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Forest School Handbook



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Forest School Policy

Forest School is built on 6 guiding principles:

1. Long Term and Regular
2. Development of a Relationship Between the Learner and the Natural World
3. Holist Development Fostering Resilient, Confident, Independent and Creative Learners
4. Opportunities to Take Supported Risks Appropriate to Learners and the Environment
5. Run by Qualified Practitioners Who Reflect on and Develop Their Own Practice
6. Learner-Centred, Creating a Community for Development and Learning

Forest School provides opportunities to explore and experience the natural world through practical pursuits, planned activities and unplanned self-guided play. The use of natural resources stimulates the imagination and provides opportunities for creativity and investigation. Attendees engage in motivating and challenging practical tasks throughout the year, in almost all weathers. They work with tools, play, take risks, and participate in group activities whilst developing an understanding and respect for nature. Forest School has been shown to foster resilience, confidence in own abilities, self-esteem, social and communication skills, and independence.

Forest School encourages children to:

- explore nature using all their senses
- develop physical skills
- use tools safely for creative or practical purposes
- evaluate and take risks in a managed environment
- develop language, communication and social skills
- overcome challenges and develop problem solving skills
- make decisions on their own learning experiences
- experience success and learn how to manage failure
- reflect on their own experiences and achievements
- time and space to follow and develop their own interests
- develop motivation and concentration

Best Practice Procedures

Before a Session

- Leaders will have access to any essential medical information (e.g. allergies) and any special education needs for each attendee to allow for appropriate planning if required.
- Equipment will be stored securely.
- Equipment will be brought out before the start of the session and will be inspected for damage before use.
- A risk assessment and check of the site and weather conditions will be carried out.

During a Session

- There will always be at least one leader trained to Forest School Level 3 on the site.
- The Forest School leader will have a mobile phone for emergency purposes and access to a first aid kit including a burns kit.
- There will be at least one additional adult on site who has a current enhanced DBS check for working with children may also have first aid training.
- A register of all attendees will be taken at the start of the session, with numbers checked throughout the session.
- Clothing will be assessed for suitability.
- All attendees are made aware of the basic set of safety rules for Forest School, including where the physical boundaries of the site/session are location and the behaviour expectations.
- Additional safety elements will be discussed for certain activities as they arise, such as fire lighting and tool use.
- The Forest School leader will supervise fire lighting and tool use with only a small number of children, and ensure the other adult knows the leader is occupied.
- Children will wash their hands before snack time and when leaving the site (and throughout the session if necessary).

At the End of a Session

- All equipment will be brought back to the storage area and all rubbish will be removed from the site.
- All children will be checked against the register before leaving.

Personal Protective Equipment Information

When attending a Forest School session, it's important to have clothing that is appropriate for the weather, time of year and location, as well as the right safety equipment.

General Clothing

- Clothing should be old or ones that are fine to get dirty or damaged.
- Light-coloured long-sleeved tops and trousers, throughout the year. These provide protection from biting insects including ticks, the sun, nettles/brambles etc.
- Waterproof trousers and jackets for wet weather situations, or when it's windy.
- Lots of layers when it's cold, including on your feet!
- Sensible footwear - wellies if it's really wet or walking boots. These protect against weather conditions and underfoot terrain.
- Sun hats and sun cream in summer.
- Woolly hats, gloves and warm socks when it's cold.
- High-vis jackets can be used for some sessions to make attendees easier to spot.
- Bring spare clothes if possible.

Specific Items Provided by the Forest School

- Strong gardening gloves for clearing nettles, brambles or thistles in the undergrowth.
- Cut-resistant gloves when using certain tools.
- Fire gloves or welder's gauntlets when fire-lighting, cooking over a fire or using a Kelly kettle. These are longer gloves that protect the wrist and forearms as well as the hands.
- Extra water available for putting out a fire.
- First Aid kit including burns kit.

Using Tools Procedures

Using tools and equipment is a part of Forest School and allows children to not only develop physical skills, but also enables them to assess and manage risk, enhance problem solving in practical tasks and develop confidence in their own abilities. Equipment and tools are chosen to provide suitable progression, sufficient challenge and variety to meet the interests of different children. Tools are introduced in a structured manner, with emphasis on safety by following these guidelines:

- Each type of tool/activity will have an individual risk assessment.
- A first aid kit will be available.
- Before using any tools, the Forest School leader will first assess the ability levels of the individuals at the session.
- Activities using tools will be adapted to ensure safe use.
- Every time tools are used, general safety rules around the use of tools will be explained.
- Every time tools are used, additional instructions and safety considerations for the specific tool will be discussed including where the tools will be used and the space needed around each tool user, the required protective equipment, how to walk with the tool and pass it on to someone else safely and how to replace any safety covers or catches.
- Tools will be checked for damage before use and will be maintained in good working order including be kept sharp.
- Tool use will be demonstrated by the Forest School leader.
- Tools will only be used under direct supervision of the Forest School leader, with low numbers of children working with tools at any one time (the actual number may vary with age and experience of tool users and which tools are being used).
- Each tool has a specific set of purposes that they will be used for.
- Children must not touch the blades of any tool.
- Appropriately sized gloves will be provided.
- The Forest School leader will ensure the correct gloves are worn depending on the tool being used.
- Children will know that if they are asked to put their tools down, they must make the tools safe (e.g. putting a knife back in its sheath, or closing and apply the catch on secateurs), then put them down.
- Children not using tools should be engaged in activities away from the tool use area.
- At the end of the session all tools must be accounted for and put away into locked storage.

Campfire Procedures

Fires are another important part of Forest School. Not only is the process of learning to light one a valuable lesson in resilience and useful for developing self-motivation, they are also a great centrepiece for reflection at the end of a session. These procedures aim to ensure that everyone participating in sessions where fires and/or Kelly kettles are used can do so safely and with the risks managed to an acceptable level:

- Fires and use of a Kelly kettle have individual risk assessments.
- A burns kit will always be available near the fire.
- Fires will be kept to an appropriate size for their use.
- Sufficient water to put out the fire will be kept near the fire.
- Before lighting a fire, or instructing anyone else to, the Forest School leader will first assess the ability levels of the individuals at the session to ensure they are able to understand and comply with the specific rules regarding movement around the fire.
- Every session in which a fire is lit, the safety rules around fires will be explained, including the use of fire gloves, movements around the fire area, numbers of people allowed in the fire area at any one time and who is allowed to add wood to the fire.
- Fires will only be lit in the designated area, which will be clearly marked out. Each time, the Forest School leader will reassess the site for suitability.
- Wind conditions will be monitored before a fire is lit and throughout the time when the fire is lit, and the activity will not go ahead if the wind is too strong.
- Long hair will need to be tied back and any dangling or very loose clothing will need to be removed or tucked in (e.g. ties, scarves or long toggles/tassels).
- Wood collected for the fire will be placed in piles according to thickness. Piles will be near the fire area, but not close enough to cause a tripping hazard near the fire, or to accidentally ignite.
- The process of lighting a fire will be demonstrated by the Forest School leader, including physical posture to allow for easy retreat if required.
- Fire-lighting will only be performed under direct supervision of the Forest School leader, with low numbers of children involved at any one time (the actual number may vary with age and experience of the children).
- All attendees will be informed when a fire is about to be lit, and a lit fire will not be left unattended.
- A Kelly kettle must be used only on flat, clear ground.
- The Forest School leader will ensure fire gloves are used when needed (feeding the fire, cooking over the fire, picking up cooking utensils, or lifting a Kelly kettle).
- Children not involved should be engaged in activities away from the fire area or seated near the fire area.
- Any fuel added to the fire must be placed on it, not thrown, and should not include any metal or plastic.
- Any food or hot drinks made over the fire will be cooled sufficiently before being given to children.
- If children are cooking food themselves (e.g. marshmallows), a glove will need to be worn, and only 2 or 3 children will be allowed near the fire at any one time.

