RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

Elysian

Providing Animal Assisted Therapy & Learning

Agreed: November 2026

To be Reviewed: November 2027

Elysian is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy is applicable across all sites on which Elysian operates.

Vision and Purpose

At Elysian, we believe that safety is the foundation for growth. Our risk assessment policy supports a nurturing, therapeutic environment where children and young people (CYP), especially those with additional needs, can thrive emotionally, socially and academically.

We recognise that healing and learning are deeply interconnected. Our approach to risk assessment reflects the unique nature of our provision, which includes animal-assisted interventions, equine activities, outdoor learning and relational support. We aim to identify and manage risks in a way that protects wellbeing without limiting opportunity. Risk assessment is about sensible, proportionate control of real risks. It is not about removing every risk or creating unnecessary paperwork, and it should never become a reason to stop CYP from taking part in valuable experiences.

This policy meets the requirement of the Independent School Standards that the proprietor draws up and effectively implements a written risk assessment policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, and takes appropriate action to reduce the risks identified. It applies to every site and activity run by Elysian, to staff, volunteers, CYP, visitors and contractors, and to activities that take place off site.

Legal Framework

This policy is grounded in the following legislation:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, including the duties to assess risks to young persons under 18 and to new and expectant mothers
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils) and Part 5 (premises and accommodation)
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022
- The Work at Height Regulations 2005
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- The Animal Welfare Act 2006 and, where they apply, the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018
- The Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled CYP and staff
- The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018
- The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law), for which Elysian is preparing

It also takes account of the following statutory and non-statutory guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- DfE: Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools
- DfE: Health and safety on educational visits
- DfE: Emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings
- HSE: Risk assessment: a brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace (INDG163)
- HSE: Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions
- HSE: Management Standards for work-related stress
- Benedict's Law (allergy safety in schools), which Elysian follows as best practice ahead of it applying to independent schools

Definitions

Hazard: anything with the potential to cause harm, such as animals, tools, terrain, substances or behaviour.

Risk: the likelihood that harm will occur, combined with how serious that harm could be.

Control measure: a step taken to remove a hazard or reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Residual risk: the level of risk that remains once control measures are in place.

Risk assessment: a careful look at what could cause harm, who could be harmed and how, and whether enough has been done to prevent it. Significant findings are recorded.

Dynamic risk assessment: the ongoing judgement staff make during an activity when circumstances change, such as weather, an animal's behaviour or a CYP's presentation.

Near miss: an event that did not cause harm but could have done.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **The Proprietor (Chief Executive Officer, Chair of the proprietor body and Chair of Governors)**: holds ultimate responsibility for health and safety and for making sure this policy is drawn up, implemented effectively and resourced, and that appropriate action is taken to reduce the risks identified.
- **Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Governance**: keeps this policy in line with current legislation and guidance, and monitors how well it is working through quality assurance, with a focus on learning and improvement.
- **Estates and Operations Group**: oversees premises, fire and estate risks across all sites, and leads preparation for the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.
- **Heads of each provision**: make sure all risk assessments for their site are completed, recorded, shared with the people who need them and reviewed on time; agree any activity with a high residual risk before it goes ahead.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead**: contributes to individual risk assessments where there is a safeguarding element, and leads any risk assessment or safety and support plan needed where a CYP may pose a risk to others, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- **Staff and volunteers**: take part in risk assessments, read and follow the control measures for their work, use dynamic risk assessment during activities, and report hazards, incidents and near misses straight away.
- **CYP**: are involved, at a level that suits their age and understanding, in identifying risks and agreeing how to stay safe, in line with our principle of nothing about me without me.

- **Parents and carers**: share information that helps us keep their child safe, contribute to their child's individual risk assessment, and follow safety guidance when on site.
- **Contractors and visitors**: provide evidence of their own risk assessments and method statements where relevant, and follow site safety, safeguarding and induction arrangements.

