind spot.

25. TRAINING, INFORMATION AND COMPETENCE

Staff and volunteers will receive an appropriate induction covering site hazards, emergency procedures, reporting, safeguarding interfaces and the risk assessments relevant to their duties. Additional training will be provided where legal duties or risk assessment require it. Training must be understandable, role-relevant and refreshed when competence may have degraded or risks/controls change.

- animal handling and zoonosis/hygiene controls;
- forest-school activities and any fire/tool competencies;
- work-equipment/POWER competence;
- COSHH and hazardous-substance handling;
- manual handling where task risk warrants training;
- first aid;
- fire safety and evacuation;
- restrictive intervention, where the person's role requires it and in accordance with the separate policy;
- individual learner/SEND communication and risk controls;
- lone-working/emergency communication where applicable.

Not every item above is universally mandatory training for every staff member. The required level is determined by law, the role, risk assessment, competence and the activities actually undertaken. Training records will show completion/renewal or review dates where relevant.

26. SEND, DISABILITY AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Health-and-safety management will be inclusive and person-centred. The Ark will consider communication, sensory needs, mobility, cognition, behaviour, medical needs and disability when designing controls. A diagnosis or disability will not be treated as an automatic safety reason to exclude a pupil from an activity. Reasonable adjustments and alternative controls will be considered before restriction, consistent with the Equality Act 2010 and current HSE guidance.

Where an individual need creates a specific risk, assessment will be case-specific and reviewed when needs change. The pupil's views and communication method should be considered where appropriate, alongside parent/carers and commissioning-school information.

27. CONSULTATION, REPORTING CONCERNS AND STOP-WORK AUTHORITY

Employees will be consulted on health-and-safety matters directly or through any appropriate representative arrangements. Staff are encouraged to report hazards, defects and impractical controls because they have direct knowledge of the work. Anyone who reasonably believes there is serious and immediate danger should take safe steps to remove themselves/pupils from danger and notify the Lead Coordinator/Director. Staff will not be criticised for stopping an activity in good faith where safety cannot be maintained.

28. MONITORING, INSPECTIONS, AUDITS AND INCIDENT LEARNING

The Ark will monitor whether controls work in practice. The schedule will be risk-based and may include daily/pre-use checks, periodic documented site inspections, equipment/maintenance checks, risk-assessment reviews, accident/near-miss trend analysis,

fire/emergency tests, training records, staff feedback, safeguarding incident learning and an annual health-and-safety audit/management review.

Actions will have an owner and target date. The person with day-to-day H&S oversight will monitor completion and escalate overdue significant actions. Directors will receive proportionate information on significant incidents, high risks, overdue actions, training/inspection status and trends, and will formally review health-and-safety performance at least annually.

29. POLICY AND RISK-ASSESSMENT REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed at least annually. Earlier review will occur after a serious or repeated incident/near miss, RIDDOR event, safeguarding learning, enforcement/adviser recommendation, material change in law or guidance, new site/equipment/substance/activity, change in staffing or pupil profile, commissioning requirement, or evidence that controls are not effective. Related risk assessments and emergency plans will be reviewed at the same time where affected.