- When finished, the fire will be put out completely using sufficient water to ensure there are no hot embers left. When cool, any ash or partly burnt wood can be distributed around the woodland.
- All methods of fire lighting must be put away securely at the end of the activity.

Hygiene Procedures

Toileting

- Children are encouraged to go to the toilet before coming to Forest School.
- Children needing the toilet during a session will be able to return to the school building with an accompanying adult – the nearest toilets are in the Year 4 area.

Handwashing

- Handwashing facilities will be used at each session where food and/or drink is prepared.
- Children will be encouraged to wash their hands when returning to the school at the end of a Forest School session.

Food Hygiene

- The Forest School leader will be made aware of any food allergies or dietary requirements in advance to ensure food is suitable for everyone to eat.
- At each session where food is prepared, at least one leader will have a Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene qualification.
- Before preparing any food, hands must be washed thoroughly.
- Any cuts must be covered with a blue waterproof plaster.
- Long hair must be tied back and any dangling clothing such as a tie or scarf should be removed.
- Uncooked food should be stored in clean plastic containers and kept cool if necessary.
- Cooked and uncooked food must be kept separately.
- Food must be prepared on a suitable surface (e.g. a chopping board or plate).
- Food must be cooked thoroughly.
- Any rubbish and food waste must be removed from the site at the end of the session.

Emergency and Serious Incident Procedures

Ambulance Procedure

Call the emergency service/s that you require on 112 from a mobile (or 999 from a landline).

Location of the nearest working landline if mobile not working/no signal is situated in the school office.

Notify the school as soon as possible.

Give as much information about the patient and their location as possible:

- Who has been injured?
- What their injuries are.
- If they have any medical conditions.
- Where on the site the patient is?
- The directions to the site and the patient.

Arrange for someone to stand in front of the school near the road until emergency assistance arrives.

Don't hang up until you are told to do so by the call taker.

Major Incident Procedure

- Session leader to attend to casualties immediately and administer first aid, according to their level of training.
- Ensure the rest of the group have 'tools down', the fire is out, and are safe with another adult. Seek the attention of another leader if possible.
- Assess the situation and distinguish between walking wounded (person is able to walk to get help e.g. broken arm), or a more serious accident (person is unable to walk e.g. unconscious). Attract the attention of additional adult participants if necessary, to contact the emergency services.
- Monitor incident and make notes while comforting casualty.
- When deemed safe, and if necessary, get the rest of the participants off the site until the emergency is dealt with.
- Inform the school of the situation as soon as possible.
- Complete incident report form. If it's for a child, a parent/guardian needs to sign this.
- If necessary, contact the child's parent/guardian to inform them and have them collect the child early if required.
- Session leaders to review incident, review session practice, and review the session rules and risk assessments to ensure. Report to RIDDOR for any major incidents.

Lost Child Procedure

The following procedure should be instigated and followed by the session leader responsible for a group in the event of any person (adult or child) going missing from the group.

- Carry out “1, 2, 3 back to base” routine to bring everyone to the seating area.
- Conduct a head count to check that all other members of the group are present.
- Have any other leaders or volunteers stay with the group at the gathering circle and await further instructions.
- Confirm missing persons name and how they were dressed.
- Send all available adults to search the immediate area for an agreed length of time (e.g. 10 minutes), whilst calling the person’s name.
- Ensure that each of the searchers has a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life.
- Searchers should stay within an area they know and be aware of their own safety.
- If the missing person is not found in the agreed length of time, everyone should regroup at the gathering point.
- Everyone should walk back to the school.
- The head teacher and other staff should be alerted and the school’s policy relating to a missing child should be implemented.

Areas for search:

- The main areas of the site.
- Inside any dens or structures that may have been built during the session.
- Both storage sheds.
- The pond area.
- The school playground and playing field.
- All toilet facilities in school.
- All classrooms and cloakrooms in school.

After the incident is over, complete a full report using the incident report form.

Out of Control Fire Procedure

In the event of a fire that cannot be put out quickly and safely by the session leaders, alert the group.

- Gather everyone together, conduct a head count and evacuate area to a safe location on the playground.
- Inform the school of the situation.
- Instruct one person to call the fire brigade and give directions to the site.
- Arrange for someone to stand at the front of the school to direct emergency services.

Session leaders to review incident, review session practice, and review the session rules and risk assessments.

Minor Incident Procedure

- Injured participant assessed by first aid trained session leader.
- Treat as required (within the training of the first aider), gaining additional assistance if necessary (additional support from another leader if appropriate).
- Fill in an incident report form to record incident. It is also important to log any 'near miss' accidents to monitor these. This is kept with the First Aid kit.
- When possible, refill any used items from the First Aid kit.
- School office to be informed.
- Session leaders to review incident, review session practice, and review the session rules and risk assessments.

General Emergency Action Plan

In the event of a serious incident (that may not be covered by the above eventualities) the procedure below will be followed:

- The session leader will stop the children immediately and remove the group from the hazard, danger or the injured party.
- One adult will ensure the safety of the group at all times.
- A First Aider will give first aid to any injured person.
- An additional adult may be asked to seek help/phone emergency services if required and inform the school.
- If the injured party is an adult or the session leader, one adult helper will ensure the safety of the children whilst another adult will seek help (additional adult may be participant if required).

Daily Operating Procedures

Before, during and after each session it is the Forest School leader's responsibility to make sure the following checks have been performed.

Before the Session

- Check the required number of adults are available.
- Check the numbers and names of children expected and any medical conditions or additional needs to be aware of.
- Check the weather forecast for the day.
- Check all emergency procedure information is on site, along with the first aid kit.
- Check mobile phones have sufficient battery.
- Perform the daily site risk assessment to make sure the site is safe to use.
- Erect shelter if necessary.
- Set up fire square if necessary.
- Use the session plan to collect together and set up any resources and activities, including additional water if fire activities are planned.
- Check through any risk assessments for specific activities and resources and make sure the tools and resources are in good working order.
- Set up hand washing station.
- Set up boundary tags.

