



Vermont School's Climbing Policy 2024-25

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Policy Statement

At Vermont School, as a Thrive setting, we recognise the importance of play in developing social, emotional and cognitive skills. We actively incorporate play-based activities as a vehicle for

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learning, including those that involve a degree of risk. We support risky play by:

- **Understanding its importance:** Play and risk play are crucial for children's development, helping them build confidence, resilience and problem-solving skills
- **Creating Safe Environments:** As a Thrive setting, we create environments where children can explore and take calculated risks under supervision, fostering a sense of safety and encouraging them to push their limits in a supportive setting
- **Promoting Natural Exploration:** As a Thrive School, we support the use of real tools and natural materials in play, recognising that these can provide more meaningful and encouraging experiences for children
- **Creative Activities:** We use creative activities to engage children in play due to past experiences, ensuring that all children have opportunities to explore and develop their skills through play

Climbing Trees

Climbing trees offers a wide range of developmental benefits for all children, and it is particularly valuable for those with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Physically, it promotes coordination, strength, and spatial awareness, while also encouraging risk assessment and problem-solving. Tree climbing provides a powerful outlet for emotional regulation and stress relief through active, nature-based play. It fosters a sense of achievement and boosts self-esteem as children overcome challenges and gain confidence in their abilities.

The sensory experience of being outdoors and engaging with natural elements can also have a calming effect, reducing anxiety and improving mood. Additionally, the unstructured and imaginative nature of climbing trees supports social interaction, resilience, and the development of independence - key areas of growth for children with SEMH needs. Integrating opportunities for safe, supervised tree climbing into play and learning environments can therefore be a highly effective strategy in supporting the overall well-being and development of these children.

"In play, under a tree or up a tree, alone or in groups, expression themselves in words or with blocks, or, music or miniature world materials, children think and feel and act in ways of the utmost importance for their learning" (Mary Jane Drummond 'Play Learning and the National Curriculum - some possibilities' 1996)

Climbing on the roof and at height

At Vermont School, we have a flat-roofed building that can become a tempting challenge for some children who attempt to climb onto it by using nearby fences. In response to this serious safety concern, we have taken multiple preventative measures to protect our students.

We have applied anti-climb paint to vulnerable areas and clearly displayed warning signs to discourage climbing. Additionally, we have created and shared social stories with the children, helping them understand the dangers of being on the roof in a way that is age-appropriate and meaningful. These efforts are part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring a safe and secure environment for all students.

The majority of our children engage safely with risky play; however, some need additional support. As a result of this we have developed this policy and accompanying risk assessment.

Policy Outline

This policy aims to safeguard pupils, staff and visitors and Vermont School by mitigating the risks associated with children climbing on roofs and climbing trees. The school acknowledges that climbing may stem from emotion dysregulation, sensory needs or a desire for escape. This policy supports a proactive and consistent approach in managing such behaviour.

The activities under assessment involve children climbing on a flat roof at Vermont School and climbing trees at Vermont School. This may occur during free play, supervised activities or unplanned access. The roof has a height that could lead to injury if accessed improperly.

Children climbing roofs or trees present significant safety risks. Vermont School takes a trauma informed, behaviourally aware approach to managing this behaviour. The school does not support unsafe climbing and takes all reasonable steps to prevent access to high-risk areas.

This policy applies to staff, pupils and visitors to Vermont School.

Prevention Measures

The following points aim to identify the potential hazards, evaluate risks and suggest controls to keep tree climbing a manageable and safe activity whilst supporting children's physical development and play.

Trees

- Regular inspection of trees and potential climbing points near buildings. Children need to wear suitable footwear when in school (no sandals).
- Environmental modifications such as pruning lower branches, surveillance cameras where appropriate. Vermont Schools has a grounds maintenance contract with Southampton City Council (SCC) in the event of fences, trees etc needing attention.
- Sensory and physical alternatives for children with climbing and sensory seeking behaviours will always be the first activity sought (e.g., climbing frames in safe areas)
- Trained first aiders will be available on-site at all times. There are eleven qualified first aiders on site who have been trained by Tigerlily. The awarded qualification is CTQ Level 3 Award in First Aid for Schools. Certificates are held by the school and are valid for three years. The most recent training date was 7th April 2025.
- A fully stocked first aid kit will be available in two places. The first location is the front reception office and the second will be located in the new medical room which is under construction. The first aid kits will be checked each week by a dedicated first aider.
- Care plans will be maintained for pupils with medical needs and regularly reviewed.
- All medication will be stored securely and administered according to school procedures.
- Children are taught about the importance of considering their own safety.

