



Priory CE Primary School

# Forest School Handbook



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## **Introduction to Forest School**

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 the child'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, in order to build a resilience that will enable continued and creative engagement with their peers and their potential. It is an approach to education that makes use of the outdoor environment to create a unique learning vehicle.

Forest School sessions provide increasingly diverse opportunities for children to benefit from a supportive curriculum that can help children build positive values and attitudes about themselves, about learning and the environment in which they live. Children are given appropriately challenging and achievable tasks that build their confidence, skills and independence and are given the time to thoroughly explore their thoughts, feelings and relationships. This time and reflective practice develops inter- and intra-personal skills, which are well-documented as being directly linked to learning skills.

Forest School encourages children to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- discover how they learn best
- pursue knowledge that interests them
- learn how to manage failures
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- regularly experience achievement and success
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- become more motivated
- improve their concentration skills
- improve their communication
- explore the world through all the senses available to them

All sessions are designed and led by our trained staff, with the help and direction of our Forest School practitioner. However, Forest School strongly encourages participant-led learning, so as the weeks progress, learners are given more freedom and responsibility to explore their interests and therefore initiate and direct their own learning.

Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation.

Activities can include:

- ✓ Shelter building
- ✓ Natural art
- ✓ Using knots and lashings
- ✓ Fire lighting
- ✓ Bug hunts
- ✓ Tree investigations
- ✓ Climbing and balancing
- ✓ Woodwork using tools
- ✓ Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- ✓ Collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials
- ✓ Team games



## The Forest School Site



Our Forest School takes place in the grounds of the old Children's Centre grounds on the edge of the Priory CE Primary School site. It is a large contained site with a few trees (mainly Sycamore and Ash). Around the fence line we have plants such as Hawthorn and brambles. In November we will be adding to the wooded area and also developing a further site on the lower KS2 Sports Field as we have been awarded a donation of 210 sapling trees by the Woodland Trust.

The site adjoins the school grounds and is not accessible to the public.

# Conservation Policy

One of the six Forest School Principles is that 'Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.' Part of this principle is the understanding that the Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners. With this in mind, consideration will be given to the following:

- Until we have developed our site to a point where we have an abundance of a woodland resources, most materials will provided by the Forest School leaders from various other sites.
- Fires will only be lit within the designated fire pit, so that it doesn't harm any wildlife.
- Forest school leaders will ensure that woodland species are conserved and will continue to develop the site and plant new species where possible.
- When collecting natural resources including flowers the children will be taught to not pick flowers that are critically endangered or privately owned, pick only 1 flower from a patch of twenty 20, they should take flowers from patches where they grow in abundance and they should leave a substantial amount of the plant unharmed (e.g. stem and root) so it can continue to grow.
- Forest School Leaders will ensure that the grass is kept long and un-cut where possible in order to encourage wildlife.
- Children will be taught not to disturb natural habitats such as bird's nests, fox holes.



## **Staffing**

Our Forest School is organised and run by Becky Fairclough (Senior Inclusion Lead) who is working towards her Level 3 Award for Forest School Practitioners.

All staff and volunteers have undergone an appropriate selection process to assess their skills and suitability for working with children and have been subject to enhanced DBS checks. All sessions are staffed by a qualified first aider and all staff have access to a recommended first aid kit.

## **Code of conduct for adults at Forest School**

### **All adults attending Forest School should:**

- Make themselves familiar with the Forest School Handbook and sign to say that they have done this before taking part in any sessions.
- Follow all policies, procedures and risk assessments as set out in the Forest School Handbook.
- Assist with setting up and clearing away equipment before and after the session.
- Report any issues of unsafe behaviour immediately to the Forest School Leader.
- Report any unsafe equipment or items immediately to the Forest School Leader.
- Report any safeguarding incidents immediately to the Forest School Leader who will report to the Safeguarding Lead.
- Be assessed on their competent use by the Forest School Leader before attempting to use any of the Forest School tools.
- Email any photographs taken on personal devices at the end of the session to the Forest School Leader and delete them immediately.
- Ensure that they are dressed appropriately for each session, taking into consideration the planned activities, weather and site conditions.
- Notify the Forest School Leader as soon as physically possible, if they are unable to attend the Forest School Session (preferably no later than 9am on the morning of the session).
- Turn up on time for the session.
- Notify the Forest School Leader immediately of any illness or injury that may hinder their ability to take part in the session.
- Support the Forest School Leader with activities as requested by the Forest School Leader.
- Take every opportunity to protect the environment in which they are working (i.e. taking care not to trample plants, damage trees or litter etc).
- NOT behave in a way that will be detrimental to the reputation of the School.