At the Start of the Session

- Take a register and make sure everyone is dressed appropriately.
- Walk to the seating area in the site.
- Safety briefing and introduction to the available activities.

During the Session

- Model the expected behaviour and safe use of tools.
- Continuously assess risks, make observations and monitor movements of the children.

At the End of the Session

- Tidy up activities and make sure all tools have been returned safely.
- Gather together and wash hands ready for a story, snack and reflection activity.
- Check numbers are correct.

After the Session

- Put out fire, clean tools and pack resources back into storage shed.
- Top up any resources that may be running low (e.g. soap, snacks, wipes, anything used from the first aid kit)
- Check of site to make sure all rubbish has been collected to be taken off site and disposed of properly.
- Reflect on and evaluate the session, especially with regards to children's interests, to help plan future sessions.

Cancellation Procedures

Forest School sessions are outdoors and usually go ahead whatever the weather. However, there are some situations under which a session may need to be cancelled. It is up to the Forest School leader to decide if a planned session can go ahead or should be cancelled. If a session is cancelled, it is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to make arrangements to inform all attendees as soon as possible.

Circumstances where a session would have to be cancelled:

- If no Forest School leader is available.
- If too few additional adults are available to run the session.
- If the site is deemed unusable or unsafe (e.g. due to flooding or damaged trees)
- In extreme weather conditions (such as winds of about 40mph or above (see chart) or thunderstorms). High winds and strong gusts must be monitored closely.

Scale	Description	Miles per hour	Effects	Risk
0	Calm	0-1	Smoke rises	Low
1	Light air	1-3	Smoke drifts	Low
2	Light breeze	4-7	Leaves rustle	Low
3	Gentle breeze	8-12	Twigs move	Low
4	Moderate breeze	13-18	Leaves and small branches sway	Low
5	Fresh breeze	18-24	Small trees sway	Low
6	Strong breeze	25-31	Large branches sway	Low
7	Moderate gale	32-37	Whole trees in motion	Low
8	Fresh gale	39-46	Twigs break off trees	Low
9	Strong gale	47-55	Branches break off trees	Low
10	Whole gale	56-64	Trees uprooted	Low
11	Storm	65-74	Widespread damage	Low
12	Hurricane	75+	Devastation	Low

Risk Assessments and Risk-Benefit Assessments

It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to ensure that attendees have exciting, challenging and engaging play opportunities whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unacceptable risk of harm, such as death or serious injury. We aim to provide an environment with well-managed risks to encourage the development of attendee's own risk awareness and management, self-esteem, independence and motivation. In order that these aims can be met, the session leader will:

- Carry out full risk assessments on each site where sessions will take place.
- Carry out full risk assessments or risk benefit assessments for the different activities that take place.
- Carry out additional risk assessments for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour require them.
- Perform pre-session safety sweeps (daily site checks) prior to the session commencing and as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical.
- Consistently apply the following approach to risk assessment:
 - 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 regular amendments to the generic risk assessments based on site visits or observations.
- Review the assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change which may affect the assessment such as if an accident or near miss occurs) and revise as necessary.
- Inform the attendees of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise the risk.
- Involve the attendees in risk assessment, as appropriate, as a part of the learning process.
- Ensure legal guidelines are met (e.g. having adequate insurance and parental permission).
- Ensure that all attendees are aware of the emergency procedures for the site.
- Be responsible for making sure everyone knows the general safety rules as well as teaching attendees adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe.
- Ensure all risk assessments, emergency procedures, emergency contact details and medical information is on site during a session.

Health and Safety Policy

Statement of Intent

The governments HSE (Health and Safety Executive) states that if you have fewer than five employees you do not have to have a written policy for managing health and safety (www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/policy/index.htm).

However, we will comply with the Health and Safety Act 1974 and understand that all of our session activities, and the outdoor sites we use, have risks associated with them. Our health and safety policy aims to:

- Prevent accidents to leaders and session attendees
- Manage health and safety risks on the sites we use
- Provide instructions, information and training to ensure leaders are competent to run sessions
- Consult with other leaders on matters affecting their health and safety
- Ensure safe handling and use of equipment and substances
- Implement emergency procedures

Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for health and safety lies with the Forest School leader. It is the responsibility of all session leaders to ensure this policy is put into practice during sessions.

All leaders should:

- Co-operate with each other on health and safety matters
- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety
- Take reasonable care of the health and safety of session attendees
- Report all health and safety concerns

Arrangements

To help keep all sessions as safe as possible (but without removing completely the learning element of attendees understanding and managing risks appropriate to their age and developmental stage), we have a series of risk assessments related to both activities provided at our sessions, and the location of the sessions themselves. These risk assessments are continuously monitored and updated when appropriate. We require at least one leader at each session to have a valid outdoor first aid and paediatric first aid qualification. We also ensure that any leader participating in an activity, or teaching an activity to others, has the appropriate training or experience to enable them to understand any risks and manage them safely.

Accident Policies and Procedures

Accident and First Aid Policy

Our policy and procedures for accidents and first aid will adhere to The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981.

- The session leaders hold up to date outdoor first aid qualifications alongside up to date paediatric first aid qualifications.
- The person responsible for reporting accidents, incidents or near misses is the first aid trained member of staff who witnesses the accident.
- They must record it in the Accident book and report it to the session leader and the school. It should be done as soon as the accident is dealt with, while the details are still clearly remembered.
- The session leader will check the accident book weekly for any possible patterns to be identified e.g. an accident occurring in the same place. This will be recorded in a separate file. Any patterns will be investigated and addressed, if necessary, by the Forest School leader.
- The session leader has access to a First Aid kit which is always on site.
- Our policy and procedures for accidents and first aid will be followed by all session leaders in accordance with The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981.
- If a serious accident, incident or near miss were to occur at or within the vicinity of our site, a RIDDOR record and near miss report will be created. The session leader and accompanying adults have full knowledge of and will pay regard to the contents of this Accident and First Aid Policy.

Accident Procedure – If a Child Is Injured or Becomes Unwell

- Session leader to attend to casualties immediately and administer first aid, according to their level of training.
- Ensure the rest of the group stop 'risky' activities ('tools down', the fire is out, and are safe with another adult). Seek the attention of another leader or adult if possible.
- Assess the situation:
 - Minor incident – cuts, grazes, minor burns, falls from low height but with no evidence of a break) – follow [Minor Incident Procedure](#).
 - Medium incident – more serious accident, but child is able to walk to get help e.g. broken arm) – follow [Minor Incident Procedure](#) or [Major Incident Procedure](#).
 - Major incident – child is unable to walk e.g. unconscious – attract the attention of additional adults if necessary and contact the emergency services using the [Ambulance Procedure](#).
- Monitor incident and make notes while comforting casualty.
- If necessary, contact the child's parent/guardian to inform them and have them collect the child early if required.
- When deemed safe, and if necessary, get the rest of the participants off the site until the accident is dealt with.
- Inform the school and complete accident report form. Child's parent/guardian to sign form and be given a copy.

