



Forest School Handbook

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Section 1 - Forest School explained

History of Forest School

Forest School originates from Sweden in the 1950's. In Denmark it has become integral to an Early Years childcare setting and typically children attend 4 hours per day.

Staff from the children's Centre at Bridgewater College in Somerset visited Denmark in 1993. This led to development of a UK Forest School programme, which has adapted to offer educational opportunities to older children, young people and adults as well as the early years.

It was Gordon Woodhall who first used the forest school approach with older children with low self-esteem. He went on to work with the Welsh Forestry Commission to create the OCN qualification to provide national professional recognition.

In 2002 the first Forest School conference was held where a definition was created and a networking opportunity provided. The Forest Education Initiative FEI was funded and supported by the Forestry Commission and later taken over by 'Learning Outside the Classroom', a charity formed after a manifesto supported the benefits of Forest School.

In 2012 the Forest School Association updated the definition and created a dedicated organisation to represent Forest school with the prospects of becoming a regulatory body to maintain standards of care and education offered within Forest School settings. Forest school was then developed in Hampshire with thanks to the Wildlife Trust, who in 2008 started running courses locally. At that time only a few private day-care nurseries and schools were practising Forest School mostly within the Early Years age range. Later on Early Years Advisors at the Hampshire County Council set up an informal support group. Since then the movement has grown, a wider age range is covered and a formal cluster group (Hampshire FEN – Forest Education Initiative cluster group) has been formed to share resources, knowledge, and training and raise public profile.

Introduction to the Forest School approach

Forest school should be run over a long period of time with the purpose of forming bonds of trust in order to promote social and emotional development. It also benefits physical development through facilitation within a natural environment, usually woodland. Other areas of learning development also benefit through group experiences and the activities experienced. Outdoor activities provided include building shelters, exploring and discovering the natural environment and wildlife, making things using natural materials, using tools, playing games and outdoor cooking over fire. Fire & tools will only be used when it is considered safe to do so, age, ability and group safety will be assessed prior to use. The forest school approach emphasises upon the importance of play and child initiated learning within a semi-structured and planned programme that has the flexibility to allow for children to take control of their own

learning. Allowing free choice gives a sense of freedom and self-expression, the opportunity to explore personal identity. Their enjoyment and the fun they have will result in completion of self-motivated tasks & greater depth of learning will be achieved. The strength of character and the social skills developed are transferable to all aspects of life and learning. Children are more likely to show commitment and as a result succeed if given positive encouragement from adults supporting them to follow their own choices. Forest school practitioners, supporting adults should work toward the idea of facilitation rather than leadership of children. Helping identify steps toward reaching goals, ensure the environment and equipment supports their learning. Holistic development refers to the need to consider how all aspects of child development are interrelated and thus affect the whole. Forest school takes a holistic approach to learners.

Overview; purpose, aim & objectives

Purpose/aim of Elburton Forest School is to provide activities for children to experience outdoor learning using the Forest School approach in the local woodland environment. Objectives: To promote positive experiences of Forest School within guided adult and child led sessions. Provide opportunities for language and communications skills to be developed during Forest School sessions. Experiences and planned activities should provide opportunities to develop each individual in all areas of the EYFS or National Curriculum thus helping to build upon confidence and self esteem, promote educational value of Forest School and benefits to all areas of learning through a holistic approach. Provide opportunities to develop knowledge, understanding and responsible attitude for our natural environments, wildlife and each other. Learning about sustainability and deepening knowledge of how to conserve or work with nature. Create an adaptable approach to session planning & incorporate wishes of parents, interests of children, identify areas of learning and development to be promoted through facilitation of Forest school. Reflect on feedback from parents, children and volunteers. Then use these reflections, observations and evaluations to inform future Forest School programmes, sessions and professional development.

Minimising & awareness of environmental impact

Our environmental impact within Forest School is the effect that we leave behind upon the environment used during our sessions. It is important that as individuals and as a group we show respect and care, sharing knowledge and understanding to develop our abilities to care for our natural world. If we reduce the resources we consume, minimise waste, recycle and show awareness for the consequences of our actions we can aim to work in harmony with our environment. It is important to learn about the balance within ecosystems and how we can work with nature to promote biodiversity, becoming aware of our influences both positive and negative, the impact our actions have.

Examples of how our impact can be minimised:

Dead wood is important within the woodland habitat, although also the best wood to be used for creating campfires. Consider fire site location, availability of dead wood, conservation of dead wood, size of fires and frequency.

Fire siting is important, know the soil type. If land is peat they should not be lit, as they can burn deep into the ground and cause devastating impact. Check with site owners for permission to light fires & also be sure yourself it is safe to do so.

