

# Forest School Handbook of Policies & Procedures



*To be read by all staff, helpers and  
volunteers of Forest School*

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# Forest School Ethos

Forest School is an inspirational process that aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved and offers learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.

The ethos of Forest School is based on a fundamental respect for children and young people and for their capacity to instigate, test and maintain curiosity in the world around them. It believes in children's right to play; the right to access the outdoors (and in particular a woodland environment); the right to access risk and the vibrant reality of the natural world; and the right to experience a healthy range of emotions, through all the challenges of social interaction, to build a resilience that will enable continued and creative engagement with their peers and their potential.

Forest School is based more on the process of learning than it is on the content - more on the 'how' than the 'what'. This means that genuine Forest School practice steps boldly out of the shadow and limitation of 'planned activities' and ventures collaboratively into the realms of the unplanned, unexpected and ultimately unlimited. Children and young people are given encouragement to direct their own learning - this often requires catalysing on the part of the Forest School leader either through stimulating play in the outdoors or through 'scaffolding' a child's learning, but mostly through simply observing how children are in the outdoors.

## **At Forest School all participants are viewed as:**

- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- entitled to experience regular success
- entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

## **Forest School principals**

**FS** is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.

**FS** takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

**FS** uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.

**FS** aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

**FS** offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice. See the full principles and criteria for good practice.

## Suggested Activities for Forest School

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be remembered that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

- **Shelter building**- *building dens from sticks and logs or putting up tarps.*
- **Fire lighting**- *learning about fire safety.*
- **Tool use**- *loppers, bow saw, Scotch Auger, mallets, bill hook.*
- **Studying wildlife**-*birds, insects, pond life and mammals.*
- **Playing team and group games**-*problem solving and team work.*
- **Sensory activities**- *mud kitchen, muddy bare foot walk, blindfold games, exploring touch and textures.*
- **Wild food foraging and camp fire cooking**- *black berries, nettles, elderflower or whatever is available.*
- **Using a Kelly Kettle**-*boiling water for hot drinks or food.*
- **Rope and knots**- *for securing tarps, or woodland crafts.*
- **Art and sculpture work**- *clay, mud and natural materials.*
- **Woodland and traditional craft**-*Elder beads, dream catchers, etc.*
- **Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters**
- **Physical movement activities**-*tree climbing, balancing, etc.*
- **Music**-*exploring natural sounds and woodland instruments.*

# Environmental and Ecological Impact

We aim for all our participants and staff to engender a high level of respect for the natural world and encourage all to be involved in decisions about their environment. By optimizing recycling and promoting the reuse of materials we hope to demonstrate and encourage a wider respect for the environment, as well as an understanding that all produce and waste is linked to the health of our planet as a whole. Whilst using the Forest School site we will try and minimise the harm caused to plant species and wildlife. The site is likely to incur a higher level of erosion due to increased use, for this reason we intend to set up multiple sites that can be used on rotation to reduce impact, also considering how our activities may affect the eoc-system. When going out of nursery grounds we shall abide by The Countryside Code

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Measure or prevention</b>
Collecting dead wood	Dead wood is important to any woodland ecology as it has a multitude of uses, from homes for mini beasts to beds for fungi, so a lack of it is bad for any woodland habitat	Limit the frequency of fires and evaluate the amount of dry, dead wood before having a fire. Collect only the minimum amount required for fire. Reserve specific areas for dead wood conservation. Bring wood to session if necessary.
Fires	Changes in soil chemistry can lead to increase in PH levels, carbon, phosphorous, etc. which can be harmful to some plants, whilst other essential nutrients may be depleted. Fire can travel underground to roots even after appearing to be extinguished.	Designate fixed locations for fires on parts of the site that aren't particularly ecologically interesting or unique. If possible, dispose of ash into patches of nettles. Ensure that all fires are extinguished fully before leaving a site. Where needed, use a fire wok to contain fire.
Cooking	Food waste may attract animals to the site or increase numbers of certain species, potentially leading to adverse changes in biodiversity.	Inform participants of these impacts and provide a bin (to be taken away) or an ecologically sound place for compostable food
Tree climbing	Damage to trees	Restrict these activities to suitable trees that will tolerate such use.
Collecting natural materials	Damage to plants - some plants are far more sensitive to losing their leaves or flowers than others, different seasons affect this too.	Inform groups which plants are best to pick, if any. Ensure leaves or flowers are taken from fallen parts where possible. Limit the frequency of this type of activity. Leave plants unpicked whenever picking is not necessary.
Toileting	Wet wipes contain plastic. Human waste entering waterways	Burying faeces and tissues ensures they biodegrade, or dispose of them a bag to be taken away, toileting area will be at least 20 metres from a waterway.