## **Accusations against adults at Forest School**

Should a child make an allegation against an adult at Forest School whether historical or current should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead – Pam Keen (Head Teacher). If she is unavailable then you should ask Jenny Cunliffe (Deputy Head and Deputy DSL), Cat Hawksworth (School Business Manager) or a member of SLT to contact her for you. It is important that you do not share your concerns with anyone else unless the Head Teacher is unavailable and you are asked to do so by a member of SLT. If the allegation is against Pam Keen it should then be reported to the Chair of Governors. A member of the office staff will provide his number. It is important that you do not share your concerns with anyone else unless the Chair of Governors is unavailable and you are asked to do so by the Vice Chair.

**(Please see section 16 of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for further information).**

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Forest School Leader and supporting adults:**

- To plan, prepare and deliver a range of Forest School sessions.
- To liaise with clients prior to sessions to ensure plans are appropriate and all needs and expectations are met.
- To supervise and support children with varying needs while delivering sessions.
- To create and maintain an engaging, fun and supportive environment, demonstrating flexibility in planning and running sessions in response to varying/changing needs of children.
- To ensure that all sessions are well prepared.
- To be aware of and comply with all Priory CE Primary's Forest School Policies and Procedures.
- To participate in training and other learning activities/meetings as required.
- To administer basic first aid as the need arises.
- To observe confidentiality at all times.
- To undertake all duties reasonably requested by the Head Teacher. Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work with different groups of staff, teachers, students and the general public
- All adults should have a flexible and proactive work ethic and a positive attitude
- All adults should be punctual and organised
- Should come prepared to work in all weathers.

**The Forest School Leader and all supporting adults should operate by the 6 Forest School Principles.**



### **Forest School Principles and criteria for good practice**

**Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.**

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

**Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.**

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.

- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

**Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners**

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

**Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.**

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

**5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.**

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification. Find more information on Forest School qualifications here.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

## **6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning**

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

## **Ratios**

- All staff working with children will have an enhanced DBS disclosure, suitable references and appropriate qualifications.
- Staff, students and visitors without DBS disclosure will not be permitted to be left with the children at any time.
- Staff DBS's will be updated when employment commences and every three years after.
- Ratios are maintained at all times as per the Forest School requirements (Max 15 participants to 2 adults, 1 of which must hold the Forest School Level 3 Qualification).
- Tool use will be on a 1:1 basis, however, dependent on the age, ability and competency of the participants the Forest School Leader may change this at his/her discretion.

## **Accident and Emergency Procedures**

All staff, volunteers and participants will be briefed on what to do in case of an emergency. A whistle will be blown 3 times as a signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff, be silent and wait for instructions. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will attend to any casualties, giving First Aid as necessary. An Accident Form will be completed later at the School Office. A RIDDOR record will be created if necessary.

If the Forest School Leader is injured or becomes ill, the Forest School Assistant will take charge of the situation as above and will call the school office and request that a First Aider is sent over immediately. They will then follow the procedure below.

### **In the event of Injury**

**If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by First Aid on-site and requires medical assistance:**

- In serious cases, the Emergency Services should be contacted (see below) using the Emergency Phone carried by the Forest School Leader, then the school will be notified. The School Office will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.

- One member of staff from school will meet the ambulance at the Jubilee Road entrance and direct the crew to the incident via the double gates next to the main All Stars building. If required, an additional First Aider from school will be requested to assist at the Forest School site.
- If the injured party is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the injured party's emergency contact will be updated about the situation by a member of the School office staff.