- Session leaders to review incident, review session practice, and review the session rules and risk assessments to ensure. Report to RIDDOR for any major incidents.

Accident Procedure – If an Adult Is Injured or Becomes Unwell

- Session leader to attend to casualties immediately and administer first aid, according to their level of training.
- Ensure the rest of the group stop 'risky' activities ('tools down', the fire is out, and are safe with another adult). Seek the attention of another leader or adult if possible.
- Assess the situation:
 - Minor incident – cuts, grazes, minor burns, falls from low height but with no evidence of a break) – follow Minor Incident Procedure.
 - Medium incident – more serious accident, but person is able to walk to get help e.g. broken arm) – follow Minor Incident Procedure or Major Incident Procedure.
 - Major incident – person is unable to walk e.g. unconscious – attract the attention of additional adults if necessary (including the land owners at Plum Cottage) and contact the emergency services using the Ambulance Procedure.
 - Forest School leader is injured – session must end. Other adult to organise attendees and contact additional adults if necessary.
- Monitor incident and make notes while comforting casualty.
- When deemed safe, and if necessary, get the rest of the participants off the site until the accident is dealt with.
- Inform the school and complete accident report form.
- Session leaders to review incident, review session practice, and review the session rules and risk assessments. Report to RIDDOR for any major incidents.

Allergies, Allergic Reactions and Medication Procedure

- The session leader and accompanying adults have full knowledge of, and will pay regard to the contents of our policy and procedures for attendees who have allergies and allergic reactions, which may relate to food/plant/insect allergies etc. Leaders will be made aware of the signs and symptoms of a possible allergic reaction in case of an unknown or first reaction in an attendee. These may include a rash or hives, nausea, stomach pain, diarrhoea, itchy skin, runny eyes, shortness of breath, chest pain, swelling of the mouth or tongue, swelling to the airways to the lungs, wheezing and anaphylaxis.
- The session leader and accompanying adults have full knowledge of and will pay regard to the contents of our risk assessments relating to the outdoor environment.
- For some attendees, their inhaler/medication may need to be immediately accessible during an activity, in which case the session leader will be aware of the medication, but the child or their attending adult will look after this medication and ensure it is taken correctly.

Manual Handling

- Correct handling techniques must be followed to minimise the risks of injury. A variety of injuries may result from poor manual handling.
- The session leader is responsible for modelling safe manual handling to the attendees and assessing their age and ability whether it is safe and appropriate for them to move loads such as logs or rocks, due to the weight, size and shape, taking into consideration factors such as weather conditions.

Incidents and Near Misses

Any incidents or accidents occurring during a session should be dealt with by the Forest School leader, or another leader with the appropriate first aid training, in accordance with the [Emergency and Serious Incident Procedures](#) or [Accident and Emergency Policies and Procedures](#). In all cases, an accident report form must be filled in as soon after the incident is under control as possible.

All 'near miss' incidents – where an accident could have happened but was narrowly missed – should also be logged on an incident report form.

Logging accidents and near misses provide insight into how well risks and hazards are identified and controlled for. Over time patterns could form as to how or when things go wrong. These can be used to amend session practice, session rules and risk assessments to prevent or reduce the potential for similar incidents to occur in the future.

It's also important to keep an accurate record to be able to provide information if legal investigations or insurance claims are instigated.

The school should also be informed.

Policy on Checking Criminal Records

Safe Recruitment

To reduce the risk of abuse to children and the likelihood of allegations being made that are founded, every organisation should have clear and rigorous recruitment procedures. These procedures **should always** include the following:

- All prospective workers (paid or unpaid) should complete an application form which asks for details of previous employment and the names of two referees. Referees should be reminded that they should not misrepresent the candidate or omit to say things that may be relevant to their employment.
- All prospective workers (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity with children must have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before they start work – anyone who refuses to do so should not be employed (for more information on what is classed as regulated activity with children, please visit: <https://www.ucheck.co.uk/what-does-regulated-activity-mean/>)
- **Nobody** should start work before positive references have been received and the DBS process completed with a disclosure certificate received.
- All appointments to work with children should be subject to a probationary period.
- New members of staff should be clear about their responsibilities and wherever possible work to an agreed job description.
- These guidelines should be made available for all staff members and volunteers and be a part of any induction process.

Safeguarding Children Policy

Introduction

We recognise our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within the framework of the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and *Working together to safeguard children A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children - March 2015*, which states that:

“Voluntary organisations and private sector providers play an important role in delivering services to children. They should have the arrangements described in paragraph 4 of this chapter in place in the same way as organisations in the public sector, and need to work effectively with the LSCB. Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns and make a referral to local authority children’s social care or the police if necessary”.

It is difficult to acknowledge that abuse or harm could take place within your organisation but any group working with children is vulnerable. It is the responsibility of all of us to put the welfare of children and young people first, and to recognise behaviours that can put children at risk. Under the terms of the Children Act 2004, anyone up to the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.

All Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations need to have appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. These arrangements should include:

- Procedures for staff and others to report concerns they may have about the children they meet that are in line with the East Riding Safeguarding Children’s Partnership procedures
- Appropriate codes of practice for staff, particularly those working directly with children
- Recruitment procedures in accordance with Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme. Working Together to Safeguard Children Guide to Inter Agency Working, and the East Riding Safeguarding Children Partnership (www.erscp.co.uk)
- Training and Supervision of staff (both paid and voluntary).

We are aware that many children and young people are the victims of different kinds of abuse and that they can be subjected to social factors that can have an adverse impact upon their lives, such as domestic violence, parental substance misuse or neglect.

We aim to create a safe and fun environment within which children and young people can thrive in the security of clear guidance.

These guidelines are for the use of all paid staff, volunteers, visitors and the parents and carers of the children and young people we offer a service to and through them, we will endeavour to ensure that:

- Children and young people are listened to, valued and respected
- All paid staff and volunteers are subject to rigorous recruitment procedures and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance
- All paid staff and volunteers are given appropriate child protection training, support and, where appropriate, supervision.

The Guidelines are divided in to the following sections:

- Understanding & Recognising Signs of Abuse

- What to do with your concerns and how to respond to a child wanting to talk about abuse
- Allegations made against staff
- Safe Recruitment
- Good Practice
- Safe Behaviour Do's and Don'ts
- Safeguarding children in the East Riding of Yorkshire
- Contacts

All child protection concerns should be acted upon immediately. If you are concerned that a child is at risk of or actually suffering abuse, you should tell the designated Safeguarding Children Officer within your Organisation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school is:

Chantelle Amor – 01430 430385

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school is:

Lee Hill – 01430 430385

The Designated Safeguarding Leads for our organisation are:

Sally Blee – 07870 246702

Josie Twiddle – 07907 925875

If the designated officers are not available, you must speak to a senior member of staff. In an emergency, or if you do not agree with the decision made by your Designated Safeguarding Lead, you can make a referral directly yourself.

