Organisation name: **Colchester Zoological Society** Date Conducted: 30-09-2026 Conducted by: Stella Ramey

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SCHOOL AND GROUP VISITS TO COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

This risk assessment is a guidance sheet providing a general outline of potential risks and controls identified. It is strongly recommended that **all organisers make a preliminary visit to Colchester Zoological Society (CZS) to carry out their own risk assessment before bringing a class of children**. Two free familiarisation tickets to complete this visit can be requested after you have made a school booking.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher/Leader Responsibilities:

Teachers/Leaders and any supporting adults are responsible for the behaviour of the children towards the animals, staff, and other visitors. **All children in Year 9 (14 years old) and younger must be directly supervised at all times**. Responsible students in Year 10 and older must have supporting leaders in the zoo but are allowed to traverse the zoo in small independent groups without direct supervision. All unsupervised children must be in uniform and/or otherwise identifiable.

When in close contact with animals or anything associated with an animal, students should be supervised and teachers/leaders must **ensure appropriate hygiene** afterwards. Teachers/leaders are also responsible to ensure all groups **follow posted or verbal instructions and rules** before entering a close contact situation with animals.

Play areas are **not supervised** by CZS staff and are open to general visitors. If children are eligible to use the play area it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure adequate supervision.

- School groups and other children's groups are not permitted to use the Jungle Tumble indoor soft play area
- School groups in **EYFS – Year 6** (children 10 and younger) can use any of the zoo's outdoor **play areas between 12pm and 2pm**; they are not permitted to use the play areas outside of these times
- **Secondary school students** in years 7 and above **are not allowed on any play area** at any time**.**

If children are not eligible to use the play area it is the **teachers' responsibility to ensure the students do not use the play area**.

In the event of any emergency, follow zoo staff instruction and ensure all students and adults with your group also follow said instructions.

Zoo Responsibilities:

CZS strives to provide a safe and enjoyable day out for schools and children's groups. To ensure these groups' health and safety the zoo follows a variety of procedures and has many existing control measures in place. Stated below is a general risk assessment identifying potential risks and the controls CZS has in place to mitigate these potential risks. Please note that these are guidelines only and teachers are recommended to complete their own risk assessment prior to a school visit.

2. RISK ASSESSMENT

Risks from Animals

CZS has specific and detailed risk assessments for animals on site, including risk categories, procedures and relevant policies. Specific risk assessments are also conducted for close-contact situations, including walkthroughs, shared spaces, feeding opportunities and other situations where contact between visitors and animals is possible. No live animals are used for school specific activities, and all public visitor risk assessments apply to schools in close contact situations. These processes and procedures are designed to minimise risk; however, there are still some specific identified risks associated with these live animals:

Risk Identification	Risk Level	Existing Controls
Animals – Bites, scratches, etc.	Low	● No visitor contact with species that are likely to cause harm. ● Stand-off barriers to prevent contact between and animals and visitors. ● No feeding policy except in designated areas (e.g. farm area, lorikeets, etc.) ● Trained first aiders on site and first aid equipment stored at various areas in the park. ● Majority of staff in radio contact in case of emergencies. ● Visible signage warning visitors of bites etc.
Animals - Disease	Low	● No contact with animals likely to transmit disease. ● No human eating or drinking permitted in close contact areas. ● Where animals are used for close contact, hand washing facilities are available. ● All animals used for close contact are regularly health screened. ● Visitors may only feed animals in designated areas. ● Very young children should touch animals.
Animals – Other physical injury from animal contact. *e.g. being jumped on by goats within the farm walkthrough*	Low	● CZS staff oversee public walkthrough and have radios for communication as required. ● Trained first aiders on site and first aid equipment stored at various areas in the park. ● Adult supervisors must always accompany groups in animal walkthroughs. ● Clear instructions for on visitor behaviour and conduct are posted at all walkthrough entrances. ● Visitors should only enter walkthrough if they feel comfortable doing so and follow posted instructions. ● Do not cross barriers to maintain separation for animals who wish to move away. ● No species are kept in walkthroughs that are likely to cause harm.
Animals - Insect Bites	Low	● Bee and wasp sting emergency procedure in place. ● Teachers are advised that any students that are known to have a severe allergic reaction to stings must have appropriate medication with them and understand its administration ● Regular inspections for and removal of wasp nests ● Trained first aiders on site and first aid equipment stored at various areas in the park.
Animals – Escapes	Low	● Established animal escape procedure. ● Established animal security policy in place. ● Majority of staff in radio contact in case of emergencies.