#### Emergency Contact Numbers

Ambulance/Fire Brigade: 999

School Office: 01782 233585

Site Address:

Trentham/Hanford Children's Centre, Jubilee Road, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 8EF

#### **Requesting attendance by Emergency Services (Ambulance)**

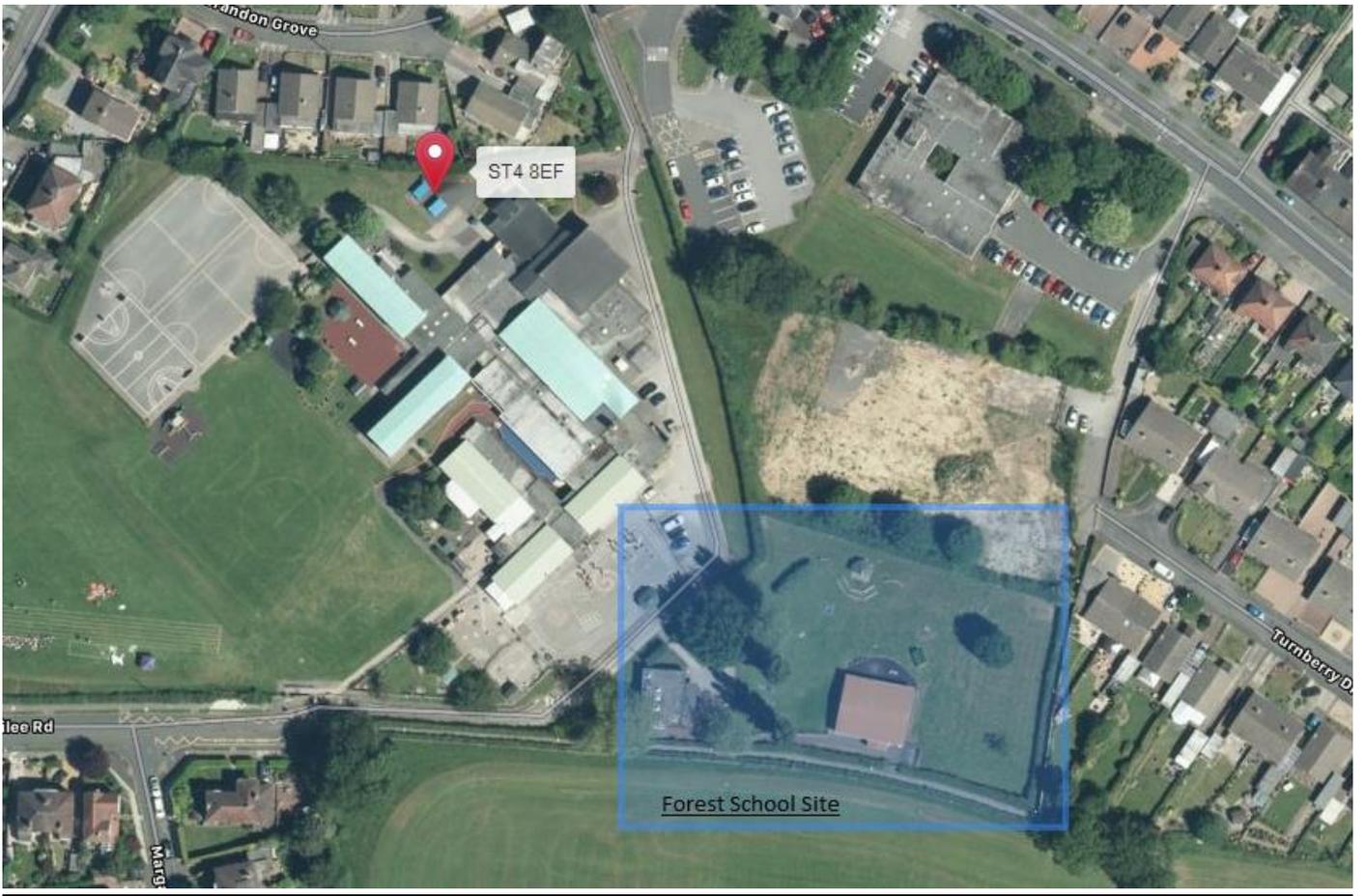
Dial 999 and ask for an ambulance. Be ready with the following information:

