

Risk Assessment – Family Sail & Paddle to Weston Shore (Expanded)

Activity: Family Sail & Paddle – Weston Shore (short sheltered trip)

Location: River Itchen / Weston Shore (Southampton)

Activity Type: Mixed Activity: supervised paddling + skippered sailing (family focus)

Date last reviewed: 23 January 2026

Assessor: James Wardle

Reviewed by:

Review due: January 2027

Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a family-focused mixed activity day from St Denys to Weston Shore, using a combination of paddling craft and small sailing yachts.

The route is short and sheltered, but the presence of children increases the need for strong group control, conservative conditions, and safe launch/landing management.

The trip should be planned around high tide to reduce shallow water, mud hazards and grounding risk, particularly for sailing craft anchoring and return passage.

Additional Controls (Activity Specific)

A) Paddling (Supervised) – Key Controls

- Lead and sweep appointed; buddy families; headcounts at regroup points.
- Children either in stable craft with adult control or in craft matched to size/confidence.
- Conservative route and pace; short duration; frequent check-ins and rest breaks.
- Buoyancy aids mandatory; dress for immersion; spare warm layers for children.

B) Sailing (Skippered) – Key Controls

- Skipper in charge of each sailing boat; children remain seated/in cockpit during manoeuvres.
- Lifejackets mandatory; clear boom awareness briefing and moving-about rules.
- If anchoring off Weston: set anchor correctly, maintain swinging circle and keep clear of swimmers.
- High tide planning: arrive/depart around high water; monitor depth and depart early if water dropping.

C) Shared Shore-side Controls

- Controlled landing area chosen to avoid swimmers/steep banks where possible.
- Clear plan for toilets/food/break time and strict headcounts before leaving.
- Emergency contact plan and simple abort options (return early if needed).

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures	Risk Level	Further Actions
Capsize / immersion (children higher risk)	Children and adults	Cold shock, panic, hypothermia	BAs/lifejackets mandatory; dress for immersion; short route; frequent check-ins; stop early if cold/tired.	Medium	Extra caution outside summer
Separation / loss of group control	All	Delayed assistance	Lead/sweep, buddy families, headcounts, clear 'stop and regroup' commands.	Low-Medium	Split into smaller pods if needed
Busy waterfront / swimmers	Public and participants	Collision/injury	Controlled approach; choose quieter landing area; slow speed near shore; supervise children.	Low-Medium	Avoid peak busy times
Grounding / shallow mud	All	Stuck, delay, injury	Plan around high tide; avoid soft mud areas; depart before depth reduces.	Low	Change timing if needed
Boom strike / sailing manoeuvres	Crew	Head injury	Boom awareness briefing; controlled tacks/gybes; children	Low-Medium	Use preventer if needed

			seated; skipper calls manoeuvres clearly.		
Anchoring hazards (if used)	Crew; other users	Dragging, trip hazards, collision	Correct scope; check holding; tidy lines; maintain anchor watch; avoid swimmers.	Low-Medium	Avoid anchoring if crowded

General Notes

- Kayaking elements are SUPERVISED. Sailing elements are SKIPPED. This split is intentional and must be maintained.
- Leads/skippers remain responsible for dynamic risk assessment and may modify or stop activities if conditions change.
- Participants must follow instructions and communicate concerns promptly.
- This risk assessment should be reviewed annually or following any incident or near miss.