## Admissions and Attendance

We believe that all children should have an equal opportunity to attend Forest School and we aim to provide each child the best possible care and level of comfort during their time with us. In order for us to achieve this, it is important that each child has the right clothing and equipment suitable for each session and that we are provided with all the appropriate information regarding each child's medical needs, dietary requirements, learning requirements and next of kin contact details (please see permission form). In the interest of health and safety and the wellbeing of each child, participants without correct kit may not be able to attend or take part in particular sessions.

Please refer to kit list below for more information.

<b>Summer</b>	<b>Winter</b>
Light waterproof jacket	Warm waterproof coat
Water proof trousers	Waterproof trousers
Long trousers (not skirts)	Long trousers (no skirts)
Wellingtons or sturdy waterproof shoes	Wellingtons or sturdy waterproof shoes
Light long sleeve top	Thick warm socks (not cotton)
Sun hat	Warm hat, gloves, scarf
Sun cream	Jumper
Spare set of clothes	Spare set of clothes
Water bottle	Water bottle
Any required medication	Any required medication

To ensure our sessions are enjoyable for the whole group, each child will be expected to follow our behaviour guidelines (please see behaviour policy). Any participant continually stepping outside of this agreement may be removed from the session or be asked not to attend again until further notice is given. However, we strive to keep a good flow of communication between staff parents/guardians and participants as well as trusted relationship to allow all parties to work together in solving any issues.

# Behaviour policy

Everyone, including in Forest School sessions; staff, volunteers and participants, have a responsibility to protect their own, and other group member's health, safety and well-being. They should inform the Forest School Leader if anybody's actions are likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others.

We aim to promote:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness of personal abilities and limitations
- Respect and care for oneself, other people and the natural environment
- Co-operation and non-violent communication

## Forest School Agreement and Ground Rules

At the beginning of the first session, an agreement will be sought between the staff and all participants regarding the conduct of the group. This will include items such as respecting oneself, each other and the environment and listening carefully to instructions when they are given. The group will be encouraged to contribute items to the agreement before it is 'sealed'. However, ground rules are firmer non-negotiable, such as 'no violence' or threatening or unsafe behaviour and will be explained along with the consequences of breaking them.

## Physical Intervention

In accordance with the law, and our values, we do not use, or threaten to use, corporal punishment and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not administered by any person who is in contact with them. However, where necessary, physical intervention may be used in order to avert immediate danger to any person (including the child). Any occasion where physical intervention is used will be recorded in an Incident Report and parents/carers will be informed on the same day as the incident.

## Behaviour expectations for leaders, assistants and visitors

- ✓ Be a positive role model for participants, particularly with regards to respecting each person and the environment
- ✓ Encourage and reinforce caring and nurturing behaviour
- ✓ Be vigilant with regards to common sense safety
- ✓ Facilitate from an egalitarian and liberal approach, avoiding unnecessary rigidity or petty rules

- ✓ Avoid coercive or manipulative behaviour management, based on personal negative messages, as we feel these damage morale, motivation and self-esteem and are counterproductive to the ethos and objectives of forest school.

### **Encouraging Positive Behaviour**

We want to allow the greatest potential for each participant's forest school experience to be transformational and therefore wish to welcome each participant from an open and unbiased viewpoint with regards to their behaviour and abilities. Whilst recognising that it is useful to have previous information about participants' needs, we believe that no child is inherently 'naughty' and hope that the greater freedoms offered by a forest school environment will allow for a more flexible interpretation of positive engagement. We will work with each group to develop a clear set of boundaries and guidelines. Each participant will have the opportunity to voice their own feelings. Talking about how they wish to be treated and listening to the feelings of others is important as it will allow the group to work together, understand one another and ultimately become more supportive and cooperative. It will also contribute to making the forest school a safe and enjoyable space.

