



York Road Nursery and Pre-school

Forest School Policies and Procedures

September 2019



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1. Purpose and Aims of Forest School

- To provide an experience that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for the local environment.
- To develop self-esteem, independence and imagination whilst taking appropriate risks with set boundaries.
- To work harmoniously within a group or independently respecting the views and ideas of others.



2. The Role of the Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader:

- will carry out a detailed safety check prior to each session and comply with the Health and Safety Risk Assessment.
- will carry the welfare/emergency pack at all times.
- is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- has the responsibility of ensuring all those participating are kept safe at all times.
- will keep an accident book to record accurately any accidents/incidents that may occur during a session eg. trips, stings, etc
- will hold an up to date Outdoor First Aid certificate.
- will plan and deliver a full and varied programme taking into account the EYFS.
- will incorporate a range of different learning styles to promote independence during the activities.
- will maintain a safe environment in order to maximise the learning experience in the woodland setting.
- will ensure that during all Forest School sessions all persons will be treated equally regardless of ability, age, gender, culture or race.
- will ensure all persons will be included in all activities in a nurturing and caring environment.
- will promote the value of working together harmoniously respecting others views and ideas



3. Health and Safety Policy

Procedure:

- Forest School sessions are to be held at Hitchin Boy's school SG5 1JB, within a gated woodland area.
- For each Forest School session the adult:child ratio will be 1: 5.
- A daily site risk assessment will be carried out prior to each session.
- A general risk assessment will be written in line with planning and will be reviewed termly.
- The weather will be assessed prior to each session by the Forest School Leader. If extremely windy or cold and it is deemed unsafe eg a storm, the session will be cancelled.
- Appropriate clothing to be worn, eg waterproof trousers, coat, hat, gloves. Parents to be notified prior to the start of a forest school session as to what essential clothing will be needed via a 'Parent's Guide to Forest School' booklet.
- There will be a nil by mouth policy whilst in the woodland area to prevent contamination from animal faeces, mud or poisonous flora and fauna. The exception to this will be on the last session where food may be cooked on an open fire.
- Children will wash their hands immediately after each session.
- The Forest School Leader to carry mobile phone at all times in case of emergency.

In Case of Injury

- The Forest School Leader will hold an up to date Outdoors First Aid certificate and will be in charge of first aid arrangements.
- The First Aid kit is to be kept in the forest school truck and taken to all sessions.
- In case of an accident requiring further assistance, the school office will be contacted via mobile phone.
- Emergency contact details, directions and national grid reference for emergency services will be on the lanyard worn by the Forest School Leader and on the FS rucksack.

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- In accordance with school procedure an incident/accident form must be completed in accordance to HCC guidance.

ALL INHALERS/EPI PENS/MEDICATION TO BE TAKEN UP TO WOODLAND AREA FOR FOREST SCHOOL SESSIONS AND ADMINISTERED AS REQUIRED.

During the Forest School Session

- Before staff/volunteers and children leave the nursery, the registers will be taken and a regular headcount will be taken throughout the session whilst in the woods.
- Identifying boundaries to Forest School are discussed at the start of each session along with the Forest School guidelines and safety rules.
- If children move to explore hidden areas, an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to move independently. If you lose sight of a child shout '1,2, 3, where are you?' (response to be taught in first session.)

Lighting a Fire

- When lighting a fire, the Forest School Leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before the start.
- A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point.
- A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed that all safety equipment is in place.
- All open fires will be built within the 'Fire Circle'.

Picking up and Playing with Sticks

- Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end.
- Sticks must not be thrown.
- Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.



Carrying and Transporting of Natural Materials

- Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes.
- Safe lifting is encouraged by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. This will be modelled by the adults present.
- Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.
- Work gloves to be made available.



4. Travelling to and from the site

To the site:

- The route to the site will be assessed prior to the outing taking place.
- Ensure children are wearing hi-viz jackets.
- On leaving the nursery site, the last adult to ensure all gates are secured.
- Children to walk to the site using our walking bus.
- Ensure children **DO NOT** let go of their strap at any time.
- One adult to be at the front, other at the back, ensure other adults spaced out along the line.
- On arrival at the road – two adults to stand either side of middle of the road to stop the traffic
- Adults to guide the children across the road.

Once entering the site ensure children continue to hold their straps until we enter the woodland unless otherwise directed by the Leader.

