



THE EDWARD RICHARDSON PRIMARY SCHOOL

FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

Date of last review	Spring 2024
Term next due for update	Spring 2027
Member of staff responsible for this update	Forest School Leader
Governor responsible for this update	Chair of Governors
Requirement	Statutory

Aims of policy

- To ensure that our parents/carers, staff, governors and visitors have a confident understanding of its meaning and how it will be applied in our school.
- State the responsibilities of the Forest School Leader:

Health and Safety (risk assessments)
Insurance
First Aid
Environmental factors and Site Management Plan
Fire Safety
Emergencies
Food and hygiene
Tools
Plan/deliver programme sessions
Evaluation and Reflection

Our aims for Forest School will be to:

- develop a natural, safe and inspiring site where all children have the opportunity to access the benefits that Forest School offers;
- deliver programmes that have the opportunity for children to develop all areas of their holistic development;
- respect pupil's individual learning styles and support them as they find and develop their own problem solving skills and nurture their own reasoning/voice;
- give children opportunities to develop relationships, to share their learning and develop teamwork strategies;
- experience our school's natural environment and develop knowledge of the outdoors;
- to understand that at Forest School the focus is the process of learning, not the outcome;
- take into account these aims from the school's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy:
 - create a supportive, caring and happy environment in which each pupil can work with a sense of wellbeing and security;
 - develop the potential of each pupil taking into account their individual needs and abilities;
 - offer opportunities for the development of the whole child;
 - build positive attitudes to school and behaviour in all pupils in line with the school behaviour policy;
 - develop links between the community and school.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety will be a main priority at all times and we will adhere to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Forest School Leader will complete risk assessments for all aspects of the site, all activities planned, tool use and fire. These will be kept in a separate risk assessment folder.

The Forest School Leader will:

- ensure that all members of staff or any visitors have a valid and current DBS check. We refer to The Children's Act 1989 and follow correct procedures.
- have read this policy and the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- ensure that correct safeguarding is in place and that adults are aware of the school's Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- make any other staff/helpers aware of the risk assessments.
- complete a site sweep an hour before a Forest School session to assess the site for its usability and deal with any issues that have arisen.
- ensure that children have the correct suitable clothing/protection to complete their Forest School sessions safely.

Toilets

As the Forest School area is so close to the school building, any child needing to use the toilet will be brought into the school with an adult (Year R & Year 1). Older children will be accompanied by a peer buddy and directed to use the toilets between Classes 1 and 2 (Year 2-6 children). The FS Leader will keep a note of any children (unaccompanied by an adult) who enter the school building to use the toilet and acknowledge their return afterwards.

First Aid

The Forest School Leader will hold at least a 2 day First Aid Certificate (with outdoors aspect)/Paediatric First Aid Certificate. The Forest School Leader will make sure that at each session they have:

- a first aid kit (the Forest School Leader will make sure this is suitable to use and is on site at the start of each session);
- a mobile phone (to use to contact emergency services/or the office to contact parents/carers);
- any pupil's medication/epi pens (the Forest School Leader will take out what is needed and return to school after a session). This will be in conjunction with our SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS and INTIMATE CARE POLICY;
- accident book (first aid will be administered if needed and a form will be completed for the child to take home; a copy will also be kept at school).

Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency, correct and safe procedures will be followed. The children will be made aware by using our 'call sound.' They will have been taught what to do when they hear this sound (immediately stand still and quiet, wait for next instruction). The Forest School Leader will then determine how the situation will be dealt with ensuring that children's safety and wellbeing is absolutely paramount. The Forest Leader will gather the children in a safe place whilst the correct person/s are contacted (999 for medical/fire emergency, office for a member of staff or parents/carers). Emergency first aid will be administered or fire incidents will be dealt with if deemed appropriate by the Forest School Leader, without endangering their own or the children's safety. Should an emergency take place, the Forest School Leader will ensure that major incidents are reported to the Local Authority.

The school grounds are locked throughout the school day so the risk of strangers/loose animals (e.g. dogs) is extremely low. However, should a stranger approach the site, the Forest School Leader will gather the children and follow school procedure (adults to question the stranger, get children inside to safety).

Insurance

The school holds insurance that covers all aspects of Forest School.

