



Forest School Policy

Reviewed on	Approved by
21/11/2022	S Hollet
1/3/2024	G Baker
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Forest school aims -

Forest school is very much child led and based around play.

Forest school is to give children the opportunity to experience being outdoors where they can explore the nursery forest school area at their own pace.

To allow children to explore their own risks and give them opportunities to do so in a safe environment.

To help children's independence, motivation, self-awareness, communication and teamwork.

To encourage love and respect towards nature

Staff

Within our nursery we have a Qualified Level 3 Forest school leader, Holly Freeman who works 4 days a week, all year round. Holly is paediatric first aid trained and also holds a separate Forest School first aid qualification.

Risk assessments

A visual risk assessment is done daily before the sessions starts

- We look at weather conditions, weather warnings.
- Look at the trees above for any broken branches
- Ground conditions – wet / slippery
- Make sure pathways are clear
- Fire circle – free of trip hazards
- Check the trapline shelters, and the guide ropes are visible
- Check any potentially harmful flora
- Check for animal faeces

Before each term a risk assessment will be carried out.

Red ribbon / boundaries

At the start of each session the staff and children are to wait at the entrance of forest school and wait for the leader.

The leader will point out the red ribbon and explain that the red ribbon means 'stop' and it's to stop our feet from walking out of forest school.

Red ribbon on the water tank is to 'stop' our hands from turning the water on.

The children should be encouraged to ask for the black bucket to be filled and not to turn it on themselves. This is in place to safeguard the children from harm.

Activities

Activities will be set out suitable for the class coming down for a session. If the staff have specific interests from children's 'Sparks', they will work with the forest school lead to bring the spark down to woods.

Equipment

The leader will ensure all equipment is in good working order.

Water bucket

When the Big buds / Saplings are due at forest school the leader will ensure that the black bucket is not full to the top and the wooden grate is on top.

A member of staff is to stay close the water bucket and entrance of forest school

First aid kit

The leader is to ensure the first aid kit is always full and there are at least two ice packs available.

The first aid kit / ice packs are situated in the black box on the picnic tables by the fire circle. Please let the leader know if things are running low.

It is the room staff's responsibility to record the accidents at forest school.

Cancelling sessions

On some occasions the forest school leader may decide to cancel sessions if the risks are too high for example

- Weather warnings in place by met office
- Wind/ gusts are higher than 35/40mph
- Extreme rainfall
- Thunder / lightning

Emergency procedures

- **Fire drill** – If anyone hears the fire alarm bell ring to alert other staff and to gather the children by the forest school toilet.
 - Only if there is a free member of staff, one to help babies evacuate
 - Do register and ensure all staff and children are present.
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- **Lockdown** – once we have had the lockdown call. A member of staff will call us saying ‘peanut butter sandwiches for tea’
 - Forest school leader and staff to gather children and make their way to the trail where we will hide until a member of staff rings to confirm all ok
 - **Serious accidents** – the nursery manager needs to be informed immediately if the accident is serious and needs a 999 call.

Toilet

The forest school leader will ensure the toilet bucket is in the toilet and it's all stocked up with toilet roll, paper towels, antibacterial wipes, hand soap and black bags. If there is anything missing the forest school leader will be informed.

Days in which forest school is not running. Staff can open the toilet, getting the toilet bucket from the hall and emptying it at the end of the day in the hall. Alternatively, the hall toilets can be used on a Thursday and a Friday.

Hand washing

The children are to use the shower system. Yellow bucket of clean water. In colder months there will be a big flask of warm water which is to be poured into the yellow bucket when needed. Hand soap and paper towels will be there too.

Drinking water/ snacks

The children are to bring own water bottles down. Classroom staff to bring the snacks and bowls down with them to every session.

Clothing

Suitable clothes and footwear must be worn.

Winter weather conditions – wet / cold

- Waterproof all in ones or waterproof trousers and coats
- Layers of clothing must be worn; several thin layers are best as these can be removed if the child becomes too warm.
- Suitable footwear; waterproof, comfortable and sturdy. Wellington boots are best but are not very warm so thick, thermal socks or at least two pairs of socks.
- Wolly hats are a great way to keep warm.

- Body warmers are great as they offer warmth without the restrictions of a big coat under their waterproofs.

Summer weather conditions – warm / dry

- Long sleeved tops and trousers/leggings
- Sturdy footwear (wellies if wet), trainers or boots. No sandals or flip flops.
- Sun cream to be applied by the staff in the rooms before they come to forest school

Spare clothes are always a must.

Fires / Fire circle

Fire plays a huge part within forest school. There is great skill and determination involved. Self-control and building resilience are also required to meet their personal achievements.

Fires are ALWAYS to be kept small and contained in the fire area or fire bowl.

Once the leader feels that the children are displaying good listening skills, and they show an understanding about fires this is when fire lighting will be introduced.

The leader to ensure fire circle to be equipped ready for a fire session.

- Red bucket of water
- Fire gloves
- Burn kit
- Cooking equipment all clean and ready
- Fire lighting equipment all stocked up and ready

All staff to promote the '**Fire dragon rules**'

- Green dragons – sit on logs and walk around – happy / safe dragon
- Orange dragon – can come into the fire circle with an adult -
- Red dragon – in the fire circle on own – Sad / unsafe dragon

All staff to encourage children walking around the outside of the circle and not in the middle

Children only come in the middle with an adult if they are fire lighting or cooking on the fire

Fire lighting – **ONLY** to be carried out with a leader in the fire circle.

long hair tied back. No loose clothes like scarfs or gloves on.

The Fire position (one knee up and one knee down) should be encouraged at all times when fire lighting.

Eating (Berries)

The leader will set clear boundaries and will encourage throughout sessions that NOTHING is to be put into mouths during a session.

Hands are to be washed before snack every time.

Cooking on the fire

The leader and other staff are aware of the following

- Everyone should wash hands or use antibacterial wipes before handling food and drinks.
- All food is in its original Packaging and stored in a clear airtight container once opened
- All equipment is to be cleaned after a session
- The forest school leader will check staff for any allergies or intolerances
- Food waste to be put in food bin for composting – NO CITRUS fruits.
- Rubbish to be put in bin provided either by picnic benched or by hand washing station.

Hand tools

The use of hand tools may be used in a session. This will help children gain key skills such as good listening, self-awareness, independences, team work, communication, fine and gross motor skills.

- All tools will be maintained and kept in good order.
- A 'tool talk' will be given about the tools being used
- Safety gloves will be provided and worn appropriately
- Knives will be kept locked away
- Other garden tools kept in the leaders shed or green house

There is a risk assessment on each of the tools we use.

Woodland conservation

At forest school we are aware of the environments and the promotion of its sustainability. Understanding the impact, we have on the woodland environment is essential element of the children's learning. The children will be encouraged to appreciate their natural surroundings and learn to respect it. This will in turn develop a natural responsibility for the natural world.

It is OUR responsibility to minimize the impact and adjust our activities with the seasons/weathers to allow natural changes that will occur.

The forest school leader will:

- Regular checks of the conditions of the trees

- Consider the use of different areas and its activities
- To allow areas of wilderness for wildlife e.g., brambles and nettles
- To create habitat piles
- To leave dead wood for encourage insects
- Maintain pathways – add woodchip to minimize erosion of well-trodden areas
- Rotate the area uses to allow regeneration of ground layer
- Encourage the children to not to pick any flowers, leaves or berries
- Allowing areas to rest. Making them out of bounds as necessary
- Keeping the site free from rubbish