### **De-escalation**

If a situation arises in which participants are behaving in a way that threatens the safety of the group, the forest school leader will ensure that the following steps are taken:

1. Recount the facts of the incident as observed, in simple language and without judgement, and if possible mutually agree on these. Remind the participants involved of any guidelines they have not followed.
2. Listen to the involved party or parties, if necessary gently separate them from the group for this. Ask about how they feel about the incident, empathise with them to help them to express themselves and take responsibility for their feelings. Ask them to imagine how they think their behaviour has affected everyone else.
3. Talk with them to establish what their needs in the situation were and to understand how they were not being met. Discuss what their needs might be now and encourage them to consider the needs of everyone else present.
4. Help them to express any requests they might have clearly and in positive language. These can be requests of themselves, others, situations or of the environment.
5. Encourage discussion of new strategies, so that if a similar situation arises the participant(s) feel able to communicate their needs without resorting to negative behaviours.

### **Recording & Reporting**

In all cases the forest school leader will complete an incident report form, and where necessary inform Nursery manager and parents/carers. Any significant issues or incidents will be discussed with parents or carers in a private conversation, when the participant is not present.



# Acorn Reward System

During our outdoor learning sessions the children will be expected to follow the “Forest School Agreement”, these are guidelines set out to encourage positive behaviour. At the end of each session, children that have clearly taken extra steps to promote positive behaviour will receive a coloured Acorn as a reward, each one having a special quality. At the end of each term these will be exchanged for an award reflecting their best qualities.

Colour	Quality	How to earn it
	Kindness (pink)	Helping a friend in need or being attentive to wildlife.
	Teamwork (red)	Working well as part of a group
	Bravery (orange)	Stepping outside of your comfort zone or showing courage
	Confidence (yellow)	Getting stuck in to an activity and being competent to complete a task on your own
	Listening (green)	Being quiet and respectful when another person is speaking and following instructions well
	Helpfulness (blue)	Tidying up and keeping the woodland trail as we found it, helping to set up an activity, assisting an adult with a task
	Knowledge (purple)	Showing that you have an understanding of a topic related to the activity
	Amazing (gold)	Receiving the most acorns at the end of term or showing outstanding behaviour

# Health and safety

## Health and safety policy

Forest School programmes may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for participants. It is important to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits too. However, we seek to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessment covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session.

## Legislation

We fully accept our legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The purpose of this act is to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of health and safety at work. It protects not only all people at work, but also the health and safety of the general public who may be affected by the Forest School activities.

## Staff & Training

All our Forest School leaders are professionals with relevant qualifications and experience and strive to maintain and add to their professional development during the course of employment, they will also have undertaken current DBS checks. At least one member of the on-site team will hold an up to date ICT first aid qualification appropriate to outdoor employment. We will also aim to provide adequate training and support to ensure all staff and volunteers are confident and competent when following the policies and procedures we have set out in this Handbook.

## Risk / Benefit Analyses

We believe that, while there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. We also recognise that taking risks is an important part of learning and development and we want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn about risks, challenges and personal safety. Consequently, we will use a risk/benefit analysis in our assessment of our sites and activities

## On Site Risk Assessment Procedure

Forest School sites must be safe and easily accessible, so whether we are on site at the nursery grounds or going off site, we will visit and assess it before activities take place. During our assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level. If going off nursery grounds, we will make agreements with landowners and explore specific site issues if necessary. Whilst doing this we will identify

any hazards and implement the necessary controls, check for mobile phone coverage, access in case of emergency, and assess toilet facilities. We will ensure all staff and partners are provided with a copy of the risk assessment prior to an activity. When and where possible, we will carry out a last check of a site prior to the arrival of a group. Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to groups' arrival a site assessment will be made with the group upon arrival.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards, such as windblown trees or litter
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or when the more should be done
4. Record the findings
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary

### **Shared Information & Responsibility**

Sharing of responsibility with respect to group safety and risk/benefit analysis will be agreed in advance between the Forest School leader (Charlotte Taylor) and other staff or volunteers. Any special knowledge of the group - for example a participant may have a particular fear of dogs or a food allergy - can be useful when planning activities as we aim to make every session as beneficial to participants as possible. Participants or staff with any special requirements must make the Forest school leader (Charlotte Taylor) aware prior to the session (included in registration form) so arrangements can be made to the best of our ability.