Environmental Factors, Ecological Impact Assessment and Site Management Plan

As Forest School develops, a site management plan will be proposed that allows our site to be developed to its full potential. Environmental factors will always be taken into account so that any existing natural habitats are not affected. Ecological impact assessments will allow the Forest Leader to manage how the site is used and what can be done to keep it to its natural state as much as possible. Part of Forest School ethos is to use the natural site and its wonderful learning opportunities. This will be done in the best possible way without causing any damage/harm (see separate documents for Ecological Impact Assessments and 3 Year Site Management Plan).

Fire

The Forest School Leader will assess and designate a safe location for the fire at Forest School. This will be inside our log circle at Forest School. The log seats will be 1.5m away from the middle. Children will be made aware they are to enter/leave the circle by stepping over the logs and move around the circle on the outside. They do not enter the middle of the circle unless invited in by the Forest School Leader. We discuss these rules at the start of each Forest School session. The fire will always be started in a fire pit. If the children are invited to the fire then will be using the safe kneel (respect) position. This will be modelled by the Forest School Leader. Before the fire is lit, the Forest School Leader will ensure that:

- everyone is in a safe position and knows the rules;
- fire gloves are worn;
- two buckets of water are available;
- a burns kit and fire blanket are available.

Food & Hygiene

The Forest School Leader will hold a Food & Hygiene Certificate. Permission will be obtained from all parents/carers before allowing children to eat at Forest School, checking for allergies. If using fire, the correct procedures will be followed. All equipment used will be cleaned and stored in a safe place. Food will always be cooked correctly following Food and Hygiene requirements. All children will wash their hands before any consumption. The Forest School Leader will provide soap and two washing up bowls at every session. One will be for initial washing with soap and the second for a rinse. A clean towel will be provided every session.

Tools

The use of tools at Forest School can have a significant impact on children's learning and self-confidence. Safety will be an absolute priority of all at Forest School where tools are used. The Forest School leader will ensure that:

- all tools are risk assessed;
- all tools are stored securely in correct places at school and are checked before and after each session;
- safety rules are revisited before use and throughout the session. Correct use of tools will be modelled by the Forest School Leader.
- that the safe kneel (respect) position is used.
- tool use is supervised by the Forest School Leader at all times, with ratios dependent on the age and ability of the child/children.

Risk assessments

Forest School is an incredible opportunity for our children to access a variety of experiences that they may not experience normally. This, of course, comes with a range of scenarios that bring different levels of risk. The risk assessments can be found in a separate folder; copies are held by the Forest School Leader and Head Teacher. Risk assessments include:

- forest school site
- children
- site conditions and weather
- string, wool and rope
- fire
- shelters
- food

- water
- mud
- bow saw
- potato peelers
- mallet
- trees, branches and logs

A risk assessment for each session will be also completed.

Planning and delivery of sessions:

The Forest School Leader will plan programme sessions suitable to the children's age, capabilities and interests. It is up to the Forest School Leader to decide how many children will be in each programme, and generally groups will consist of no more than 15 children per programme. Reception children access Forest School once a week, with the Forest School Leader then taking the other year group sessions in half termly blocks throughout the year, usually with an outside volunteer. Alterations may be made, dependent on availability of additional members of staff or volunteers.

Programmes will be written based on themes (e.g weather, tools, team work, crafts etc.) or may link with topics the children are learning. At Forest School there will be plans for each session but these are flexible and can be changed on the day if the children's interests/learning are heading in a different direction. Session plans will be accessible each time so that any staff/visitors have the opportunity to read these beforehand.

At Forest School we will adhere to the school's:

- Behaviour Policy
- Equality Policy and Accessibility Plan
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy

Evaluation and Reflection

Forest School sessions are very much focused on the process of learning rather than the overall outcome. At the end of each session, a period of time will be dedicated to reflection. The children will come together with the Forest School Leader to evaluate their time in Forest School that day. This will be a hugely beneficial part of Forest School as it will give the children the chance to reflect on their experiences and share their thoughts on what they liked/didn't like or how they found an activity. It will give them time to think about their risk taking, turn taking and overall learning on that day. The Forest School Leader will keep a weekly Forest School diary of their sessions, which will be a mixture of photos, self-reflection comments from the children and comments from the Forest School Leader. This will be shared each half term with class teachers and a summary shared with parents/carers through the class website pages.

Approved by (Chair of Governors): _____

Date: _____