Fire can also affect soil PH and therefore affect plants growing in the area. Make sure fires are extinguished properly before leaving a site and scatter ashes in a suitable place.

Outdoor cookery – waste produce, either litter or food should be removed, as it will affect local wildlife & biodiversity.

Tree climbing/swinging can cause damage to trees, consider size, strength and impact, teach children & others awareness. Suggest appropriate places to climb & explore.

Trampling/paths – be aware of plants and species within an area, their tolerance, dedicate paths where necessary, help others identify wildlife within the area and to play, be within it with care.

Collecting natural objects/materials from within the site should be done with care to its effect, how many plants/objects are there? Can we simply observe or record instead and leave them to live? Consider collecting items from the floor that have fallen, but still pay attention to not gathering in excess. Use this as an opportunity to explore the diversity and ecosystems within the site, which flora and fauna rely upon each other and are present?

Guidance on the role of adults within Forest school

Offer a sense of safety and security to children through responsibilities for duty of care both physically and emotionally. Read and understand Risk Assessments, Policies & Procedures for Elburton Forest School including safeguarding and behaviour.

It is important for adults to act as role models for the children, to play alongside them (parallel play) or to be involved in their play.

Facilitate rather than guide play, to create a balance between leader and participant and allow for independence and self-initiated play. Facilitation is to assist a process or personal progress through planning or provision of equipment rather than an adult taking on the role of 'teacher' to impart their own knowledge. The emphasis is upon the child's development of own knowledge and understanding to create a deeper more long lasting influence from the learning experiences provided. Activities for sessions aim

to create opportunities and experiences, which stimulate imaginative & creative play and engage each child's own interests or the combined interests of the group.

Introduce resources in a manner to children, which allows them to know and understand their use. Break down tasks into manageable, achievable steps to set them up to succeed. Make sure that expectations upon children are fair and take into consideration their personal, individual abilities and stages of development.

Encourage children to make their own judgements, decisions and choices. Consider the use of language & communication; interactions between adults and children should be positive. Listen to their contributions, recognise their skills and abilities, actively engage their interest whilst aiming not to over influence them with your own agenda.

Aim to create equality, a respectful attitude & approach (hold the space without ownership). Be aware of role, influence upon learning and reflect upon conduct for continuous improvement.

Allow children to consolidate learning through repetitive activity (this is one of the benefits of long term Forest School programmes), allowing the time for children to repeat patterns of learning. When time constraints within sessions apply children can revisit activities over future sessions. This is where flexibility within session planning is advantageous and adult feedback of value. It is very important to keep in mind the fact that the process of learning is more important than the product itself, skill is acquired through practise.

Questioning strategies & supporting learning

Questioning techniques dictate whether learning is child or adult centred. Learner centred questions are intended to share knowledge appropriate to the experience of the child, to encourage them in self-discovery of the answers.

*Ask thought provoking questions, rather than closed yes/no answers.

*When children make statements of knowledge ask questions that encourage self-reflection/how they reached the idea. This helps develop deeper understanding.

*Avoid vague phrasing, be clear, brief and easily understandable. Allow time for response, don't pressure children into responding or use humiliation as a means for getting a response.

*Make sure questions serve a purpose rather than encouraging children to guess in their response.

*Encourage children to share knowledge upon subjects, thoughts and ideas. Use your own observations within surroundings to draw children's attention to learning opportunities, phrase questions so as to encourage children to make observations of their own.

*Make sure children have the practical experience to understand the context of questions; provide opportunities for exploration and self-discovery.

Strategies that support learning:

*Encourage children to work together to discover answers to questions *Encourage an attitude that there is no right or wrong answer to any question, just different levels of understanding and knowledge.

*Ask questions that help to consolidate previous learning experiences.

*Ask questions that require an active response, line of enquiry and discovery in keeping with their ability.

*Encourage learners to question and interpret their own feelings and thoughts.

Section 2 - Legal responsibilities of Health & Safety within Forest School

Forest School safe practise: Responsibility of Health & Safety and insurance cover.

Legal responsibilities of Health & Safety within Forest School Health & Safety Executive (HSE) & The Health and Safety Act (1974) The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local authorities are responsible for enforcing legislation and the statutory requirements/duties of businesses in promoting positive health and safety practice. The Health and Safety Act (1974) outlines the duty of employers to ensure employees or people affected by their business are not exposed to risk of health or safety as far as is reasonable and practical. Employees also have a duty of care for their own safety, those who they may affect and to cooperate with their employer in regards to H&S.