### **Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure**

Emergencies are never wanted, but they are a possibility and so we ensure that all Staff and volunteers are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures. Most emergencies can be resolved on-the-spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services should be contacted and the following procedures followed:

1. Secure safety of whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities if safe. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance (with emergency whistle). If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.

2. First Aider to attend to any casualties with adult helper and required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one ICT first aider must be on site at all times. Make a record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them if possible.
3. Emergency services contacted as necessary by radio to office, ideally by an adult helper. Charged mobile phones are carried by staff if off nursery grounds. Give grid references to 999 operator (if off nursery grounds) and nearest location accessible by Emergency Vehicle.
4. Safety of the rest of group will be maintained by the remaining staff and adults away from the scene of the incident.
5. Informing next of kin should be carried out as soon as possible after the incident by Forest School Leader or nursery manager as well as the landowner (if off site)
6. Incident report and/or first aid book should be filled in on site if possible and then logged (see first aid kit for report form). This should be filled in whenever the emergency plan is used even if no one was harmed and it was just a near miss.

### **Legislation -Reporting: incidents and accidents**

Ensure that all equipment involved in an accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by the police. Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record. Any reports being made should be written in clear legible handwriting and contain correct, specific facts detailing the event and persons involved. This should include times in chronological order and **MUST** be signed by a parent/guardian on the day. A copy may be given to parent/guardian if requested, retain this record until all matters are finally settled. If possible take photographs. Do not allow anyone to interview any party member without an independent witness being present. Accidents leading to admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours Tel 0845 3009923 (HSE - Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm> First aid kits must be restocked after use and a stock check carried out every 6 months. Any incident or near miss must be subsequently investigated by staff team to review existing controls and procedures. 'Incidents', which include major behavioural incidents and any major negative occurrence that is not an accident, will also be recorded by the Forest School leader or other member of staff in an Incident Report.

# Tools and Activity Guidance

## Tool Use Procedure

Using a range of tools will be necessary in many site based activities and is an important part of our work as it enables participants to develop new practical skills that help develop self-confidence. We aim to ensure that all people participating in sessions with tools do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Tools that may be used include potato peelers, bow saws, pruning saws, loppers, knives, drills and hatchets. The following guidelines are to be followed when using tools:

- The forest school leader (Charlotte Taylor) will check all tools are fit for continued use before the session
- Only tools that are in safe working order shall be supplied for use
- Correct and safe use of sharp tools will be demonstrated to all staff and participants
- Tools should be counted when handed out and counted back in again when finished
- All groups are to be supervised closely by competent leaders until deemed competent to work with limited supervision
- Tools should be kept in a designated safe area when not in use - none should be left unattended outside this area
- All knives will be closed/ sheaved immediately after use
- Saw guards will be replaced immediately after use
- Walking around with open/ unmasked tools will not be permitted
- Safe working distances and suitable ratios must be maintained at all times

All group members will wear suitable boots/shoes and safety clothing for the activity they take part in.

## Guidance on Knife Use

- There will be a designate area for those using knives
- knife will always be carried with sheath firmly on and pointing to the ground
- Always pass knife with sheath firmly on and in demonstrated manner
- Always keep knife in sheath when not in use

- Leader to count knives out & back in
- Ensure participants have had demonstration before use (& leader is confident of participant's ability) including grip and body position
- Knife work is always supervised by a responsible adult
- Each person to sit "an arm and two tools length from the next"

### **Food Hygiene & Eating**

All participants on activities will be encouraged to wash their hands with water and soap, (or sanitizer) which will be provided, before eating food. During some sessions, we may cook items such as popcorn, damper bread or marshmallows over the fire. At least one member of staff will hold a current Food Hygiene Certificate and will ensure that safe procedures are undertaken accordingly.