- Emergency Mobile Number 07900925444
- School Phone Number 01782 233585
- School Post Code ST4 8EF
- Ambulance Access – Jubilee Road
- Location Details Grid Reference SJ 86917 41805

#### **Requesting attendance by the Emergency Services (Fire Brigade)**

Dial 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade. Be ready with the following information:

- Emergency Mobile Number 07900925444
- School Phone Number 01782 233585
- School Post Code ST4 8EF
- Fire Tender Access – Jubilee Road
- Location Details Grid Reference SJ 86917 41805



## **First Aid**

The Forest School Leader is responsible for First Aid and is qualified in Outdoor First Aid and Medication Management.

As the Forest School sessions will be taking place on site in the Children's Centre grounds it is not necessary at this time to take a full outdoor first aid kit with whistle and thermal blanket etc. A basic first aid kit with burns kit will be carried along with a fully charged mobile phone, so that the Forest School Leader can contact the school office should a serious injury occur.

Should a minor injury occur, such as a small cut or graze, the wound will be cleaned on site and a plaster will be applied. The injury will be recorded in the first aid book and the child will remain on site. Should a more serious injury occur, or should a child become extremely unwell, the Forest School Leader will telephone the school office and request that a further member of staff is sent over to bring the child back to the main school building.

For further information on First Aid, please see the main school First Aid Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

## Weather

It can be said that there is no bad weather, just poor choices of clothing and although we would like to be able to operate Forest Schools in all weather, sometimes this is not feasible due to safety issues. In extreme weather, careful consideration must be taken regarding the safety of both the children and adults. Poor weather would be extreme heat, rain, snow, wind, and storms. It is not appropriate to be working in wind speeds that are higher than 25pmh (see Beaufort scale appendix K).

It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to check local weather forecasts before leaving the school building and to ensure that the children and staff are appropriately dressed for the weather. The Forest School Leader will decide whether it is appropriate to continue with the session when the weather is poor.

The table below details the procedure and risk assessment undertaken by the Forest School Leader in the event of poor weather conditions:

| <b>Weather Condition</b>      | <b>Reason to continue</b>  | <b>Reason to cancel</b>   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Snow                          | Snow has settled and children have arrived prepared for session in snow. | Snow still falling, freezing and slippery conditions. School is being closed due to concerns of safety. |
| Rain                          | Light rain, forecast is good.  | Heavy rain, forecast to continue, possible flooding.  |
| Wind                          | Light wind   | High wind. Danger of falling branches and trees   |
| Storm (Thunder and Lightning) | Low rumbles of thunder heard in the distance.<br>Clear skies.            | Rumbles of thunder grow louder.<br>Bolts of lightning visible in the distance.                          |
| Heat                          | Medium heat. Children wearing sun protection. Keep to shaded areas.      | Too hot. Risk of sun stroke and heat exhaustion.  |

## Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment

No person will be permitted to go to Forest School without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold and keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware that the clothing is likely to come back dirty and possibly stained or damaged.

Clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood.
- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers
- Warm boots (wellies can be very cold during the winter)
- Warm Socks, and a spare pair
- Gloves and Woolly hat – Cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility– sunny weather#

We work on the principle that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing” and sessions will continue in most weather.

We do have some spare waterproofs and wellies (please speak to the Forest School Leader about this prior to the session should these be required). As well as this, we do provide safety gloves that are to be used when working with tools.

## **Daily Procedures**

### **Prior to all Forest School Sessions**

- Check all equipment is available and in good working order.
- Ensure all Risk Assessments are up to date.
- Check all medical records and ensure plans are in place should a participant have a disability/medical need/existing injury/allergy etc.
- Check the weather to ensure that planned sessions are appropriate in current conditions and that appropriate clothing/equipment is available (eg boggy wet weather, all children to be wearing wellies).
- Ensure registers and other paperwork is stored securely to meet GDPR regulations.
- Check site.
- Ensure that all staff taking part in the session are aware what they will be doing and are suitably prepared.
- Ensure that appropriate people are notified of the planned activities (e.g. Fire Brigade notified of any planned fires).