Section 3 - Policy & procedure relating to Health & Safety

The H&S First Aid Regulations (1981) Legislation states it's an employer's responsibility to ensure First Aid & medical attention are administered immediately following an accident or sudden illness. Failure to do so can result in prosecution. This includes making First Aid equipment available, providing adequate staff training, Risk Assessments reduce hazards and risks to health or injury. Part of this duty is the regular monitoring, maintenance and review of first aid equipment and provision of up to date training relevant to cover all aspects of workplace safety.

Sharing information regarding health and safety at Forest School:

All volunteers, parents, associates will receive Risk Assessments, policies and procedures and given the opportunity to question anything they do not understand. A copy of the handbook will be available for download on the website & be onsite in the Welfare bag during activities. I will remain vigilant to safe practise and make sure that all those in attendance are made aware of risks and how to take appropriate actions. Staff requirements: Paediatric First Aid Certificate held by leader DBS checks for volunteers in regular attendance. Volunteers in attendance either have experience in care work, child care, or wildlife, nature and conservation.

Ratios of adults to children for Forest School Programmes:

*There will be a minimum of 4 adults present for Forest School sessions including a teacher and Forest School leader.

*Parents may be in attendance to support younger children.

*Specific ratios & group safety will be considered during planning of activity provision with age, abilities, equipment use, environmental influences taken into consideration.

*Tools and fire will initially require 1:1 or small group ratios depending.

*Safety will be paramount, activities may be postponed or re-organised to make sure ratios ensure safety.

First Aid provision:

*A First Aid kit as recommended by St John's Ambulance would be taken to every Forest School session. An emergency welfare bag containing additional items will also be taken to every session.

*A member of staff with paediatric or outdoor first aid will be present at sessions

*Parents will be responsible for making any medical needs of children or themselves known to: the Forest School Leader, School office or Class Teacher. If necessary they should accompany their child.

*An emergency procedure plan is kept in the welfare bag and in the school office. This has all contacts and details of how to manage an emergency.

Emergency guidance & information:

In the event of an Emergency ring the Emergency Services on 999 stating your name and address of Elburton Primary School.

All minor accidents and incidents will be recorded on an iPad using the application 'medical tracker'.

Procedures in event of a serious accident or incident:

1. Assessment of the situation
2. All participants unaffected will be moved or protected from further injury or danger.
3. First Aid administered as appropriate
4. Non-affected members may go into shock –appropriate action/First aid given as required.
5. Call emergency services on 999.
6. Alert the office to the incident.
7. Remove the remainder of the group to a secure location and protect from the attention of the media. If young people are involved, ensure adequate supervision ratios or return to an indoor environment if possible.
8. Retain all equipment involved in an unaltered condition.
9. Do not make statements to the media or allow anyone else to make statements where at all possible. School will contact the press office.
10. Keep a log of all people contacted/involved in the management of the incident as possible and the timing of actions taken in relation to the incident.

Reporting procedure for Accidents & emergencies:

Contact the Health & Safety Executive as soon as reasonably possible on the following Tel: 0845 300 9923 In accordance with Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1985 government legislation an accident re-post must be made within 10 days. This can be done online at www.hse.gov.uk

It should be investigated why the incident occurred. It may be necessary for those involved in any traumatic event to seek counselling and support. Failure to report a death, serious injury or occurrence is an offence punishable by law. An accident or incident that causes a person to be absent from work for more than three days should also be reported.

Child protection

The Children Act 1989 states children's services have a legal duty of care; they are accountable for safeguarding and sharing information. Safeguarding is the actions or procedures followed when abuse is suspected or known, it protects children and their basic human rights.

Procedure - disclosure of abuse:

If a child makes a disclosure it is important to act appropriately. Listen to what is said without interrupting or guiding the child, do not ask questions and record exactly what are said/ key phrases that cause concern. Refrain from passing personal judgement however offer reassurance by telling them that you will do all you can to protect them from harm.

They need to feel they can trust you and that they have done the right thing to confide in you to make sure they understand that as a child, as the victim they have done no wrong, it is not their fault.

If signs and symptoms of abuse are obvious the matter should be discussed with parents or carers in a sensitive manner. Awareness that it is not necessarily they who are the perpetrator, they may not be aware or may be in denial, they may in turn need support or be suffering abuse themselves. If there is significant cause for concern a report should be made as soon as possible to prevent the child from coming to harm.

Any discussions, observations, disclosure or contact made for support or guidance should be recorded, signed and dated as proof of action taken. Systematic observation over a period of days and descriptions of signs, symptoms or indicators will help to clarify the situation. If abuse appears to be continuing, action must be taken. Records can be used in a court of law to represent staff if a false accusation is made. If an accusation is made the staff should not work with children until the matter is resolved. Staff should avoid being alone with children. Before a report is made it is essential that the suspicion of abuse is valid, allegations of such nature are taken seriously and justly

so, once made it can have significant influences upon the child, their family and the Forest School. Once a report has been made there is a legal duty of care for the child that an investigation will be completed, this may result in legal proceedings in a court of law.