**Wild Food Foraging:** Our Forest School sessions may sometimes include foraging (e.g. blackberries, nettles, elderflower/berries, hazelnuts) the group will be given gloves to wear to protect hands from thorns or stings and bacteria whilst picking. The group will be advised not to eat or put anything in their mouth until it has been properly washed and prepared or cooked to prevent risk of illness.

**ALLERGIE INFORMATION FOR GROUP MUST BE CHECKED BEFORE ANY FOOD RELATED ACTIVITIES.**

# Fire Lighting Procedure and Risk Assessment

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Therefore I aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

## Benefits of fire lighting

Fire lighting is an important life skill, during such sessions; the children involved gain key knowledge of how to safely prepare the area, maintain and manage and respect a fire, and manage their behaviour to create a safe environment for themselves and others. Allowing the participants the responsibility to “self-assess” risk and learn through discovery can help to build self-esteem, self-worth and confidence.

## Preparation

- Designated fire area should be completely free of all debris, leaf litter and trip hazards and away from any low hanging trees or branches.
- The inner fire circle must be enclosed by logs or rocks to prevent fire spread.
- Outer seating logs must be a minimum of 1.5 meters away from the inner fire circle with easy exit route between each.
- Any purpose shelter placed over fire area (such as tarp) must be of safe height and made of fire retardant materials to prevent ignition from fire or sparks.
- Prior to your session always check the weather. Never light fire in unsafe conditions, this includes high winds and extremely dry weather where fire may spread.
- If fires are being lit off sight, permission must be sought by land owner or local authority and permit obtained if required.

## Safety equipment

- Fire gloves
- Fire blanket
- First aid kit containing burns kit.
- Flowing water (or one full bucket and one empty to pour between) for treating burns
- Water for extinguishing fire

*This equipment must be present at all times during a fire lighting session and in clear view. All staff and participants must be made aware of its designated location. If for any reason its location is changed everyone must be informed immediately.*

## During the session

- Only a trained Forest School practitioner (**Charlotte Taylor**) should be responsible for lighting and maintaining of the fire.

- The participants should be given a clear safety talk and demonstration before anything else takes place. This included; teaching the respect position, only entering and exiting the fire circle by walking around the outside of the seating area and **never** entering the fire circle without an invitation (this also go for other members of staff or helpers to maintain consistency) and safe use of a fire steel if participants are using them during the session.
- Fires must **only** be lit with appropriate tinder kindling and wood and **must never** be aided by the use of flammable liquids or plastic. Flames must not reach more than knee height to remain controllable and must me manned by a member of trained staff at all times. **Never leave unattended.**
- If participants are toasting marshmallows or stirring a cooking pot, they must demonstrating safe behaviour and be assisted on a one to one basis by a member of staff as well as maintaining a safe distance from flames and sparks.
- At the end of the session the fire must be fully extinguished with water until no embers, smoke or steam remain.

## Risk Analysis Table

Hazard	Harm	People at risk	Existing prevention measures	Probability (P) 1-5	Severity (S) 1-5	Rating (PxS) 1-25
flames	Burns, fire becoming out of control.	All-mainly children	Trained member of staff present at all times. Children given safety talk and demonstration. Flames must only reach knee height.	1	5	5
Wood spitting	Minor burns skin or clothing	All-mainly children	Trained member of staff present at all times. Children given safety talk and demonstration. Seating area within safe distance.	1	2	2
Hot ashes or cinders	Could re-ignite causing wild fire	Adults, children and wildlife	All fires are fully extinguished at end of session clearing any remains. Fire blanket present at all times	1	4	4
Equipment such as tripod or cooking pots becoming hot	Burns from handling	Adults and children	Trained member of staff monitoring children at all times, only adults wearing safety gloves will handle equipment.	1	3	3
Smoke in eyes/ inhalation	Cause breathing problems if asthmatic and irritate eyes	Adults and children	Seating area at safe distance, check that any participants with asma have inhalers.	1	4	4

**This assessment is to be updated should any new preventative measures be put in place on further evaluation of practice.**



# General Session Safety & Group Guidance

## Session Safety Resources

Whenever outdoor activity sessions are run there will always be the need for key items to meet the health and safety requirements of a group. The location & remoteness of the site, time of year and the group members will have a significant impact on what resources are needed to run a safe and enjoyable session. A list is provided with key points to consider when planning sessions.