### **During the Forest School Session**

- Take registers and carry out regular head counts.
- Ensure that all participants are appropriately dressed and issue suitable clothing where needed.
- Introduce the task and explain all safety procedures including highlighting potential hazards on site.
- Continual assessment of the site.
- Count Equipment out and back in again.
- End session with time for reflection.

### **After the Forest School Session**

- Ensure that all session records are completed and stored securely.
- Ensure all participants wash their hands.
- Ensure that the site is left in good order and that all rubbish is collected and safely disposed of.
- Ensure all equipment is checked, cleaned and stored safely.
- Ensure all fires are correctly extinguished.
- Ensure a de-brief is carried out with all appropriate staff.

## **Food Safety**

- Children will be taught not to eat anything unless directed by the Forest School Leader.
- When children are suitably able, they will cook/toast food such as marshmallows, dough, fruit and vegetables only when supervised by a Forest School Leader.
- All food allergies/dietary requirements are to be notified in writing to the Forest School Leader.

### **Food Preparation, transport and storage**

- Hands to be cleaned and cuts/grazes to be covered.
- Food to be stored in clean container and utensils to be cleaned after each session.
- Drinking water to be available at all times.

### **Cooking and Clearing Away**

- Cleaning supplies to be available at all times for hand-washing/sanitising.
- Children to cook safely following the Fire Risk Assessment.
- Care should be taken when cooking and consuming hot food and beverages to avoid burns and scolds.
- Uneaten food to be safely disposed of.
- Area to be checked and cleared of food before leaving the site.
- Pots/Utensils to be cleaned and sanitised after use.

## **Sanitation Procedures**

### **Toileting**

Before a Forest School Session the children will be given the opportunity to go to the toilet. During the session the children will be able to access the toilets in the main Children's Centre Building.

## **Hand Washing**

Nil by mouth policy (No lick, no pick) for anything found in the area, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water or antibacterial gel to clean their hands before consumption.

## **Litter**

A full site sweep will be done before the Forest School Session. However, should any litter be found on site during the session it will be picked up only when wearing gloves or using a litter picker. All rubbish created during the session must be disposed of in the black bag provided, so that the site is left in a tidy and safe condition.

## **Animal faeces**

Should any animal faeces be found on site during the course of the session the Forest School Leader will remove this with a shovel.

## **Loose Dog/Member of Public Procedure**

The Forest School site is on the grounds of the Children's Centre at Priory CE Primary School which is fenced/hedged boundaries and buzzer entry gates. There are security cameras on both gates which are linked to screens within the school office. We are currently using the Children's Centre grounds as these are not used by anyone during school time, however we are developing a further site within the school grounds on the Lower Sports Field. No members of public are permitted on site without permission, therefore there should be no unknown visitors to the site without prior notice.

Should an unknown person approach the group the following procedure will be followed:

- A member of staff will move away from the group and intercept the unknown person to ascertain the reasons for them being on site.
- A staff member will telephone/radio the school office to notify them of the encounter.
- Should there be any question that there is any potential danger to the group the Forest School Leader will blow 3 blows of the whistle and call "On me!" which will signal that the children need to form up in twos ready to leave the site.

- The Forest School Leader will complete a head count and move the participants to safety.
- Should the Forest School Leader be notified by the school office of any Lock Down or Fire Drill the Leader will follow the correct procedures and either assemble the children at the relevant point, remove them from site or bring them immediately into the building.
  
- In the unlikely event that a loose dog (other than our school dog) might enter the site, the Forest School Leader will blow 3 blows of the whistle and call “On me!” which will signal that the children need to form up in twos ready to leave the site. The Forest School Leader will complete a head count, move the children to safety and notify the school office by telephone/radio.

The participants will be allowed to return to the site when deemed safe to do so by the Forest School Leader.

Hand sanitising materials will be available should any participant come into contact with dog faeces.

# **Fire Procedures**

## **Choosing a site**

A permanent fire circle has been created within the grounds of the Children's Centre. Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs/tyres at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit.

