



Hora Hora School Tree Climbing Policy



Purpose:

This policy aims to set out Hora Hora School's stance on tree climbing, in terms of pedagogy and safety. This policy relates to all staff and pupils.

Rationale:

Hora Hora School places an emphasis on experiential learning and use of the outdoors. Research tells us that tree climbing is important in that it allows children to find their own limits regarding physical movement in a safe environment. With supportive adults, it lets them develop a healthy relationship with their own bodies and an understanding of their capabilities. Tree climbing provides an opportunity to genuinely overcome fear.

Hora Hora School also recognises that it has a duty to ensure that the playground and materials used there are safe.

Risks:

As with any climbing playground equipment, climbing trees can entail significant risks, resulting in injury or death.

Factors increasing risks associated with tree climbing at Hora Hora School include:

- Climbing above hard surfaces such as concrete paths and fences
- Climbing in areas out of sight of a supervising adult
- Taking ropes or other equipment up a tree
- Lack of education for children about tree-climbing risks
- Fighting or dangerous play at height
- Lack of awareness among staff regarding safe play
- Climbing on weak branches (i.e. thinner than pupil's wrist)

Requirements to manage risks in **The NZ Health & Safety at Work Act of 2015 (HWSA)** require that employers assess risks and put measures in place to control them. The Ministry of Education requires that all schools manage the safety and welfare of all pupils.

Measures undertaken to address risks:

- Tree climbing is restricted to a manageable area (trees on the northern end of the school field and the 'climbing tree' by the swimming pool), to maximise visibility for teachers on duty and minimise risks of falling onto fences and paths. This will be reviewed from time to time.
- The designated climbing trees are painted with blue paint to indicate to children which trees are allowed to be climbed. They will also be painted with stop (red) and go (green) to indicate which branches and how high they are permitted to go.
- The designated climbing areas have grass beneath them to ensure that should a child fall from a tree, the landing will not be on hardened ground, thereby reducing the risk of injury.
- One specific climbing tree by the Playcentre entrance has grown out over a fence. There is padding over the fence paling to reduce the risk of injury.
- At break times when all areas are available to play in, there will always be 1 adult on duty.
- Clear rules regarding outdoor play are provided for all staff to enforce. These include it being forbidden to take anything up a tree such as large toys and skipping ropes. Play supervisors ensure tree climbing is restricted to designated areas and that there is no horseplay at height or goading of children to climb higher.

- The duty teacher may exercise their judgement to intervene or ultimately ban children from tree climbing if they deem it appropriate to do so.
- The Hazards Officer will inspect the climbing trees **monthly** for hazards, **report** and **document** these hazards, where required, and ensure a thorough knowledge of the BOT Hazards Identification Procedure.
- Parent/Caregiver **permission** is attained for tree climbing as part of the enrolment process. Children will be informed of the trees which are approved for climbing.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Horahora School – March 2024

To be reviewed annually.

References: Ministry of Education – Health & Safety at Work Act 2015: Practical Guide for BOT’s and school leaders (2016)



Horahora School Tree Climbing Parent Permission



I have read the Horahora School Tree Climbing Policy and accept that the school has done all it can to minimise risks for my child while climbing trees.

PARENT/CAREGIVER NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____