## Pro forma consent

Parents/guardians will be asked to fill in a consent form before their child begins at Forest School programmes. The completed consent form will give relevant medical details of the child, consent for the child to take part in the Forest School activities and permissions to administer medicines and creams and to admit the child to hospital for emergency treatment. The form also provides emergency contact details and optional permission to take and use photographs of the child for promotional purposes and reports. The Forest School leader (Charlotte Taylor) will keep copy of this information at all sessions attended by the child.

## Weather & Clothing

Clothing advice will be given to participants and their parents/carers prior to the session e.g.

Winter: waterproofs/coats, fleece/jumper, hats and gloves

Summer: waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, long sleeved tops and trousers

Footwear: wellies or strong/sturdy (ideally waterproof) outdoor shoes and warm woollen or manmade fibre socks (**not cotton**). This is for the comfort and safety of all involved, participants without correct clothing may not be able to take part in the session.

## Hazardous Plants & Fungi

Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the group so that all members are aware of the dangers. Serious poisoning from ingestion of leaves, berries or mushrooms rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, we disallow all participants from foraging and eating anything that has not been agreed safe by the Forest School leader (Charlotte Taylor). If a member of the group is exposed to a hazardous plant or fungi, causing a reaction a leader must be informed and appropriate First Aid given. If the nature of the reaction is more serious the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure must be followed. All staff will be given a spotter sheet on how to correctly

identify hazardous plants and fungi, which will include symptoms caused by coming into contact with it, and what to do in the event that this happens.

### **Biting & Stinging Insects**

Insect bites and stings can be common, particularly in spring and summer, and usually cause only minor irritation. In rare cases, people can have a serious allergic reaction to a bite or sting that requires immediate medical treatment - if this is the case then a leader will refer directly to the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure. If there is prior knowledge to suggest that a participant will have an allergic reaction if bitten, then the Forest School leader (Charlotte Taylor) must be informed before any activities take place on site. If ticks are known to exist in proximity to an area when going off site, then all participants need to check or be checked for ticks as soon as possible following any activity. Where a tick is found on a participant, a plaster should be placed over it and parents/carers informed at the end of the session so that they can remove it safely. Information on safe removal of ticks can be found at [www.tickbitepreventionweek.org/tick-removal](http://www.tickbitepreventionweek.org/tick-removal)

### **Administering medicines, sun cream or insect repellent**

Permission will be sought from a guardian to give their child paediatric paracetamol, sting or bite treatments, antiseptic cream and sun cream. These permissions will be included in the pro forma consent form. Guardians will also be asked to provide details of allergies or relevant illnesses and to supply medicines where necessary (such as an epi-pen or asthma inhaler). Where a guardian does not give permission for medicines and creams to be applied, their wishes will be adhered to by the Staff.

### **Safe Lifting**

Forest School activities can be physically demanding for participants and staff, for example when handling heavy objects, so it is wise to be aware of best practise. One of the greatest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly. Here are some tips:

- Think and plan where and how you are going to move an object before you lift
- Keep the load close to your waist and the heaviest side of the load next to your body
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward if possible
- Ensure a good hold on the load, hug it close to your body if possible
- Avoid bending your back, only bend at your hips or knees if possible
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways especially if bending at the back

- Keep your head up and look ahead, not down at the load once it is held securely and move smoothly
- Know your limits - don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage without help
- Put the load down if you need to adjust it
- Where possible, use ropes to drag objects such as trees

### **Group walking/going to locations off nursery grounds**

When the group goes for a walk or is traveling to a location off nursery grounds, the following procedures will be followed:

- The destination will be communicated to all adults present
- Children will be counted at the beginning and end of the walk, and at any necessary points in between, such as after a rest or play stop
- Walking on roads will be avoided, but where necessary will be in single file, with an adult at the front and the rear, and remaining adults interspersed between children
- All group members must wear a high visibility jacket

### **Dogs & Members of the Public**

Some sites will be open to the public and so there may well be other people out enjoying the woods. Most people will be happy to pass by the Forest School group without hindering activities, but there is the possibility of unwanted attention from a passer-by. In this event a leader will step and deal with the situation appropriately. If the situation escalates to a dangerous level staff will use a mobile phone to call the police and use the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure.