- The last adult through to the HBS grounds to ensure the gate on arrival is locked.
- The last adult through to the padlocked gated area to woodland to ensure padlock is secure.
- Children encouraged to walk safely to the fire circle.

On leaving the site:

- On leaving the wooded area, last adult to secure padlock.
- On leaving HBS grounds, last adult to secure gate.
- Ensure children continue to wear hi-viz jackets and hold on to the walking bus.
- Ensure children **DO NOT** let go of their strap at any time.
- One adult to be at the front, other at the back, ensure other adults spaced out along the line.
- On arrival at the road – two adults to stand either side of middle of the road to stop the traffic
- Adults to guide children across the road and safely back to nursery.



5. Safeguarding Policy

During a Forest School session, we are committed to taking all reasonable measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child in our care. We will do this by the practice of safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers working with children and by protecting each child from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another child. This policy will complement the whole school policy on Safeguarding, a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

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 any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay.
- To ensure that safe recruitment procedures are followed.
- To design and operate a procedure which promotes this policy and which, so far is possible, ensures that teachers and others who are innocent are not prejudiced by false allegations.
- To contribute to the operation of appropriate health and safety procedures.
- To have regard and to be consistent with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and guidance.
- Aim to ensure that all parents/carers can share their information in confidence and that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of the children.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other staff members except where it may affect planning for the child's individual needs. Personal information about children is to be kept securely.



Any volunteer or staff member who finds that a child is telling them something that concerns them should follow the course of action set out below:

1. Listen to the child but do **NOT** ask any 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 no limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure.
4. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the nursery as soon as possible.
5. Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation, including the date, the time, the place the conversation took place, the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence. Keep the record secure and hand it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Photographs

- Parent's permission will be sought before photographs are taken of children, either as individuals or in groups as per school guidelines.



6. Missing Child Policy

This policy will complement the whole school policy on the Missing Child, a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

Procedure

- Prior to the session a head count will be undertaken.
- This will be repeated at regular intervals during the session.
- The boundary areas will be established with the group. A staff member is to patrol the boundary areas at all times.
- In order to identify where children are during the session if away from the group, the Forest School leader or staff member will call '**1, 2, 3 where are you?**'. All staff and children are to return to the group. This call will be carried out regularly to establish whereabouts of child/children.
- If it becomes apparent that a child is missing, an adult will blow the emergency whistle to call the group together quickly and a head count will be taken.
- If a child appears to be missing, 2 adults to stay with the group whilst the remaining staff/volunteers 'sweep' the area.
- If a child is still missing, an adult is to alert the Police and inform the school **IMMEDIATELY**. The relevant information is to be found on the Forest School Leaders lanyard and on the FS rucksack.



7. Confidentiality Policy

This policy will complement the whole school policy on 'Confidentiality', a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

- All staff and volunteers must adhere to the nursery's Confidentiality Policy.
- Medical and personal information is to remain confidential.
- All adults must be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and kept confidential within the schools Forest School.
- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for the taking of photos and videos.
- Volunteers should only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader.
- As part of the permission to attend Forest School sessions, parents will be asked to agree to their child being photographed or filmed for observational, training or school promotion purposes.; any child without this permission will not be recorded in the school's Forest School information sheets.
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality
- Only the school mobile phone should be used for emergency purposes.
- Observations and assessments of the children attending will be kept in school and remain confidential to the teacher, and the child's family.
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity however this must be in strict confidence.



8. Behaviour Management Policy

This policy will complement the whole school policy on Behaviour Management, a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

Aims

- We are committed to establishing a learning environment in which children develop self-discipline and self-esteem as they take increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions, and as they consider the well-being of others.
- We actively promote positive behaviour, where children are encouraged to treat each other with care and respect.
- Forest School encourages positive behaviour by focusing on activities that require sharing, negotiation and co-operation.
- We encourage responsibility in caring for others and for the environment which includes showing respect to plants, trees and animals.
- We support children's self-esteem by encouraging them to be successful,
- Forest School requires all staff, volunteers and students to provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care, good manners and courtesy.
- We require all staff, volunteers and students to use positive strategies for handling any conflict by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development – for example distraction, praise and reward.
- When children behave in unacceptable ways, we help them to see what is wrong and how to cope more appropriately.
- Children who misbehave are given, where possible, one-to-one adult support in understanding what is wrong and in working towards a more desirable behaviour.
- Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children.
- Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session. These include: 'No pick, no lick, 'be careful how you carry a stick', staying within the designated areas at all times, etc.