Contacts for Safeguarding:

MASH: 0345 155 1071 Give as much information as you can. Your information will be passed immediately to a manager who will decide the action needed and will normally respond to you within one hour. You must follow up your telephone call by sending a completed referral form to the MASH within 48 hours. Email the form to mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk

If a child has a Plymouth address you may need to contact Plymouth Social Services Advice & Assessment Team on 01752 308600/346984.

Confidentiality & data protection:

The process of confidentiality is when access to information is restricted & kept private. Information about a person should only be held for reasons to fulfil a lawful purpose and with their consent. It may only be shared with others if permission is given and there must be a valid reason to do so. Measures must be taken to prevent loss, damage or transfer without consent. Confidentiality may only be breached if a situation arises that causes concern for the welfare or safety of another and appropriate guidance should be sought & followed.

Data protection is the means by which data is protected; preventative measures to restrict unauthorised access. Confidential information in the form of written or photographic records must be stored in a locked cupboard, any data held on a computer system must be password protected. Procedure for confidentiality & data protection: Sensitive data held during sessions including the emergency contacts list will be kept in the office. Access will be monitored and restricted. Sensitive data will be stored in a locked office in between sessions or on a computer with password protection.

The importance of maintaining confidentiality & data protection: The Data Protection Act (1998) is the UK legislation relevant to data protection and confidentiality. Failure to comply with the duties set out within this legislation is an offence punishable by law. Understanding the duties and responsibilities it presents is important in being able to perform the role of an educational provider in a professional manner and fulfil legal responsibility.

Forest School Programme information/permission:

*Parental consent recorded for photographs to be used for advertisement of forest school sessions on our school website or Facebook page. It also states that they may be used to prompt memory of successful activities and to remember events observed for future planning.

*Any medical needs and First Aid administration consent form for adults & children.

*Information available to parents and guardians about Forest School.

*Medical needs & consent for administration of First Aid form Consent form for photography.

*On request parents will be welcome to view a current DBS check and other relevant certification; Paediatric First Aid, Child Protection training, Early Years NVQ Level 3 & Diploma.

*Volunteers will be given a copy of this handbook to look at and become familiar with the Elburton Forest School best practice.

Equal Opportunities

Equality is promoted by aiming to meet the individual needs of each child and we have an Equality Duty. To ensure they are all given opportunities to grow and develop through Forest School provision. Inclusive practise where diversity is celebrated and differences are valued helps develop understanding and respect. Direct or indirect harassment or victimisation as a result of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, religion or belief, disability, or race will not be tolerated it is a legal obligation to promote equality under the Equality Act 2010.

Behaviour Promoting

Positive behaviour management creates a happy and caring environment for children. Having realistic expectations of children sets them up to succeed and achieve, aids their self-esteem and confidence. Offering the child guidance and breaking down steps toward meeting a learning goal prevents a perception of failure and challenging behaviours. Instead the child's independence and pride can be fostered in a nurturing, and caring way using positive reinforcement and role modelling.

Strategies used to promote positive behaviour:

Clear boundaries and guidelines, discuss within the group. Adults present to role model positive behaviour to children and remain calm. Encourage & support students to take responsibility for their own behaviour by seeking to help them develop individual coping strategies (this can only be achieved through developing trust & working relationship over time). They will be encouraged and supported to act respectfully toward others, their environment and show self-respect. A non-judgemental attitude, valuing the

individual, their personal skills and creating a flexible/adaptable learning environment which is always inclusive to all children is important in creating inclusion. This may include allowing students to opt out of full participation or to work with them to enable inclusion that they are comfortable with.

Bullying & violence:

De-escalating aggressive situations:

Gain attention, ask everyone to be calm and speak kindly, keep their own manner as calm and respectful as possible.

State factually what happened refraining from giving judgement.

Listen to feelings, own accounts, give each party a chance to speak, separate if possible or allow time to calm down.

Identify why needs were not met, why upset, what are the needs of the whole group and what are our boundaries/rules.

Support positive expression.

Suggest approaches or 'coping strategies' for future situations

Bullying and violence will not be tolerated. As such it is defined by behaviour that is deliberately hurtful and repeated over time. It may be in the form of physical aggression, verbal (name calling or intimidation), or indirect (exclusion or lies). Children may display signs of bullying by becoming clingy, being absent, feigning illness, changes in their behaviour (either aggressive or withdrawn).