Some participants may be unused to or afraid of dogs. If this is known to be the case for any particular participants the Forest School leader(Charlotte Taylor) should be informed prior to arrival on site. If a dog appears the fearful participant can be joined by at least one member of staff. If a dog approaches the group and appears to likely to cause trouble all participants will be advised not to run or act excitably – ideally keep arms by their sides, voices low and stay as still as possible. A leader will speak to the owner. Signs will be mounted on footpaths close to the Forest School area asking dog-owners to keep dogs under control and for cyclists to be aware that children are playing in the area.

## Lost or Missing Person Procedure

Unknown woods can be disorientating, especially if a participant is unused to this kind of environment. Many woodland sites are not surrounded by walls or fences, and whilst we appreciate this sense of freedom can be beneficial to all, there is also the possibility that a participant may get lost. There are a number of ways we can prevent this:

- We encourage all our participants to take an interest in their surroundings so as to help them find their bearings. Ultimately we would like to inspire all who are able to become responsible for their own safety with respect to staying close to the rest of the group.
- Boundaries will be chosen, clearly marked and made known to the group. Going outside the boundaries will require all of the group to go or a sub group, with at least one leader –allowing at least two leaders to stay with remainder of group.
- The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of day, then at other relevant points in the day – particularly after activities that include members splitting up.
- Good communication within the group will encourage collective responsibility for each other's safety – leaders are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participant's whereabouts.

In the event of leaders fearing that a member of the group has gone missing:

1. All group members will be immediately called back in, by prearranged call or whistle, and counted and missing member determined. The time will be noted.
2. The Group Leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least two adults must stay with them at all times.
3. One or more adults should immediately start searching for the missing group member –calling and whistling as appropriate.
4. If the missing group member is not found within 10 minutes, the group Leader must contact police by telephoning 999 (this will result in the emergency plan coming in to action). Leaders must recall and write down a description of what the missing person was wearing and any distinguishing features. Any information on their last known location and time should be noted. Also if they have any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted down. All information then must be passed to police or other agencies.

## **Toileting**

For sites without toilet facilities, the following procedures have been proven to work effectively and to comply with current child protection recommendations:

- Encourage everyone to use the toilet before coming on site.
- We will identify a suitable location away from the work area in advance of the session. A screen can be used to provide privacy and a toileting bucket will be placed at this location.
- The group should be introduced to wild toileting - participants encouraged to take a “wild wee behind a tree” or use a trowel to bury faeces and tissue if necessary - and any queries or uncertainties to be dealt with. At all times the emphasis needs to be on discretion and encouraging participants to do as much as possible independently.
- A hand washing bucket will be available at all times as well as wet wipes and cleaning gel if necessary. All wet wipes should be placed in bags and disposed of off site.

Toileting kits contain:

- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes and cleaning gel
- Nappy bags
- Small trowel
- Tarps to make a modesty screen
- Spare pants and jogging bottoms if younger children

## **Lone working**

When preparing for a session outside of nursery, it may be necessary for one person to visit the site alone. In these circumstances, anyone carrying out the work should inform The Forest School Leader (Charlotte Taylor) before departing and ensure that each have the mobile and home/work telephone numbers of the other. The lone worker should leave details of where they will be working and at what times. Contact should be made when the lone worker leaves the site. If the lone worker changes location they should inform the Forest School leader (Charlotte Taylor) If no contact has been made by the lone worker at the agreed end of working time, then the designated staff member should attempt to contact them. If they are unable to contact the lone worker, then they should try their home number. If no contact has been made in 24 hours, the police should be called.