9. Equality and Inclusion Policy

This policy will complement the whole school policy on Equality and Inclusion, a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

During a Forest School session:

- all children and adults will be treated equally regardless of ability, age, gender, culture or race.
- where possible, adjustments will be made to accommodate children with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues.
- all children will be included in all activities in a nurturing and caring environment.
- a range of different learning styles will be used to help promote independence during the activities.
- All those participating will be made to feel that their experiences and contributions are worthwhile.
- the value of working together harmoniously will be promoted, respecting others views and ideas.
- Forest School is a child led experience and wherever possible the children will be allowed to follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the woodland area.
- inclusion and equality will run through all forest school activities.



10. Children with Special Needs (SEND) Policy

We ensure that all children including those with special needs can participate in forest school sessions as its aim is to provide an appropriate learning opportunity for all children providing an environment in which all children are supported to reach their full potential. This policy will complement the whole school policy on Children with Special Needs (SEND), a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

Aims

- If needed, appropriate consultation between all relevant parties will be sought. Changes and adaptations can be made to the programme of activities to meet the child's specific needs.
- If the child has a one-to-one worker within the school, it is expected that they would accompany the child. They would not be counted within the staffing ratios.
- We aim to work in partnership with parents, the school and other agencies in meeting individual needs in order that they can access Forest School.
- We aim to adhere to the DFes Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and also the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs Act 2001)



11. Learning Outside the Classroom Policy

For the purpose of the Forest School sessions the following will apply:

- To celebrate our outdoor space and rich learning that can take place within it.
- For all children to use the outdoor area as a context for learning throughout the year.
- For all children to develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments
- For all children to develop their curiosity and understanding of their physical and human world.
- To provide a safe, stimulating outdoor environment where space is used effectively to enable children to explore a broad and balanced curriculum using a range of interesting resources suitable to their individual needs.
- To raise awareness of environmental issues and encourage children to care for their environment.
- Children are provided with a range of experiences that help develop key life skills, including personal learning, enquiry and thinking skills.
- All children have the opportunity to explore, grow and nurture plants.
- Children have the opportunity to engage with imaginative, investigative and creative play using the outdoors.
- Children are supported in taking risks within a safe and secure environment
- All pupils receive a wide range of opportunities to develop socially and emotionally as well as academically through outdoor learning and play.



12. Volunteers

Volunteers are very valuable to the safe running of a forest school session to ensure enough adults are available and are encouraged to engage and join in with the childrens' learning whilst in the woodland. We welcome any parent/carer as a volunteer ensuring that volunteers adhere to the following criteria –

- A volunteer must not take a child to the toilet. He/she is to alert a staff member who will assist the child.
- No volunteer is to be left alone with a child. This is to ensure the safety of the volunteer as well as the child.
- We ask that volunteers do not take their mobile phone to the woodland. Mobile phones can be left in the nursery office and collected on our return.



13. Weather Policy

- If the weather is extremely windy it is advisable not to hold the Forest School session in the woodland due to falling branches and trees on site. Session to be held in an alternative open area if possible, eg. on the playing fields.
- If the weather is not conducive to being outdoors, the session is to be held in the classroom. Many of our activities can be carried out inside, such as our team games so no child will miss out if conditions do not allow us to go out into the woodland.
- If the weather deteriorates during the Forest School session and the Forest School Leader feels it is unsafe to remain in the woodland, the session must move back to the school.



14. Clothing Policy

Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless deemed unsafe by the Forest School Leader.

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’

Suitable clothing is essential for all to be able to participate.

In their kits children should have:

- Long sleeved tee shirt
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Long socks, wellies or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.
- Please bring clothes in a named bag which should be taken home regularly to be washed.



15. Hygiene and Toileting Policy

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before we leave the nursery for the forest school session.
- Anti-bacterial wet wipes will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning.
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will be changed in accordance with the schools Personal Care Policy.
- A potette and sacks will be provided for toilet use in a designated area of the woodland.
- During snack time or cooking activities, food hygiene regulations will be adhered to.
- Children will wash hands using an antibacterial gel and sit in the designated area when consuming any food or drink.
- Drinking water will be supplied.