Procedures to be followed regarding bullying:

Participants should be encouraged to approach adults or staff about bullying. All those in attendance were encouraged to act in a positive, respectful and inclusive manner. Adults encouraged to role model appropriate conduct. Incidents of bullying should be dealt with immediately and positive behaviour encouraged at all times. A clear account should be recorded and how the situation was dealt with, it should be monitored to ensure future action is taken if necessary. Occurrences should be discussed with all those involved. If attempts to resolve repeated issues related to bullying continue a child or adult may be asked not to attend for the wellbeing and emotional welfare of others in attendance.

Physical intervention may be used to prevent any person involved within forest school from being harmed or put at risk in any way. Any such incidents will be recorded and parents/carers will be informed. Every effort will be made to avoid such instances, incident reports will be monitored for frequency, cause, how they are dealt with so any cause for concern may be dealt with and problems resolved.

Lost/Missing Children

Procedure for a lost or missing child:

If it is suspected that someone is missing from the group they will be called to re-group and a head count conducted, the missing person identified.

Call their name out clearly and loudly. If there are sufficient adults one should backtrack to where last seen whilst others stay with the group, if not the whole group should go. At least a pair of adults should remain at the search site and continue looking. Adults should refrain from use of language which threatens punishment or blame.

If they remain lost then the Forest School leader will contact the School office to inform the Head teacher and allow for the office to coordinate the search and rescue team and walk the police to base camp. The child's parents or carers will be informed about the incident.

Toileting provision and maintenance of hygiene

It is advisable to ensure children 'go' before leaving to attend Forest School. As we are onsite at the school children can pop back into school for the toilet. Children are reminded to use wipes and antibacterial hand wash after using the toilet.

Food Hygiene

Hygienic practice will be observed and encouraged throughout activities involving food preparation. Guidance will be given where appropriate to ensure safe practice. Good personal hygiene maintained at all times: tie long hair back, cover cuts with blue, waterproof dressings, minimise touching the food. Opportunities for hand washing will be provided. Fresh water, wipes and antibacterial hand sanitizer is provided for each session.

Procedures to enable good practise in regards to food hygiene:

Hand washing water carried to site, wet wipes and antibacterial hand sanitizer.

Spare hair ties carried and blue waterproof plasters within the first aid kit.

Food chosen that pose least risk in regards to food hygiene, e.g. refrigeration is not possible so avoid storing raw meats over long periods of time.

Portion sizes/quantities considered; food should be transported, cooked and eaten, waste avoided as Forest School environment makes it difficult to dispose of rubbish which can pose a health risk.

Equipment for food will be kept separately from other Forest School equipment to maintain hygienic standards and will be transported in a sealed container or bag.

Food to be kept in containers, uncooked, cooked meats, vegetables and other food items kept separately and different utensils used.

Food will be checked to ensure it is cooked properly before it is consumed.
All cooking equipment will be thoroughly washed in hot soapy water once used.

Section 4 - Risk Assessment

*An explanation of Managing Risk within the context of Forest School and assessing and outlining the benefits of risk during Forest School sessions

*Guidance on Fire Safety

Managing Risk and the benefits (Risk Benefits)

Health and safety law is often used as an excuse to stop children taking part in exciting activities, but well-managed risk is good for them. It engages their imagination, helps them learn and even teaches them to manage risks for themselves in the future. They won't understand the risk if they're wrapped in cotton wool. Risk itself won't damage children, but ill-managed and overprotective actions could.

The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) note on their website that.

“Keeping safe and healthy should be a priority of everyone at a school or setting. However, health and safety must be particularly considered when undertaking activities within an outdoor environment, where features and conditions are continually changing”.

At Elburton Primary School we regularly visit our site, on arrival to base camp a teacher will survey the site while the children are being briefed on the activities. The teachers will then give feedback to the children and adults about anything that she/he deems a risk. When it has been particularly wet the trees in our climbing area become very wet and we check to see if they are safe to climb. We weigh up the risk and then the benefit of each individual risk.

A risk cannot always be planned for like we show in our weekly risk assessments. We sometimes happen upon risk and have to make a judgement on the spot as to whether the risk outweighs the benefit or the benefit of the child or group participating outweighs the risk (known as a dynamic risk assessment). Every leader and teacher will have different ways of viewing and then managing risk. But if that leader thinks clearly about the guiding principles of Forest School and has a supportive group of practitioners this will help to inform their judgement.

Evaluating each session will develop our responses to risk. We as leaders may not have thought that the risk was a risk we wanted to take but through evaluation of sessions and reflection time we can open up a dialogue to discuss the benefits of risk and we can think about how the child or group of learners can work towards developing strategies to manage the risk in a safe and healthy way whilst benefiting them as a whole.

We have evaluated and discussed many Forest School sessions. I have highlighted some sessions where we thought that risk would benefit that child or group of learners or when we assessed that the benefits of the risk did not add value and was just too risky.