Roof

- Regular inspections of the roof and surrounding areas to ensure there are no safety hazards such as debris or slippery surfaces.

- Signage is clearly displayed around the areas of the site where anti-climb paint has been displayed. Social stories have been created which are discussed in class and parents have been notified of the anti-climbing paint being on site via a school newsletter.
- The only member of staff permitted to access the roof is the Site Manager and only using a ladder that he is trained to climb.
- Trained first aiders will be available on-site at all times. There are eleven qualified first aiders on site who have been trained by Tigerlily. The awarded qualification is CTQ Level 3 Award in First Aid for Schools. Certificates are held by the school and are valid for three years. The most recent training date was 7th April 2025.
- A fully stocked first aid kit will be available in two places. The first location is the front reception office and the second will be located in the new medical room which is under construction. The first aid kits will be checked each week by a dedicated first aider.

Fences

- Regular inspections of the school's fencing will take place for weak spots to ensure there are no safety hazards. We have an SLA in place with SCC who will come out to repair damage.
- Signage is clearly displayed around the fenced areas where anti-climb paint has been displayed. Social stories have been created which are discussed in class and parents have been notified of the anti-climbing paint being on site via a school newsletter.

Staff Response

Trees

- If a child needs to be physically helped down from a tree, staff will maintain a calm voice and only attempt to help a child down when it is safe to do so. If the child is in imminent danger, the child's parent/carer will be contacted to come to site for support and emergency services will be called. The area will be cleared of peers to prevent escalation or attention seeking reinforcement.
- Maintain calm, supportive communication from ground level whilst monitoring the child's wellbeing from a distance.
- The Site Manager and Business Manager will continually evaluate site safety and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. SCC Grounds Maintenance will be called upon if the adjustment is outside of the Site Manager's responsibilities.
- In the event of poor weather conditions, the Headteacher will make the decision whether the grounds containing trees will be closed off to pupils until the Site Manager carries out a risk assessment of the area.
- Staff will maintain appropriate levels of supervision when pupils are climbing trees.

Fence

- Calmly but firmly instruct the child to stop and climb down safely if already on the fence. Avoid shouting to prevent startling them. Engage the child with calm, supportive language. Use known strategies if part of an individual behaviour plan.

- The Site Manager and Business Manager will continually evaluate site safety and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. SCC Grounds Maintenance will be called upon if the adjustment is outside of the Site Manager's responsibilities.
- Notify a colleague or use a radio/phone to call for assistance while maintaining visual contact with the child.
- The area will be cleared of peers to prevent escalation or attention seeking reinforcement

Risk Assessment – Climbing Risk Management Trees

At Vermont School we regard the safety of children as paramount and part of protecting pupils is undertaking risk assessments. A risk assessment has been undertaken for tree climbing which is outlined below.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION	RISK	CONTROLS – REDUCING THE RISK	RISK OUTCOME
Climbing trees - Children climbing trees at height, possible risk of falls and fractures	HIGH	• If a child needs to be physically helped down from a tree, staff will maintain a calm voice and only attempt to help a child down when it is safe to do so. If the child is in imminent danger, the child's parent/carer will be contacted to come to site for support and emergency services will be called. The area will be cleared of peers to prevent escalation or attention seeking reinforcement. • Staff will maintain calm, supportive communication from ground level whilst monitoring the child's well-being from a distance • Trained first aiders will be available on-site at all times. There are eleven qualified first aiders on site who have been trained by Tigerlily. The awarded qualification is CTQ Level 3 Award in First Aid for Schools. Certificates are held by the school and are valid for three years. The most recent training date was 7th April 2025. • Staff will maintain appropriate levels of supervision when pupils are climbing trees • Children are taught about the importance of considering their own safety	MEDIUM
Branch breakage and tree condition	MEDIUM	• The Site Manager and Business Manager will continually evaluate site safety and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. SCC Grounds Maintenance will be called upon if the adjustment is outside of the Site Manager's responsibilities. • Environmental modifications such as pruning lower branches, surveillance cameras where appropriate. Vermont Schools has a grounds maintenance contract with Southampton City Council (SCC) in the event of fences, trees etc needing attention.	LOW