## **Prior to lighting the fire**

- Call Staffordshire Fire on 01785 898888 to advise that we are having a controlled burn. Postcode for the area is ST4 8EF.
- Set up the area with all equipment required:
  - ✓ Fire gauntlets (only to be used by adults)
  - ✓ Burns kit
  - ✓ Fire blanket
  - ✓ First Aid kit
  - ✓ Bucket full of water with t-towel dunked in
  - ✓ Flint and steels
  - ✓ Tinder
  - ✓ Kindling
  - ✓ Fire wood (enough to maintain the fire for the required period)
  - ✓ Cooking and serving equipment if necessary
  - ✓ Hand washing/cleaning facilities if cooking food
- Carry out fire safety talk, including advice on moving around the fire.

## **During the fire**

- The fire should NEVER be left unattended.
- When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area immediately surrounding the fire without permission.
- Children must walk around the outside of the seating and never run through the inside of the fire circle. A fire will not be lit with a group until all children have demonstrated that they can stick to this rule.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided. If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.

- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.

### **Extinguishing the fire**

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build ups of ash from several fires need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled. It should be finely scattered along the hedge line to enable natural decomposition.
- Call Staffordshire Fire on 01785 898888 to advise that the fire is now out.



## **Risk Management and Assessment**

Priory CE Primary School aims to develop children's self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. In order that these aims can be met, the Forest School Leader will:

- Consistently apply the five-step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School activities:
  - ✓ Look for hazards.
  - ✓ Decide who may be harmed and how.
  - ✓ Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done.
  - ✓ Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits or observations.
  - ✓ Review assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change, which may affect the rigour of the assessment) and revise if necessary.
  
- Carry out Site Risk Assessments on each site where Forest School activities will take place.
- A pre-visit check will be carried out by the Forest School Leader on sites to be used prior to a day's activity, as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical. The findings will be recorded on the site check form.
- Complete an Activity Risk/Benefit Assessment for every activity to be undertaken at Forest School. Completed forms are stored in the Master Forest School File in the Inclusion Hub.
- Ensure all staff and volunteer helpers have read the relevant Site and Activity Risk Assessments prior to a session.
- Inform staff, volunteers and children of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further.
- Involve staff, volunteers and children in risk assessment, as appropriate, as part of learning.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and children are aware of the emergency procedures for the Forest School site.
- Be responsible for teaching children adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.
- Ensure children and adults will have access to drinking water during sessions.
- Ensure a nil-by-mouth policy is adopted in all Forest School sessions, except for food cooked as part of a fully risk-assessed Forest School activity.

# Risk Assessment Procedure

The purpose of risk assessment is to identify hazards and evaluate any associated risks to health and safety arising from Forest School Activities, enabling informed decisions to be taken to eliminate or minimise any risk of harm to those who may be affected. Risk assessments do not have to be complicated; the level of detail contained in them should be relevant to the level of the risks involved with the activity.

Forest School Leaders are responsible for undertaking risk assessments, identifying and implementing control measures, effectively communicating the outcomes to employees and others as appropriate.

All hazards associated with each activity and all groups of persons which may be exposed to those hazards must be identified. Hazards can arise from the use of materials, substances, equipment and the location that the activity is carried out in.

Once hazards associated with activities have been identified, it becomes necessary to establish what the potential hazardous outcomes or events could be associated with the hazard. When identifying who could be harmed, identify how they could be harmed. The next stage is to examine the likelihood of a hazardous event occurring. Infrequently occurring hazards, present less risk than frequently occurring hazards. Once any likelihood has been determined the probable consequence of the hazardous event, should be considered. Consequences can be considered in terms of severity of potential injury (is it probable that a person would die or sustain minor injuries) but consequence also can be considered in broader terms, including reputational consequences.