Please note that before we introduce new experiences we have a session at school and we discuss with the children at length the correct and safe way to use or implement that chosen activity, tool or experience. We are in no rush for our learners to light fires and whittle. We want them to have these experiences but when they are ready. We are fortunate enough at Elburton that the children experience Forest School sessions on a weekly basis all year round. We don't have to cram in experiences and practical skills in a six-week block. Our children are fortunate enough to consolidate their knowledge over a long period of time.

Risk Benefits for Elburton Primary School (Examples of when we have used the Risk Benefit method):

Fire – We have a fire to keep us warm and when our sessions are long enough to cook food for the group.

Risk

We had planned to have a fire in the woods to cook some bread and to warm us up, as it was a little chilly. We noticed that on the edge of the woods just before we entered that the wind was really starting to whip up. This is often the case on the edge of the woods and we planned to assess the wind once down at base camp. The wind was still blowing quite strong once at base camp.

Benefit

We did not deem it unsafe to be in the woods but we did think that the wind could blow the flames too closely to the children sitting around our fire circle. We decided to move all the seating a bit further back. The children helped us with this process and discussed methods and techniques for moving the seating. We involved the children in assessing the risk and discussing the benefits. We could have said no to a fire but the benefits of a fire and the discussion around making the fire work for the group in a safe way gave a great amount of learning. The flames didn't go too far out and the children were able to cook bread on the hot logs once it had died down. If at any point I did think the flames were getting too big and fanning out too wide I would have put the fire out.

Tools- We use a wide range of tools during Forest school sessions. These include, loppers, secateurs, knives, billhooks and many more.

Risk

We had a policy of 1:2 when using knives. We had some near misses and through evaluation and reflection after the session we changed our policy to 1-1

Benefit

The benefit did not outweigh the risk; it was too difficult to keep your eye on two whittlers during our sessions. We had a couple of incidents when a child would not be using the knife correctly and cut themselves.

Climbing Trees

Risk

Falling from tree, scratches on body from bark, damaging the tree.

Benefit

We feel that the benefits are far greater than the risks. The only time we ask the children not to climb the tree is when it has been very wet. The trees the children climb are Laurel and have moss on them so when it rains they become particularly wet. Other than that we think that the children can manage their own risk and safety around the trees. We support all tree climbing due to the risk of strangulation. We ask that they do not go above the adult's shoulder height.

Boundaries

Risk - Children wandering outside the boundaries

Benefit

We feel that each child should have opportunities to explore the site. Unlike the school environment the woodland environment does not have a safety fence all the way around it. But we think that the lack of man-made walls has its benefits. The children develop an understanding of natural boundaries. They understand that when they are out of sight they need to self regulate and think; is this too far? The boundary markers are a gentle reminder of the boundaries but sometimes they do go out of our sight and we trust that they can self regulate over time. They benefit greatly from not being watched. Their play is different. Can you think of a favourite time when you played as a child? Was an adult present? Probably not!

Fire Risk Assessment

A fire will only be lit if the weather is not too windy and the Forest School leader deems the group or cohort of children ready. Ready means that children have had; A "Fire Safety" session at school, (a planned session led by the Forest School leader covering The fire circle, Starting a safe fire, Use of fire, Extinguishing a fire, Safe sitting around a fire and Environment and setting of the fire.

When these elements have been covered then a fire may be lit and the Forest School leader will monitor that Safety and Procedures are being adhered to at all times.

First Aid Kit, Burns Kit, 5l Water Carrier and the Fire bucket will be taken when a Fire is planned. A Fire must not be lit if any of this equipment is not present when the fire is being lit.

Guidance of Fire Safety

Guidance on safe fire practice within Forest School;

- *Staff should be competent in fire lighting, management and extinguishing
- *All adults involved with the use of fire should read the Fire Risk Assessment
- *Fire should not be lit in unsuitable dry or windy conditions and should be a suitable size; there should be no overhanging branches
- *Firewood should be collected from a wide area to avoid depletion of dead wood in any one area and awareness of wood available, impact of group use
- *A fire surround and seating circle should be set out
- *Long hair, dangly items of jewellery or clothing removed or tucked in
- *A fire guardian or keeper appointed (this will usually be the Forest School Leader or Class Teacher) and permission to enter the circle sought
- *To cross the circle walk around the outside, no running in the fire area
- *The Kelly is only to be lit by the Class teacher, Forest School leader or adults who have had appropriate training. Follow this link; <http://www.getoutwiththekids.co.uk/camping/camping-tips/kelly-kettle/> to watch how to use a kelly kettle. Please note that the bung MUST NEVER be left in when boiling water.
- *Firewood should be kept a safe distance away and not pose a trip hazard *Sufficient water should be available to extinguish the fire
- *The fire should be put out if behaviour is unsuitable and unsafe around the fire
- *We ask parents to ensure clothing for forest school is safe around fire, e.g. no sparkly dressing-up clothes that may not be fire-retardant