Other hazards such as power cables, loose objects and the presence of wildlife or insects	MEDIUM	- The Site Manager and Business Manager will continually evaluate site safety and make reasonable adjustments where necessary. SCC Grounds Maintenance will be called upon if the adjustment is outside of the Site Manager's responsibilities. - Environmental modifications such as pruning lower branches, surveillance cameras where appropriate. Vermont Schools has a grounds maintenance contract with Southampton City Council (SCC) in the event of fences, trees etc needing attention.	LOW
Inadequate supervision	LOW	- Staff will maintain appropriate levels of supervision when pupils are climbing trees. - Appropriate staff to pupil ratio during outside play	LOW
Peer influence, copying behaviours	MEDIUM	- Children are taught about the importance of considering their own safety. - Care plans will be maintained for pupils with medical needs and regularly reviewed - Maintain calm, supportive communication from ground level whilst monitoring the child's well being from a distance.	LOW
Emotional Distress	MEDIUM	Maintain calm, supportive communication from ground level whilst monitoring the child's well being from a distance.	MEDIUM

Risk Assessment – Climbing Risk Management Fences and Roof

At Vermont School we regard the safety of children as paramount and part of protecting pupils is undertaking risk assessments. A risk assessment has been undertaken for fence and Roof climbing which is outlined below.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION	RISK	CONTROLS – REDUCING THE RISK	RISK OUTCOME
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Climbing Fences and Roofs - Possible risk of falls and fractures	HIGH	• Signage is clearly displayed around the fenced areas where anti-climb paint has been displayed. Social stories have been created which are discussed in class and parents have been notified of the anti-climbing paint being on site via a school newsletter. • If a child needs to be physically helped down from a fence or the roof, staff will maintain a calm voice and only attempt to help a child down when it is safe to do so. If the child is in imminent danger, the child's parent/carer will be contacted to come to site for support and emergency services will be called. The area will be cleared of peers to prevent escalation or attention seeking reinforcement. • Staff will calmly but firmly instruct the child to stop and climb down safely if already on the fence or roof. Staff will avoid shouting to prevent startling them. Engage the child with calm, supportive language. Use known strategies if part of an individual behaviour plan. • Trained first aiders will be available on-site at all times. There are eleven qualified first aiders on site who have been trained by Tigerlily. The awarded qualification is CTQ Level 3 Award in First Aid for Schools. Certificates are held by the school and are valid for three years. The most recent training date was 7th April 2025. • Children are taught about the importance of considering their own safety • Notify a colleague or use a radio/phone to call for assistance while maintaining visual contact with the child.	MEDIUM
Other hazards such as power cables, lose objects and the presence of wildlife or insects	MEDIUM	• Regular inspections of the school's fencing will take place for weak spots to ensure there are no safety hazards. We have an SLA in place with SCC who will come out to repair damage. • Environmental modifications such as pruning lower branches, surveillance cameras where appropriate. Vermont Schools has a grounds maintenance contract with Southampton City Council (SCC) in the event of fences, trees etc needing attention.	LOW
Inadequate supervision	LOW	• Staff will maintain appropriate staff to pupil ratio during outside play	LOW
Peer influence, copying behaviours	MEDIUM	• Children are taught about the importance of considering their own safety. • Care plans will be maintained for pupils with medical needs and regularly reviewed • Maintain calm, supportive communication from ground level whilst monitoring the child's wellbeing from a distance. • The area will be cleared of peers to prevent escalation or attention seeking reinforcement.	LOW

Emotional Distress	MEDIUM	• Maintain calm, supportive communication from ground level whilst monitoring the child's wellbeing from a distance.	MEDIUM
Staff retrieving balls from the roof, staff and children	LOW	• There is a clear no climb policy in place for staff. Staff to contact the Site Manager for help. • The Site Manager is the only authorised person/member of staff to retrieve balls from the roof.	LOW
Obstacles and equipment on roof	LOW	• The site Manager carries out regular roof check as part of his daily and weekly premises checks and reported to SCC if there are any concerns • No equipment to be stored on the roof	LOW