Referrals can be made by calling:

Universal

Families Information Service (FISH)

Tel: (01482) 396469

Email: fish@eastriding.gov.uk

Additional

Please contact the child or young person's local ERYC Early Help Locality Hubs (01482) 391700

- Bridlington: ehp.bridlington@eastriding.gov.uk
- Beverley: ehp.beverley@eastriding.gov.uk
- Goole: ehp.goole@eastriding.gov.uk
- Anlaby: ehp.haltemprice@eastriding.gov.uk
- Hedon: ehp.holderness@eastriding.gov.uk
- Driffield: ehp.wolds@eastriding.gov.uk

Intensive and Specialist

ERY Children's Safeguarding Hub (01482) 395500

Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5pm, Friday 8.30am -4:30pm.

Out of hours (01482) 393939

NB: If a child is suffering abuse and requires urgent attention because of immediate danger, call the Police on 999.

Understanding and Recognising Signs of Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in

sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

There are also additional areas of safeguarding children that we must be aware of, these are:

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Radicalisation (Prevent)

Self-harm and suicide prevention

Online safety

We will ensure that all staff or volunteers working with children or young people attend training on the above to gain a better understanding of the associated risks and issues. For further information on training available we will use:

The East Riding Safeguarding Children Partnership (ERSCP) website:

<http://www.erscp.co.uk/training/>

What to Do With Your Concerns

In the event that a child or young person makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse about an adult or another child or young person it is important that you:

- Listen to them and/or closely observe their presentation and behaviour
- Do not try to question the child in detail. If a child tells you someone has hurt them, listen carefully and explain that you will have to tell someone else who will help them to stop this happening. Tell them that you believe them.
- Make a note of what is said as soon as possible, remembering the exact words used if you can. Do not make judgements, rather evidence based recordings. Sign and date your notes.
- Inform your Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible
- Where possible it is good practice to inform the parent/carer of the disclosure and referral, however, **do not inform the person named as the abuser if you feel this might place the child at risk of further harm.**
- Do not discuss concerns/allegations/disclosures with other people. The child/young person and family have a right to confidentiality with only people who 'need to know' sharing the information.

Sometimes you may just feel concerned about a child but do not know whether to share your concerns or not. In this situation you should always raise your concerns with your Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will help you decide what to do.

It is not however the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead or other staff to investigate suspected abuse.

The responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse, whether they result from the disclosure of a child or young person or the concerns of an adult, lies with the local Safeguarding Children Team, including the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) and police officers from the Protecting Vulnerable People Unit (PVPU). It is normally the responsibility of your Designated Safeguarding Lead to make a referral to these agencies but if you judge the situation to be urgent and/or you require immediate advice you can report your concerns directly.

Either the local Safeguarding Children Team, LADO or the PVPU officer will advise you if or when to inform the child's parents or carers about any concerns. If they decide to pursue a child protection investigation you should:

- Work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, to keep the child safe.
- Attend a child protection conference, if you are invited, where you will be asked to provide information about your involvement with the child. This is one of the reasons why it is important to keep dated records of your concerns.
- Attend any subsequent child protection conferences.

You can find out more detail about the identification of abuse and what to do about it from your local Safeguarding Children Partnership website: **East Riding:** www.erscp.co.uk.

Allegations Made Against Staff

All organisations that work or come in to contact with children and young people need to be aware of the possibility that allegations may be made against members of their staff or volunteers. Allegations will usually be that some kind of abuse has taken place. They may be made by a child, young person or another concerned adult. Allegations may be made for a variety of reasons, some of them being that:

- Abuse has actually taken place
- Something happens to a child that reminds them of an event that happened in the past – the child is unable to recognise that the people and situation are different
- Your language or actions are misinterpreted by a child or young person because they are reminded of someone else
- Some children know how powerful an allegation can be and, if they are angry or upset with you, have made the allegation as a way of hitting out
- An allegation can be a way of seeking attention.

It may be difficult to accept that abuse could occur in your organisation or that the person being named could be responsible, but **all allegations should be brought to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately**. In cases where the allegation is against the co-ordinator the complaint should be taken to a more senior member of the organisation or you should take the following action yourself:

- Make sure that the child or young person is safe and away from the person alleged to have abused them.
- Contact the East Riding Safeguarding Children Team, including the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) as explained above.
- Contact the parents/carers of the child if advised to do so by the social worker or police officer in charge of the investigation.
- Irrespective of any investigation by local Safeguarding Children Unit, LADO or the police, you should follow the appropriate disciplinary procedures. Common practice is for the alleged abuser to be suspended from attending the organisation or workplace until the outcome of any investigation is known (however, please seek advice from the LADO and the police as at what stage a suspension should take place in order to ensure that any evidence is not lost or compromised).
- Consider whether the alleged abuser has access to children anywhere else and whether those organisations or groups need to be informed.
- Act upon the decisions made in any strategy decision.

All incidents should be investigated internally, after any external investigation has finished to review practice and put in place any additional measures to prevent a similar thing happening again.

It is important that you also develop support systems for the person who faces an allegation. If your organisation has a management committee it could be that a member is nominated to fulfil this role. As well as providing immediate support advice could be given on accessing appropriate outside help such as counselling or legal services.

It is good practice for organisations to develop and encourage an environment where people feel safe to express their concerns about the practice of others. If a staff member, volunteer or participant has concerns they should not be victimised in any way for expressing them.

Good Practice

All voluntary and community sector organisations should:

- Have a written Safeguarding Children Policy – showing commitments
- Identify a Designated Safeguarding Lead, preferably 2, who must undergo safeguarding children training acceptable to ERSCP
- Display the name and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead in a place accessible to all, including children, young people, parents and carers, so that they are aware of who to talk to if there are any concerns;
- Ensure that all staff working with children should attend basic child protection training and should have regular supervision from a more experienced staff member;
- Observe Health and Safety Regulations through risk assessments and written, safe working practices;
- Train someone in First Aid and have a fully stocked First Aid box
- Have an accident/incident reporting procedure
- Have an attendance register for every tutor/group leader if there are classes/activity sessions being run
- Encourage Management Committee members to visit classes/sessions unannounced
- Make sure everyone involved in the organisation actively promotes a culture of openness, where everyone (including children and young people) feels free to share their views and concerns
- Deal with any allegation about a child or adult in a confidential manner and only share the information with those who need to know
- Not allow any member of staff to be left alone with a child/children where they cannot be observed by others
- Not, under any circumstances, allow visitors to wander around the premises unaccompanied when there are children and young people present
- Endeavour, where possible, that there should always be at least two members of staff/volunteers with a group of children – It is vital that the ratio of child to adult is adequate to ensure safety. For children under 8 no more than 1:8 and under 5 no more than 1:6
- Be alert to strangers frequently waiting outside a venue with no apparent purpose. Children should not be collected by anybody other than their parents unless prior notification has already been received
- Inform staff and volunteers that if a child has not been collected after a session it is reasonable to wait for at least half an hour. If the parent or carer has still not arrived and cannot be contacted they should contact the nearest duty team or the police and request advice and assistance
- Talk to young people and encourage their involvement and participation.