| <b><i>The level of risk is calculated by:</i></b> | <b><i>The likelihood</i></b> | <b>X</b> | <b><i>The Consequence</i></b>                    |
|---|------------------------------|----------|--|
|   | 1- <i>Very unlikely</i>      |          | 1- <i>Insignificant (no injury)</i>              |
|   | 2- <i>Unlikely</i>           |          | 2- <i>Minor (minor injury needing first aid)</i> |
|   | 3- <i>Fairly likely</i>      |          | 3- <i>Moderate (up to 3 days absence)</i>        |
|   | 4- <i>Likely</i>             |          | 4- <i>Major (more than 3 days absence)</i>       |
|   | 5- <i>Very likely</i>        |          | 5- <i>Catastrophic (death)</i>                   |

**Risk rating:**

|         |                                    |   |
|---------|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 – 4   | <b>Low</b><br>(acceptable)         | No further action required  |
| 5 – 9   | <b>Medium</b><br>(adequate)        | If risk cannot be lowered any further, consider risk against benefit.<br>Monitor and look to improve at next review |
| 10 – 16 | <b>High</b><br>(tolerable)         | Identify further control measures to reduce risk rating.<br>Seek further advice e.g. line manager, H&S team, etc.   |
| 17 - 25 | <b>Very High</b><br>(unacceptable) | Do not undertake the activity. Implement immediate improvements   |

This risk estimation process helps to determine the significance of the risks associated with the hazards. The number of people who may be affected by a hazard is a relevant consideration during risk estimation.

Risk assessment is the overall judgement of the level of risk arising from the hazard, based upon the likelihood of the hazard occurring and the potential severity of the account existing risk control measures that are already established to be place to reduce / control the risk. Using the risk matrix as a guide, the level of risk should be assessed to identify the risk rating.

Suitable and sufficient risk control measures will be identified and implemented to ensure that all risks are appropriately controlled and meet legal requirements as a minimum. All risk control measures will follow the hierarchy of risk control stated in this procedure. Risk control measures are methods used which reduce/control risks arising from the hazard.

The risk assessment and control process is not a one-off activity but part of the process for continuous improvement and should be reviewed and revised as appropriate.

Risk assessments must be reviewed

- If there has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates
- If there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid
- At least annually

## Tool Use

Priory CE Primary School currently uses the following tools:

- Bow Saw/Pull Saw
- Junior Hack Saw
- Hand drill
- Bodger
- Knives
- Hammers

Tools are used with children with 1-1 adult supervision only until each child has been assessed for safety and competence and then it will be at most 1:3 dependent on the tool.

The Forest School Leader and Forest School Assistant are responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools.

The Tool Bag which contains the saws, drills and hammers is kept securely buckled at all times. The knives are stored in a metal box and both are stored in a locked room when not being used in the Forest School Sessions.

Activity Risk/Benefit Assessments are completed for all activities involving the use of tools. These are kept in the Forest School File in the Inclusion Hub. (Refer to all Tool Safety Sheets and Risk Assessments)

## **Appendices**

- A – Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- B – Health & Safety Policy
- C – Behaviour Policy
- D – Inclusion Policy
- E – Data Protection Policy
- F – Complaints Policy
- G – Lost Children Policy
- H – Risk Assessments
  - Site
  - Tools (Bowsaw, Loppers, hand drill, Bill Hook/Stick Chopper, Mallets/Bodger, Knives, Potato Peelers).
  - Use of Rope/Cord
  - Fire
  - Kelly/Storm Kettle
  - Collection of Natural Materials
  - Shelter Building
  - Leaving the ground (climbing)
  - Minibus/Transport
  - Group and Individual
- I - Forest School Communication Strategy
- J - Tool Use – Step by Step Guides
  - Potato Peeler
  - Loppers
  - Knife
  - Bowsaw
  - Bit and Brace
  - Bill Hook/Stick Chopper
- K – Beaufort Scale

## **References**

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org>

[http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/be/Beaufort\\_scale](http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/be/Beaufort_scale)

## **Staff and Volunteer Signature Sheet**

I confirm that I have read through the Forest School Handbook and additional supporting documents and I understand what I am required to do.

| Date | Name | Signature |
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Policy Author: Rebecca Fairclough

Policy Approved By: Sarah Morris (Chair of Teaching and Learning Committee and Link Governor)

Responsible Committee: Teaching and Learning Committee

Date Approved: October 2019

Date of Review: October 2021