Types of Risk Assessment

Elysian carries out the following risk assessments, using its risk assessment template unless a specialist format is needed:

- **Site and premises**: covering buildings, grounds, yards, fields, water features, security, utilities and access, for each site.
- **Fire**: a written fire risk assessment for each site, carried out by a competent person, with the full findings recorded as the Fire Safety Order requires.
- **Activity**: for each regular activity, including animal-assisted interventions, equine activities and riding, outdoor learning, practical and land-based tasks, and the use of tools and machinery.
- **Off-site visits and travel**: for every trip and for transport arrangements, including vehicle checks, route safety, supervision, emergency planning and medical needs.
- **Individual CYP**: for any CYP whose needs, behaviour, health, allergies or circumstances call for specific measures, linked to their EHCP, individual healthcare plan or behaviour support plan where they have one. Any planned use of physical intervention is recorded and agreed in advance, in line with the Behaviour policy.
- **Substances**: COSHH assessments for cleaning products, animal medicines, chemicals, fuels and other hazardous substances.
- **Staff**: including new and expectant mothers, lone working, manual handling and display screen equipment, and anyone under 18 whom Elysian employs or takes on for work experience or volunteering.
- **Work-related stress**: an individual stress risk assessment for any member of staff who reports work-related stress, in line with the HSE Management Standards.
- **Events and public activities**: for any event where members of the public, visitors or hirers are on site, including how CYP are kept separate from public activity where needed.

Our Risk Assessment Process

We follow a six-step process:

1. **Identify hazards**: including environmental, emotional, behavioural, health and animal-related hazards.
2. **Decide who may be harmed and how**: considering neurodiversity, EHCPs, medical needs, allergies, age, inexperience and any other individual needs.
3. **Evaluate the risks and decide on control measures**: balancing safety with therapeutic benefit, and considering reasonable adjustments so that CYP are included rather than excluded.
4. **Record significant findings**: using our risk assessment template, naming who is responsible for each action and by when, and sharing the assessment with everyone involved before the activity starts.
5. **Review and update**: at least annually, and sooner after an incident or near miss, a change in activity, premises, staffing, animals or a CYP's needs, or a change in legislation or guidance.
6. **Retain assessments**: securely, for 3 years beyond their active period, in line with Elysian's data protection arrangements. Where a risk assessment is linked to an accident, a copy is kept in the file with the accident record.

Where a risk cannot be reduced to an acceptable level, the activity does not go ahead until further controls are in place. Significant organisational risks are added to the relevant group's risk register, and matters outside a Head's authority are escalated to the Chief Executive Officer or Director.

Scope of Risk Assessments

Our assessments cover:

- Animal-assisted and equine activities (species-specific behaviour, handling, riding, zoonotic infection such as E. coli and ringworm, handwashing, allergies, animal welfare and the competence of staff handling animals)
- Outdoor environments (weather, heat and cold, terrain, water features, trees, plants and fencing)
- Tools and machinery (safe storage, maintenance, supervision, training and protective equipment)
- Individual needs (emotional regulation, absconding risk, sensory triggers, medical conditions and allergies, including anaphylaxis)
- Safeguarding (relational boundaries, supervision ratios, communication plans, safety plans, online safety and visitors on site)
- Travel and off-site activities (vehicle checks, route safety, emergency planning and medication)
- Premises and emergencies (fire, evacuation and lockdown, security, first aid cover and critical incidents)

Reporting and Learning

All accidents, incidents and near misses are reported and recorded promptly so that risk assessments can be reviewed. Reportable incidents are notified to the HSE under RIDDOR within the required timescales. Any safeguarding concern is raised immediately through Elysian's safeguarding procedures with the site DSL. We use what we learn from incidents, near misses and quality assurance to improve our practice, not to find fault.

Training and Communication

Elysian makes sure that staff who carry out risk assessments are competent to do so, with training where needed. Risk assessments are explained to staff and volunteers at induction and whenever they change, and the people they affect can see them. Parents and carers receive any information about risk through web links and electronic forms.

Monitoring and Review

Heads check that risk assessments on their site are current. The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Governance samples risk assessments across sites as part of quality assurance and reports themes to the relevant group. This policy is reviewed every year, or sooner if legislation, guidance or our provision changes.

Links to Other Policies

- Health and Safety
- First Aid
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions
- Safeguarding

- Behaviour
- Lone Working
- Travel and Transport
- Safer Recruitment

For the purposes of this policy, where the term Elysian is used, it refers to Elysian Animal Assisted Interventions Ltd, Elysian Animal Assisted Therapy and Learning CIC and Elysian Training and Development Ltd.