16. Emergency Action Plan and Prevention Procedures for Forest School

Prior to each session:

Each staff member and volunteer involved in the forest school session will be made aware of their role in the case of emergency and familiarise themselves with the emergency whistle and procedures. The named First Aider to be identified to all adults prior to the session.

Essential Items to take to Forest School:

For each forest school session the 'forest school truck' will be taken up to the woodland and will contain all the essential items needed:

- Register containing names, emergency contact numbers and any relevant medical information.
- The school's mobile phone with all contacts.
- Prescribed medication with written instructions if required.
- Emergency details for emergency services.
- Emergency Outdoor First Aid Kit and Burns Kit.
- Accident Form.
- Risk Assessments.
- Lesson plan for reference.
- Emergency Whistle.
- Welfare Kit containing tissues, hand gel and carrier bag.
- Snacks, drinks and cups (bin bag for rubbish).
- Bottle of water.

In Case of An Accident

- Immediate assistance is to be given to the injured/ill person.
- Assessment and intervention to be carried out.
- If emergency services are required immediately



- **DIAL 999**

Postcode:- SG5 1JB/

Grid Reference:- TL 184294

(to be given to emergency services)

- Otherwise contact school office for them to request an ambulance.
- First aider to stay with the injured person at all times. Named adult to go and direct Emergency Services to injured person.
- Forest School Leader/named adult to issue instructions to staff to gather all children to designated area eg. Fire Circle.
- School to contact child's parents/guardians/staff's next of kin.
- If injured child is on any medication this must go with them to the hospital.

Fire:

- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times.
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire.
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity.
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.



17. Communication Strategy Policy

Clear communication is essential for the smooth running of the forest school sessions:

- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the visit.
- Children and adults need to listen carefully to rules, boundaries and instructions, linked to safety procedures and activities.
- There will always be time for questions or comments from children and adults.
- All adults attending will have received a copy of the Emergency Action Plan which will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook, kept in the forest school truck.
- Any staff or volunteers attending forest school must meet prior to a session leaving to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a mobile phone for emergency use
- A copy of this Policy Handbook will be available on the school website.
- Parents will receive general information letters about forest school and the sessions provided via the school's newsletter.



18. Covid 19

Due to COVID19 and the essential need to prevent infection, the following measures have been put into place, subject to change, dependent on latest Government guidance and local guidelines in the event of a flare up of localised infection.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the nursery's COVID risk assessment and guidance.

- Up to 15 children max. to attend during each weekly session with 3 staff members plus FS leader.
- No parent helpers' due to possibility of infection.
- Good hygiene to be maintained on arrival at the woods and throughout the session by:
 - Washing hands thoroughly and frequently.
 - Hand sanitiser will be provided
 - Providing disposable tissues and disposing of correctly.
 - Each week a new pack of tissues will be used.
- Under normal circumstances food is not shared. A piece of fruit to be supplied by parent in a named bag and a named water bottle to be provided.
- Cups to be provided by the nursery and put through the dishwasher on return to nursery.
- Seating around the fire circle (for snack/group activities) to be spaced out to provide adequate space between each child and between children and the adults.
- Games that involve holding hands/touching to be adapted to avoid physical contact
- Clothing:
 - Parents to be informed of appropriate clothing for the weather – layers of long-sleeved t-shirt, long trousers, etc.
 - Children to take home the day before a set of nursery waterproofs for parent to get child ready prior to arriving for the following morning

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session if required.

Waterproofs/high-viz jackets to be washed at the nursery on return from the woods.

Parents to be advised to launder their child's clothes when the child goes home from nursery.

- Toileting Needs – Use of a portable potty, staff member to wear gloves when seeing to a child's toileting needs. Hand sanitiser to be used.
- Wash hands on arrival back at nursery.
- Equipment such as binoculars to not be used,
- Cleaning and disinfecting any touched objects.
- Social distancing cannot be guaranteed however the woodland provides lots of space for the children to naturally social distance as they explore.
- Any child/adult who develops a high temperature or even a mild cough must not attend a session and will be returned to nursery for pick up. Further isolation guidance to be followed.
- Shielded and clinically vulnerable children and adults should not attend the session.