Safe provision of activities at forest school

Activities and experiences are planned and risk assessed by the Forest School leader. Activities that need tools to complete are individually risk assessed and guidance on tool use in Forest School sessions are outlined as follows;

Guidance on safe use of hand tools, appropriate storage & transportation

- *Potentially dangerous tools to be stored safely between use, counted before, after sessions, in and out during a session to ensure they are accounted for *Consider weather conditions – can affect ability to perform tasks e.g. wet or cold can result in a less firm grip.
- *Safe working area, sufficient space for activity, good visibility/light, flat and even surface with no nearby trip hazards.

- *Inspect canopy for overhanging or dangerous branches. Area may be marked using flags or verbal instruction given as to the designated area.
- *The entire group will be made aware of tool use & risks, a walking zone introduced.
- *Safe working distances should be employed, concept of 'bubble' taught (area around you within arms reach plus length of tool & potential distance it could travel)
- *Safe stances should be used
- *All those teaching children use of tools should have training in tool use and safety and be aware of the Risk Assessment in place for the particular tool. *Those teaching children tool use should be competent in their own practise and use
- *Tools should only be introduced to children when they display the skills needed for safe practise; concentration, listening, following instruction, calm attitude and actions
- Tools should be introduced on a 1:1 ratio Once the child displays competence the ratio may be increased but it is the Class teacher and Forest School leaders' responsibility to be able to sustain the safety of the group and ensure sufficient supervision.
- *Appropriate conduct is required at all times if a situation is deemed to be dangerous an activity may be stopped immediately.
- *Tools should be well maintained, checked regularly for any damage and kept sharp
- *Those selected for use should be suited to the purpose and appropriate for the age stage and ability of user
- *They should be kept in a waterproof sealed bag or box and transported safely to forest school.
- *It may be necessary for there to be a lock to restrict access or for them to be kept in a visible position during sessions
- *Tools to be counted before a session, in & out during and after use to ensure they are accounted for.

Tool Information and Safe use of tool criteria

<u>Fixed Blade Knife</u>	
Tool used for:	Whittling, peeling, cutting string, pivot cut
Transporting to FS:	Secure, lockable, waterproof, safe box
Safety Checks:	Sharp, undamaged & sheath fits properly, no movement between blade and handle.
PPE needed (and for whom):	n/a
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Sheath to prevent harm to others whilst not in use
Ration Adult/Child:	Preferably 1:1, dependant on attitude & ability

Safe Body Stance:	Stable position, 3 point stance is suitable, other safe stances include; sit on a stump/stool, feet spread shoulders width apart in a stable position and lean with elbows on knees and hands pointing toward each other, knife facing down toward ground. Being aware that elbows don't come in toward the body as this increases the risk of the femoral arteries. Or to sit in a stable position, to hold the working arm straight (knife hand) and stabilize work to the side body working down toward the ground.
Safe Action:	Working away from the body, taught 1:1, supervision to develop competence & safe practise.
How to Clean:	Stone
Storage:	Lockable and secure cupboard/storage unit

<u>Bow-saw</u>	
Tool used for:	Cutting lengths of wood too large to be cut using secateurs or loppers. There are two types of blade; raker blade for greenwood or peg tooth blade for seasoned/dry wood.
Transporting to FS:	Blade cover is in place, carried in a sturdy, waterproof bag, if transported by vehicle must be in the boot, access must be restricted and monitored.
Safety Checks:	Ensure the blade is sharp and in good condition, the best way to do this is check effectiveness through use. Check handle is not bent or damaged, rivets where the blade is attached are in place and not loose, the blade is not wrapped.
PPE needed (and for whom):	If A-frame is used and hands carefully positioned so that the blade is separated from the hand holding the wood firmly into place then there is no need to wear a glove. Depending upon age, activity and size of wood being handled it may be deemed appropriate to wear steel toe cap boots.

Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Use of an A-frame makes sure the wood is held securely whilst being cut. Fluorescent clothing or marker flags to denote work areas & draw attention to tool users.
Ration Adult/Child:	Taught 1:1 supervision to ensure competence & safe practise.
Safe Body Stance:	Spread feet to stabilise stance, one foot slightly in front of other, the dominant arm needs to be able to take the saw full length of blade over wood, other arm to hold wood still.
Safe Action:	Two man sawing using 24" blade person either end of saw, only needs to pull. This helps students to get an idea of the motion needed to 'saw' effectively. Individually – cuts on the push and pull of the whole length of the blade. To start a cut off and minimise the chances of the saw jumping out the cut, draw the saw toward you three times to create a groove.
How to Clean:	Paint brush to clean off and wipe with an oily rag.
Storage:	Water tight, lockable and secure cupboard/storage unit.

