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

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SCHOOL AND GROUP EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS AT COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

This risk assessment is a guidance sheet providing a general outline of potential risks and controls identified for educational sessions at Colchester Zoological Society (CZS). It is strongly recommended that if there are any concerns or specific needs within their group of children, **organisers should contact CZS education staff for a detailed breakdown of their session. Organisers can then create their own risk assessment and advise zoo staff of any additional specific modifications or controls required.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher Responsibilities:

Teachers and any supporting adults are responsible for the behaviour of the students towards the animals, staff, and other visitors. All pupils attending sessions at CZS must be supervised at all times. CZS staff will be on hand to provide education, it is the responsibility of the teacher and other supporting adults to ensure the students are behaving appropriately.

When in close contact with biological artefacts (furs, skulls, etc.), or live animals, teachers must **ensure appropriate hygiene** afterwards. Teachers are also responsible to ensure all groups **follow instructions as explained by the education staff** before entering a situation with biological artefacts.

No live animals are used in any standard school sessions.

During the session, pupils are expected to:

- Behave sensibly (no standing on chairs, no running up and down stairs, etc.)
- Act appropriately towards each other (not hitting each other, not throwing things at each other, etc.)
- Respect zoo equipment and supplies (no unplugging computer cables, no shoving laptops off table on purpose, etc.)
- Listen to and follow all specific rules in regards to handling biological artefacts and/or live animals

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 including during pre-booked educational sessions. To ensure these groups' health and safety CZS follows a variety of procedures, and has many existing control measures in place. Stated below is a general risk assessment identifying potential risks associated with the pre-booked educational sessions as well as the controls CZS has in place to mitigate these potential risks. Please note that these are guidelines only and teachers with any specific needs or further concerns based on their specific group of children are advised to contact CZS staff for a more detailed breakdown of their session, and to complete their own risk assessment prior to a school visit.

2. RISK ASSESSMENT

Educational Sessions with Active Games

Some sessions involve the students being up and active playing games or other activities to reinforce or introduce specific learning concepts.
Prior to commencing any active game/activity, staff will ensure all pupils are familiar with any rules or restrictions for the activity.
Despite these precautions, the physical nature of these activities means that some specific risks remain:

Risk Identification	Risk Level	Existing Controls
Activity equipment (e.g. ropes, balls, blindfolds, etc.) – trip hazards, impact, etc.	Low	● Education staff instruct all participants in the appropriate use of any item. ● Teachers, and other adults ensure all items are used only for their intended purpose. ● Following the activity, all equipment is cleared away to prevent trip hazards. ● Specific games and equipment are individually assessed before inclusion in sessions.
Rough play – cuts/abrasions or other physical injury	Low	● Education staff instruct all participants on how to complete each activity/game. ● Most games/activities are non-contact. ● Minimal-contact activities (e.g. variations of ‘tag’) are fully explained and structured to minimise rough play. ● Teachers and other supervising adults ensure all items are used only for their intended purpose.
Trips/Falls	Low	● Pupils must wear appropriate footwear when participating in active games. ● Boundaries are established for each activity/game to avoid potential hazards (e.g. stairs). ● Larger groups are divided into smaller areas where appropriate, limiting the number of pupils running in one area. ● Following the activity, all equipment is cleared away to prevent trip hazards.
Injury from movement while seated (e.g. stretching arms to measure reach)	Low	● Pupils are instructed how to perform any movement safely before starting, including being aware of people seated nearby.

Educational Sessions with Biological Artefacts

Many sessions utilise a variety of biological artefacts, including bones, furs, feathers, and skins. Many of these objects were originally customs seizures from animals hunted in the wild and were subsequently donated to CZS for educational use. Some biological objects may have been historically treated or processed using substances that are now recognised as potential health hazards.
All objects used within the CZS Educational Biological Object Collection have been individually reviewed, cleaned and prepared for safe use before being made available for handling. Appropriate controls are in place based on the individual object and its intended use.
The following provides an overview of the potential risks associated with handling biological artefacts:

Risk Identification	Risk Level	Existing Controls
Biological Artefact Handling - Disease	Low	● All biological artefacts are cleaned and sanitised before use in sessions. ● Objects are routinely cleaned ● Hand-wash areas are located near all teaching spaces ● At the end of each session, teachers are advised to ensure all pupils wash their hands
Biological Artefact Handling – Cuts, scratches, and other manual injury	Low	● All biological artefacts have been properly prepared prior to use in sessions; where possible and appropriate, sharp edges, claws, etc. have been removed or otherwise made safe. ● Pupils are advised on how to handle objects by education staff ● Pupils are advised to use 'sensible behaviour' during all handling (e.g. not turning around quickly while holding sharp horns) ● Supervisory adults and education staff supervise handling and ensure appropriate behaviour throughout the session. ● Trained first aiders are on site and first aid equipment stored at various areas in the park. ● The majority of staff are in radio contact in case of emergencies.
Biological Artefact Handling - Allergies	Low	● All biological artefacts have been properly cleaned and sanitised before use in sessions. ● Objects are routinely cleaned to prevent build-up of dust and other material. ● Teachers should inform CZS staff of any known allergies that may be relevant to the session. Where appropriate, pupils with specific allergies should not handle the relevant artefacts.
Biological Artefact Handling – Residual historical chemicals	Low	● Specific risk assessments and procedures are in place for the biological object collection. ● Biological artefacts are individually reviewed and approved before being used for handling. ● Objects identified as unsuitable are excluded from educational use. ● Appropriate environmental controls are in place in areas where artefacts are handled. ● Food and drink are not permitted during artefact handling, and participants are advised to wash their hands before eating. ● Hand-wash areas are located near all teaching spaces. ● At the end of each session, teachers are advised to ensure all pupils wash their hands. ● Staff are trained in appropriate handling and object controls and will ensure appropriate objects are used based on the topic, age and behaviour of learners. ● Participants must follow staff instructions during any handling of biological artefacts.

Educational Sessions – Other Risks and Considerations

Due to the variety of educational sessions available, some potential risks do not fall within the categories above. These are outlined below, together with the controls in place to minimise them:

Risk Identification	Risk Level	Existing Controls
Allergies – Food, Environmental and Animal-Related	Low/Medium	● Food is not routinely used in standard educational sessions. ● Teachers should inform CZS education staff in advance of any known allergies or significant allergy-related requirements within the group. ● Where requested, CZS staff can discuss relevant activities, facilities and potential allergen exposures with the teacher, including potential adaptations where appropriate. ● Teachers and group leaders remain responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for pupils with known allergies. ● Teachers and group leaders should ensure that pupils have access to any prescribed or emergency medication required during the visit. ● CZS staff will follow relevant emergency procedures and seek appropriate medical assistance in the event of an allergic reaction.
Phobia or distress relating to specific animals including images, videos, and discussion	Low	● Teachers should inform education staff in advance of any significant phobias or other concerns. ● Depending on severity, education staff can verbally warn before showing an image to allow a pupil to close their eyes or leave the room during certain segments. ● With sufficient notice, some sessions can be modified, to avoid specific animals. ● In cases of severe phobia, some specific sessions may not be appropriate for that pupil to attend.
Holding breath (e.g. hold your breath as long as a penguin) activities	Low	● Any breath-holding activity is short (e.g. maximum 20 seconds) ● Pupils are instructed not to hold their breath if they find the activity uncomfortable or difficult and to resume normal breathing. ● At the end of the activity, or sooner if required, pupils are instructed to resume normal breathing. ● Teachers and other supervising adults are present to monitor pupils and ensure no distress.
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. ● Teachers and other adult supervisors must remain with their group throughout educational sessions; pupils will not be left alone with CZS staff.
Transmissible Disease – Human	Low	● Hand washing facilities are located around the zoo. ● Participants are advised to wash their hands after handling objects that may have been handled by other groups and before eating or drinking. ● Educational spaces are regularly cleaned ● Visitors and staff with illnesses should follow NHS guidance on transmission and exposure. ● In the event of emergent diseases, CZS will follow government guidelines.