Physical Site Risks

CZS is a large outdoor site with steep hills, mature trees, open water areas and wild animals. Procedures are in place to minimise slips, trips, falls and other general site hazards. Regular site inspections are undertaken, alongside reporting systems for potential hazards (e.g. loose boardwalk planks, raised bricks or slippery fallen leaves). These procedures minimise risk; however, some hazards may remain due to the nature and environment of the site. Key hazards to be aware of include:

Animal Enclosures – Electric Fencing – electric shocks	Low	● Stand-off barriers to prevent contact. ● Warning signs in place where appropriate.
Trips/Falls	Low	● Visitors asked to keep to marked paths. ● Daily inspection of all paths undertaken with reporting system in place to deal with defects.
Trees; Shrubs; other plant hazards	Low	● Tree Risk Assessment and Inspection carried out annually. ● Regular tree maintenance undertaken. ● Regular cutting back and control measures in place for nettles, brambles, etc.
Open / Deep Water	Low	● Fences and barriers in place. ● Group organisers asked to ensure that no climbing takes place on or over these barriers.
Weather – Sunburn/Sunstroke	Low	● Large number of undercover and shaded areas available. ● Appropriate sun protection, including sunhats and sunscreen, is advised. ● Trained first aiders on site, aware of signs and procedures for sunstroke and heat exhaustion. ● Water bottles can be refilled at any food outlet on site; visitors are advised to drink water as required.
Weather – Getting Wet / Cold	Medium	● There are many undercover areas which include extensive animal houses, covered walkways and sheltered viewing areas. ● Everyone advised to bring weather appropriate clothing for wet and cold weather.
Play Areas	Low	● Safety checks are carried out every day. ● Signs detailing rules and code of conduct at the play areas. ● Soft flooring around the play equipment. ● School children usage of play area limited to between 12-2pm to allow visitors with smaller younger children access to the equipment while preventing potential injury. ● Older students must not use play equipment to avoid injuring younger children.

Other Risks and Considerations

CZS has specific policies, procedures and systems in place to manage a range of other risks associated with operating a large visitor attraction.
Key risks and considerations for group leaders to be aware of include:

Risk Identification	Risk Level	Existing Controls
Allergies – Food, Environmental and Animal-Related	Low/Medium	● CZS contains a variety of potential allergens, including food, animal feed/enrichment, plants, and insects. ● Visitors should not eat animal food. Visitors with severe allergies should not handle animal food. ● All visitors should wash their hands after close contact with animals, or handling animal-related materials as well as before eating or drinking. ● Teachers and group leaders should ensure that pupils with known allergies have access to any prescribed or emergency medication required during the visit. ● Teachers and group leaders should follow their school's procedures for pupils with known allergies. ● Trained first aiders are available on site and first aid equipment is located throughout the park. ● CZS staff will follow relevant emergency procedures and seek appropriate medical assistance in the event of an allergic reaction.
Lost Children	Low	● Staff are visible around the zoo and can be contacted if a child is lost. ● Staff equipped with radios to alert other departments to a lost child. ● Lost Child Policy and Procedures in place.
Safeguarding	Low	● CZS utilises Safer Recruitment principles during the hiring process. ● Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Policy in place. ● Staff trained in awareness of safeguarding issues. ● Education Department staff undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
Photos / Videos taken on site	Low/Medium	● Schools are encouraged to follow their existing safeguarding policies on phone use and photography. ● Students should avoid capturing other visitors, especially children, in photos or videos. ● All visitors, including schools, are welcome to take photos/videos of animals for personal use; but all other visitors should not be included without consent. ● Commercial photography or filming requires prior permission.
Transmissible Disease – Human	Low	● Hand washing facilities are located around the zoo ● The zoo thoroughly cleans toilets, food outlets, and other public areas ● Visitors and staff with illnesses should follow NHS guidance on transmission and exposure. ● In the event of emergent diseases, CZS will follow government guidelines.
Fire	Low	● Fire Procedure in place for each building, including building evacuation. ● Evacuation Procedure for the whole park in place. ● Regular Risk Assessments undertaken.
Evacuation *(bomb threat, etc.)*	Low	● Evacuation Procedures and Risk Assessment in place for all CZS site. ● Procedure in place for evacuation of each area/department/section of the zoo. ● Staff trained in how to respond to a variety of threats which would result in evacuation.