## Poor Weather Procedures

The weather can be unpredictable at times so we aim to be prepared for any situation. The concept of Forest School originates from Scandinavia and with it come an old Swedish proverb that most Forest School practitioners adhere to “Det finns inget dåligt väder, bara dåliga kläder” or “There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”. With this in mind, we expect all of our participants to come full prepared for all conditions (please see clothing kit list).

At the beginning of each day, the Forest School Leader (Charlotte Taylor) will carry out daily weather checks. This will include; temperature, precipitation (rain fall or snow) and wind speed. If the weather is deemed unsafe, Forest School Activities will be cancelled, Please see table below for further explanation of our guidelines.

<b>Weather condition</b>	<b>Continue if:</b>	<b>Cancel if:</b>
Snow	Snow has settled or is only light fall and children are prepared for conditions.	Snow if falling heavily, freezing and causing ground to become extremely slippery or icy.
Rain	Light rain or rain that doesn't cause ground to become too slippery or boggy.	Heavy or torrential rain with possibility of flooding.
Wind	Light to moderate wind 0-6 on Beaufort Scale	High wind or gale causing tree branches to fall 6-12 on Beaufort Scale.
Thunder and lightning	Low rumbles of thunder in distance but clear skies	Rumbles of thunder grow louder and lightning is visible.
Heat	Medium heat, children are wearing sun protection and adequate shade is available	Too hot and children are at risk of sun exhaustion .

Useful websites:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/glasgowandwestscotland/hi/people\\_and\\_places/nature/newsid\\_9232000/9232313.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/glasgowandwestscotland/hi/people_and_places/nature/newsid_9232000/9232313.stm)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/429384/Heat\\_wave\\_Main\\_Plan\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/429384/Heat_wave_Main_Plan_2015.pdf)

<http://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/weatherwatchforchildren2.pdf>

# Equal Opportunities

We aim to promote equality throughout all of our sessions with emphasises on the value placed on the individuality of all our children. We are committed to giving each child every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, attainment, age, disability, gender or background. We actively seek to remove the barriers to that can hinder or exclude individual children. We aim to provide all our children with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. We will:

- Ensure equality of access for all children
- Employ a range of styles, including collaborative learning, so that children can value each other
- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- Take into account the performance of all children when planning sessions and setting challenging targets
- Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of children.

Our staff will ensure that children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Appreciate and value the differences in others
- Take responsibility for their own actions
- Participate safely, in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs
- Are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds and learning styles without stereotyping
- Have a curriculum that allows for a range of different learning styles
- Have challenging targets that enable them to succeed
- Are encouraged to participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

# Safe Guarding

Everyone involved in Forest School is responsible for child protection and all staff will have appropriate qualifications in order to have full understanding and knowledge of how to approach it.

We are committed to:

- Taking all reasonable measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child and young person (pupil) in our care
- The practice of safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children and young people
- Protecting each pupil from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another pupil

Our aims:

- To raise awareness of individual responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse
- To provide a systematic means of monitoring, recording and reporting of concerns and cases
- to provide guidance on recognising and dealing with suspected child abuse
- To provide a framework for inter-agency communication and effective liaison
- To ensure that any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay
- To ensure that safe recruitment procedures are operated
- To design and operate procedures which promote this policy and which, ensure that staff and volunteers who are innocent are not prejudiced by false allegations
- To have regard to and be consistent with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and guidance.
- To work in accordance with Fitzsimmons Place Nursery's safeguarding policies and procedures (please see Fitzsimmons Place Nursery Safeguarding policies and procedures for details).

In addition, adults working within Forest School need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may be



moved to disclose information which they might have otherwise kept to themselves. Any volunteer, or member of staff, who finds that a child is telling them something that concerns them should follow the course of action set out below in simple steps:

1. Listen to the pupil but ask NO leading questions. Allow the child to lead the discussion but do not press for details.
2. Keep calm and offer reassurance. Accept what the child says without challenge.
3. Make NO promises. You cannot 'keep a secret'. You should make it understood that there are limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure.
4. Inform the Child Protection Officer, or the deputy
5. Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation, including the date, the time, the place the conversation occurred in and the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence. Keep the record secure and hand it to the CPO.