Safe Behaviour Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Treat everyone with respect
- Provide an example you want others to follow
- Encourage children, young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they don't like
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with children and young people and are unacceptable within a relationship of trust
- Respect a child or young person's right to personal privacy, protection and safe environment
- Provide access and space for children and young people to talk about concerns they may have
- Listen to children and young people

DON'T

- Permit abusive peer activities (for example, ridiculing, bullying, name calling)
- Have any inappropriate physical contact with children or young people
- Show favouritism to any individual
- Rely on your good name to protect you
- Let suspicion, disclosure or allegations of abuse, go unrecorded or unreported
- Jump to conclusions without checking facts
- Believe 'it could never happen here'
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'

Safeguarding Children

As outlined in *Working Together* the East Riding Safeguarding Children Partnership (ERSCP) is responsible for coordinating the arrangements made by statutory and voluntary local organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The ERSCP will also approach individual organisations as and when their advice and experience in particular areas could be valuable to the production of guidance and information to the public.

The ERSCP coordinates free inter-agency and online training programmes on child protection related topics. The diary and booking forms for these courses can be accessed via www.erscp.co.uk. It is recommended that all Designated Safeguarding Leads, senior officials and those working or volunteering directly with children and/or young people attend one or more of these courses. This will enable you to gain the knowledge necessary and increase your confidence to be able to offer advice and consultancy within your organisation.

Contacts

Effective support for children, young people and families in East Riding of Yorkshire.

If a child is suffering abuse and requires urgent attention because of immediate danger, call the Police on 999.

Universal

Families Information Service (FISH)

Tel: **(01482) 396469**

Email: fish@eastriding.gov.uk

Additional

Please contact the child or young person's local ERYC Early Help Locality Hubs **(01482) 391700**

- Bridlington: ehp.bridlington@eastriding.gov.uk
- Beverley: ehp.beverley@eastriding.gov.uk
- Goole: ehp.goole@eastriding.gov.uk
- Anlaby: ehp.haltemprice@eastriding.gov.uk
- Hedon: ehp.holderness@eastriding.gov.uk
- Driffield: ehp.wolds@eastriding.gov.uk

Intensive and Specialist

ERY Children's Safeguarding Hub **(01482) 395500**

Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5pm, Friday 8.30am -4:30pm.

Out of hours **(01482) 393939**

Effective support for children, young people and families in East Riding of Yorkshire.

SUPPORT CONTACT DETAILS

Universal - FISH

eastriding.gov.uk (01482) 396469 fish@eastriding.gov.uk

Additional - ERYC Early Help Locality Hubs

(01482) 391700

Bridlington: ehp.bridlington@eastriding.gov.uk

Beverley: ehp.beverley@eastriding.gov.uk

Goole: ehp.goole@eastriding.gov.uk

Anlaby: ehp.haltemprice@eastriding.gov.uk

Hedon: ehp.holdemess@eastriding.gov.uk

Driffield: ehp.wolds@eastriding.gov.uk

Intensive and Specialist - ERY Children's Safeguarding Hub

(01482) 395500

Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5pm, Friday 8.30am-4.30pm.

Out of hours (01482) 393939

If a child is suffering abuse and requires urgent attention because of immediate danger, call the Police on 999.



The East Riding Effective Support Windscreen

ERSCP multi-agency partners will work with children, young people and their families to provide support at the least intrusive level. Support may move across levels according to identified needs.

Implementation Checklist

These child protection procedures will only be effective if all of the staff and volunteers in your organisation understand and own them:

- Identify two designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) for your organisation
- Add DSL's name and contact details to this procedure
- Ensure DSL's attend training on child protection and update that training regularly
- Ensure DSL's name and contact details are posted where they can be seen by children, young people, their parents or carers
- Ensure all staff and volunteers have a copy of the procedures
- Ensure all staff and volunteers know what to do if they have concerns about a child or young person
- Ensure all existing staff and volunteers who have contact with children have an up to date enhanced DBS check
- Ensure that all new staff and volunteers who have contact with children have enhanced DBS disclosures before they start work
- Ensure that the premises used for your organisation/activity conform to health and safety guidelines
- Ensure that any letting arrangements are bound by contracts that include an agreement to adhere to the host organisation's child protection procedures
- Have an accident/incident reporting procedure
- Have an accident/incident reporting book
- Have trained First Aid personnel
- Have a current First Aid kit

Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing

'Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers' (2008) is aimed at supporting good practice in information sharing by offering clarity on when and how information can be shared legally and professionally in order to achieve improved outcomes. It can be especially useful in supporting early intervention and preventative work where decisions about information sharing may be less clear than in safeguarding or child protection situations. Below are the 7 golden rules of information sharing that this guidance recommends.

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. From the outset be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
4. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgements on the facts of the case.
5. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reason for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Inclusion Policy

We will welcome adults and children from all backgrounds and levels of attainment. However, some of our sites are in a woodland environment. By their very nature it may be difficult for wheelchair users and people with physical disabilities to gain access to the site. If required, efforts will be made to enable access as much as reasonably acceptable given the uneven ground.

We recognise and accept our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- have a written inclusion policy
- not discriminate against attendees protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or due to their ability including SEND.
- not ask health-related questions unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the activity.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedures

Aims

This policy aims to ensure fair treatment of all users within our Forest School sessions. It should be read in conjunction with the “Definitions” at the end of this section. It is the responsibility of all staff to always promote equality of opportunity. The session leader and accompanying adults have full knowledge of and will pay regard to the contents of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedures.

- We strive to ensure our sessions are child led - the children are encouraged by adults to follow their own interests. All adults should demonstrate to the children respect for each other and their environment, encouraging children to do the same.
- Whilst in a Forest School session we will ensure that opportunities for learning and development are available to all. Discrimination of any kind is not acceptable, no child or adult will be discriminated due to their protected characteristics, these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or due to their ability including SEND.
- We aim for all children to feel appreciated, and that their ideas and contributions to the sessions are welcomed. Within the sessions we aim to raise children’s confidence and self-esteem through well thought out activities.

Our aim is:

- To treat all people with equal value
- That everyone be treated with understanding and respect

Everyone who is involved with our Forest School sessions is assured that we do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of their protected characteristics, these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or their nationality, physical or mental ability, language, class, political beliefs, or personal circumstances.

We will actively oppose and tackle all forms of direct and indirect discrimination carried out on any grounds.

Everyone who is a member of and who works or volunteers in our sessions is expected to carry out their responsibilities and duties with due regard to the equal opportunities policy ensuring fairness towards others.

Definitions

1. Types of Discrimination ('Protected Characteristics')

It is against the law to discriminate anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

These are called 'protected characteristics'.