<u>Axe</u>	
Tool used for:	Splitting timber & pointing posts
Transporting to FS:	Tool bag (waterproof & secure), safety over on head of axe, locked in boot of vehicle
Safety Checks:	Look for cracks in the head, that is not loose, handle is firmly in place and doesn't wobble, handle has no split in it, pin in head is in place, check sharpness of blade and for chinks out of metal.

PPE needed (and for whom):	Safety boots should be worn while standing whilst working with an axe, these aren't available in children's sizes. 3-point stance reduced risks.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Chopping blocks keeps wood stable and prevents harm to the body.
Ration Adult/Child:	1:11
Safe Body Stance:	3-point stance in-front of chopping block or standing legs apart, shoulder width, so axe swings between legs (using a long handled axe).
Safe Action:	<p>Make sure no-one is behind or in front and a safe distance away.</p> <p>Inform the group.</p> <p>Clear area nothing likely to catch during swing.</p> <p>Hold head straight down, raise to shoulder height and strike straight down. Don't over stretch, have work at back of block, test swinging in right place before you strike.</p> <p>If it is required that someone helps you to hold the wood whilst you use the axe, they should stand to the side (opposite to which you are holding the axe) you should stabilise the wood with your spare hand holding underneath and away from where the axe will fall.</p>
How to Clean:	Oil and rag, in woods use wood.
Storage:	Locked, secure cupboard with restricted access.

<u>Loppers & Secateurs</u>	
Tool used for:	Pruning twigs and small branches
Transporting to FS:	Waterproof, strong & secure tool bag, or locked in boot of vehicle. Apply safety lock on secateurs.
Safety Checks:	Check handles are secure, mechanism joining two handles is secure, bolts are not loose, shuts and opens as it should, brace against body to check blade is in good condition.
PPE needed (and for whom):	Hard hat if cutting above head height, if the user is too small or they are enviable remove risk.

Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Gloves can be used if materials are rough or thorny but not whilst cutting, only to move things.
Ration Adult/Child:	Initially 1:1 until competence is established within the group.
Safe Body Stance:	Feet shoulder width apart for a stable stance, work raised off the ground.
Safe Action:	Don't cut anything larger than your thumb with loppers or little fingers with secateurs. Carry with a blade facing the ground using the bottom handle. Cut with blade on top. Stand with arms forward so the body is not trapped.
How to Clean:	Oily rag.
Storage:	Locked and secure cupboard with restricted access.

Mallet	
Tool used for:	Assist splitting wood with a knife or to bang in pegs.
Transporting to FS:	Strong secure bag.
Safety Checks:	Head is firmly attached to the handle, check for splits in wood.
PPE needed (and for whom):	None of the 3-point stance is used.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	
Ration Adult/Child:	1:1 to introduce them to 1:2 children.
Safe Body Stance:	3-point stance.
Safe Action:	Fingers away from the hitting area. If working in pairs; good communication and eye contact. Gloves should not be worn.

	Be aware of surroundings and 'blood bubbles'. No one should either be in-front or behind the user as a swinging action is used.
How to Clean:	Keep dry and wipe with a rag.
Storage:	Locked and secure cupboard.

<u>Storm Kettle</u>	
Safety Precaution:	Ensure all parts are in good condition especially the handle is secure and not loose & chain is secure and cork out of sprout when in use. No one looks into the chimney whilst lit or covers it.
Safe Sitting:	Flat, clear ground with no trip hazards. Group is aware of it being lit. Demarcate a walking area around the site. Safe distance away be seated.
Ratios:	Introduce 1:2 children, then 1:4 once competent.
How to add fuel:	Light a small fire using pencil thickness sticks in the base, put kettle on top, then add pencil thickness sticks through the chimney once lit one at a time. REMEMBER THE BUNG MUST NOT BE LEFT IN WHEN THE KETTLE IS LIT.
Instructions on how to safely lift the kettle once boiled:	Hold the handle horizontally to lift with hands under the handle to take the weight of the water. All those not lifting or moving water should be seated.
Instructions on how to safely pour:	Use a chain from the cork to safely pour by slowly and gently pulling it backward to tip the kettle, cups placed on the floor to avoid burns in-case of spillage.
How to extinguish:	Use two long sticks to tip the fire bowl out onto an area of ground clear of leaf litter or debris. Sprinkle with water until no heat is felt with the back of hand.