You're protected from discrimination:

- at work
- in education
- as a consumer
- when using public services
- when buying or renting property
- as a member or guest of a private club or association

You're legally protected from discrimination by the [Equality Act 2010](#).

You're also protected from discrimination if:

- you're associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example a family member or friend
- you've complained about discrimination or support someone else's claim

Action Against Discrimination

You can do something voluntarily to help people with a protected characteristic. This called 'positive action'.

Taking positive action is legal if people with a protected characteristic:

- are at a disadvantage
- have particular needs
- are under-represented in an activity or type of work

2. How You Can Be Discriminated Against

Discrimination can come in one of the following forms:

- direct discrimination – treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others
- indirect discrimination – putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage
- harassment – unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them
- victimisation – treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment

Disability Discrimination Policy

We are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The organisation – in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities – is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

Purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time, full-time or voluntary
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in:
 - pay and benefits
 - terms and conditions of employment
 - dealing with grievances and discipline
 - dismissal
 - redundancy
 - leave for parents
 - requests for flexible working
 - selection for employment, promotion, training or other development opportunities

Commitments

We commit to:

- Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- Creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

- Taking seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

- Making opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- Making decisions concerning staff based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Reviewing employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also updating them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitoring the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Teaching and Learning Policy

Aims

Our aim is to enable children to become resilient, resourceful, and responsible, with improved self-confidence, and practical skills. We want to create an environment where children develop a good attitude to learning that can be transferred to other situations, such as the classroom.

Through this policy we aim to promote best practice to ensure that children are provided with high quality learning experiences.

The Learning Environment

Forest School leaders are responsible for providing a caring, supportive and stimulating learning environment in which all children are helped to reach their full potential.

Children learn best when they feel safe to take on challenges, are interested and motivated and feel valued. We recognise the importance of building positive self-esteem in children.

The essentials of positive self-esteem:

- Belonging: each child has a contribution to make, we value and encourage these.
- Aspirations: all children are encouraged to work towards goals that are achievable for them.
- Safety: Consistency in expectations and standards help children feel safe. Clear boundaries are set and good behaviour is expected.
- Identity: a sense of self-knowledge is supported by the belief that individuality is not threatened by undue pressure to conform. We respect difference and encourage children to learn from others.
- Challenge: acquiring coping strategies is an important part of development and learning. Children are taught to take risks and learn through mistakes.
- Success: leaders can reinforce success and build an environment where risks can be taken. Success is celebrated as part of our reflection activities.

The Physical Environment

There are positive effects on standards and motivation of children associated with the physical environment. We arrange our site to make it an exciting, stimulating and welcoming place to be by:

- Spreading the activities out where possible to encourage children to explore different areas of the site.
- Providing different activities dependent on the current interests of the children.
- Making sure that when craft activities require instructions (for inspiration), the text is simple to encourage children to explore them independently.
- Teaching, and expecting, children to respect and care for their environment.
- Providing an inviting quiet area and book corner.
- Creating role play areas (where and when relevant).

The Learning Journey

The Forest School leader is responsible for the planning, preparation and delivery of sessions which provide opportunities to enable children to develop practical skills, emotional skills and to enhance their wellbeing. This is achieved by first getting to know each individual child, to understand their current developmental stages and interests. We also recognise that children have different learning styles so we plan and deliver a range of activities with different multi-sensory elements. The Forest School leader must create a secure and friendly environment in which good behaviour is encouraged, and children feel safe to take risks, interact with others, explore their environment and have the time and space to take ownership of their own learning journey.

Equal Opportunities

Forest School activities should be sufficiently differentiated to ensure all children can access them. Forest School leaders must take account of SEND, gifted and talented, and language stage needs when planning sessions to ensure learning opportunities are provided which match children's ability and potential.

Special Educational Needs Policy

Definition of Special Educational Needs

In this policy, 'special educational needs' refers to a learning difficulty that requires special educational provision.

The SEN Code of Practice (updated May 2015) says children have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age.
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

Identifying and assessing SEN for children or young people whose first language is not English requires particular care. Difficulties related solely to limitations in English as an additional language are not SEN.

Definition of Special Educational Provision

For children aged two or more, special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age by mainstream schools or maintained nursery schools.

Aims

Our aims are:

- To ensure that all children with SEND have their needs identified in order to better support their progression and continued good physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- To ensure that every child is protected from harm and neglect and that every effort is made to enable them to learn and grow independently.
- To ensure all children can access a wide range of Forest School activities, differentiated where appropriate.
- To ensure that all children with SEND are able to participate in Forest School sessions by providing extra support or additional resources where appropriate.
- To develop a working relationship with the school and parents/carers to get a better understanding of the needs of the child.

Managing Children With SEND

SEN Code of Practice 0-25 (updated April 2020) identifies 4 broad categories of need.

Communication and interaction

Children may have difficulty in saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication.

Cognition and learning

Support for learning difficulties may be required when children learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, and include associated difficulties with mobility and communication, through to physical disability or sensory impairment.

Social, emotional and mental health difficulties

Children may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour.

Sensory and/or physical needs

Some children have a disability which prevents or hinders them during many activities such as vision impairment, hearing impairment or a multi-sensory impairment.

Some children and young people with a physical disability require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.

Commitments

We commit to:

- Consulting with the relevant parties to better understand the individual needs of children at our sessions beforehand to aid with planning.
- Ensuring that all children, including those with special needs, can participate in our Forest School sessions.
- Providing learning opportunities at appropriate levels and to support each child's individual needs.
- Adapting our activities to allow everyone to participate.
- Provide additional adult support to children who usually require it. This will be by inviting the parent/carer or school one-to-one worker to join the session.
- Performing additional risk assessments for those with special educational needs, including those with challenging behaviour, to ensure the safety of everyone at the session.

Behaviour Policy

Positive Behaviour Policy

At the beginning of each session safety rules and boundaries are discussed. Therefore, everyone knows what is expected of them and children can play without fear of being hurt or hindered by anyone else. Through clear communication, mutual respect and encouragement children can develop self-discipline and self-esteem.

Behaviour Management

Leading by example shows children how to behave socially and cooperatively and providing positive role models encourages positive behaviour. This is further enhanced by being welcoming and treating everyone with respect, care and courtesy. Through consistency children know what to expect and can develop good habits of behaviour.

Desirable behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share are reinforced through praise and positive reinforcement.

Situations where children display undesirable behaviour are ignored if no one is hurt/upset, but are discussed if others were affected, in order to build empathy.

Discipline

Long term outdoor experience enables children to develop an internal locus of self-discipline and control through development of empathy and social skills. How this is done will vary with each child.

No physical punishment will ever be used or threatened. None of the staff will shout or raise their voice in a threatening way. No techniques intended to single out and humiliate a child will be used.

Children who show unwanted behaviour will be given support to work towards a better choice of behaviour, taking into account the child's level of understanding and maturity.

In any cases of racial or other abuse, the unacceptability of the behaviour and attitudes will be made clear immediately by means of explanation rather than personal blame.

Recurring problems will be dealt with in partnership with parents.

It is important to remember that some behaviour may arise from changes in circumstances, frustration or special needs and these are monitored through observations and communication with parents/carers.

Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Positive Behaviour Policy as we feel that modelling and encouraging positive behaviour helps to encourage positive behaviour and discourage bullying behaviour. We want our sessions to be a supportive, caring and safe environment for everyone, without fear of being bullied. Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Bullying is defined as hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The three main types of bullying are:

- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft)
- Verbal (e.g. name calling, racist remarks)
- Emotional (e.g. spreading rumours, making threats, excluding someone from social groups)

People who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous feigning illness, taking unusual absences, or in children, clinging to adults. Session leaders will be aware of these possible indicators.

When dealing with incidents the following steps may be taken:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the leader who has been approached.
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded.
- Disciplinary measures will be issued as appropriate and in consultation with all parties concerned.

The person who has been bullied will be supported and given the opportunity to discuss the experience.

The person who has bullied will be helped to discuss what happened and reasons why, discuss ways to change the behaviour and liaise with parents/carers to support the person.

Code of Conduct for Adults

Aims

This code of conduct outlines the behaviour that we expect from all our staff, session leaders and volunteers. This includes anyone who is undertaking duties for the organisation, whether paid or unpaid.

The code of conduct aims to help us protect children and young people from abuse and reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations being made. It has been informed by the views of children and young people.

We are responsible for making sure everyone running our sessions has seen, understood and agreed to follow the code of conduct, and that they understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

As a session leader or volunteer you are acting in a position of authority and have a duty of care towards the children and young people we work with. You are likely to be seen as a role model and are expected to act appropriately.

Responsibilities

All sessions leaders and volunteers have the following responsibilities:

- prioritising the welfare of children and young people
- providing a safe environment for children and young people
 - ensuring equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose
 - having good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding and child protection and taking action when appropriate.
- following our principles, policies and procedures
 - including our policies and procedures for safeguarding
- staying within the law at all times
- modelling good behaviour for children and young people to follow
- challenging all unacceptable behaviour and reporting any breaches of the behaviour code to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)
- reporting all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our safeguarding procedures
 - this includes behaviour being displayed by an adult or child and directed at anybody of any age

Rights

All session leaders and volunteers should:

- treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- understand that children and young people are individuals with individual needs
- respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the sessions
- challenge discrimination and prejudice
- encourage young people and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable

Relationships

All session leaders and volunteers should:

- promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect
- avoid favouritism
- be patient with others
- exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- ensure contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the situation
- ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people
 - if a situation arises where an adult is alone with a child or young person, ensure that other adults are within sight or hearing.
 - if a child specifically asks for or needs some individual time with an adult, ensure other session leaders or volunteers know where the adult and the child are.
- only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present if possible
 - unless it has been agreed that the provision of personal care is part of the role and the adult has been trained to do this safely

Respect

All session leaders and volunteers should:

- listen to and respect children at all times
- value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities wherever possible
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible.
 - if it is necessary to break confidentiality in order to follow child protection procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

Unacceptable Behaviour

When working with children and young people, adults must not:

- allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- take unnecessary risks
- smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances
- develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people
- engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive
 - including having any form of sexual contact with a child or young person.
- let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive
- patronise or belittle children and young people
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people.

Upholding this Code of Conduct

All session leaders and volunteers should always follow this code of conduct.

If an adult has behaved inappropriately, they will be subject to disciplinary procedures. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, they may be asked to leave. We may also make a report to statutory agencies such as the police and/or the local authority child protection services.

If anyone becomes aware of any breaches of this code, they must be reported them to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. If necessary they should follow our safeguarding procedures.

Code of Conduct for Children/Attendees

Aims

This code of conduct aims to make sure everyone who attends our sessions know what is expected of them and feel safe, respected and valued.

We will make sure adults who attend our sessions have seen, understood and agreed to follow the code of conduct, and that they understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Adults will then need to ensure the children follow this code of conduct.

We expect attendees to our sessions to display appropriate behaviour at all times.

Basic Principles

This code of behaviour aims to:

- identify acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
- encourage cooperation, honesty, fairness and respect
- create an environment where self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence will grow
- encourage attendees to recognise and respect the rights of others
- encourage attendees to take responsibility for their own behaviour
- help resolve conflicts and make it clear what will happen if attendees decide not to follow the code

Dos and Don'ts

Attendees should:

- cooperate with others
- be friendly
- listen to others
- be helpful
- have good manners
- treat everyone with respect
- take responsibility for their own behaviour
- talk to session leaders about anything that worries or concerns them
- follow this code of conduct and other rules (including the law)
- join in and have fun!

Attendees should not:

- be disrespectful to anyone else
- bully other people
- behave in a way that could be intimidating
- be abusive towards anyone.

What Happens if Attendees Decide Not to Follow the Code of Conduct?

This code of conduct is part of our process for making sure everyone who takes part in our sessions receive the support they need.

Minor or First-Time Incident

If an attendee behaves in a way that doesn't follow our code of conduct, our session leaders or volunteers will remind the attendee about it and ask them to comply with it. An opportunity will be given for the behaviour to change.

This gives the attendee chance to think and to plan how they could behave differently, with support from session leaders and/or volunteers.

Formal Warning

If an attendee continues to not follow the code of conduct after a first reminder, or if the behaviour is more serious, they will be given a formal warning by the session leader.

The session leader will make a record about what happened and inform the school and parents or carers if this is appropriate.

They will also talk to the attendee about what happened and agree what support is needed to improve the behaviour in the future.

The session leader may also decide that a sanction is appropriate such as restricting the attendee from taking part in some activities.

Final Warning

If the support that we put in place isn't helping an attendee to change their behaviour, the session leader may need to give a final warning. Again, this will be recorded and the school and parents or carers will be informed as appropriate.

At this point, the session leader may need to talk with the attendee and their parents or carers about other sessions that might be more able to give the support needed.

Safeguarding Procedures

If any session leader or volunteer becomes concerned that any behaviour suggests an attendee may be in need of protection or that they may present a risk of harm to other children and young people, the leader will follow child protection procedures. This may involve making a referral to the local authority.

If child protection procedures are necessary, we will talk this through with the attendee and their parents as soon as possible, unless doing so would put the child in danger or interfere with a police investigation.

Sustainability Policy

We understand that just by running Forest School sessions on our site, we are having an impact on the environment. This impact is assessed by our Ecological Impact Assessment, and the site is regularly monitored to allow us to put in place practices to minimise any effects. Where possible we involve the children with making sure we don't damage the site, helping to build their relationship with the natural world and understand that their actions can have repercussions that they might not see at the time. To help minimise our impact (on the site and the wider environment), and keep the site sustainable, we aim to:

- Source food and resources locally, and from ethical sources.
- Order resources in bulk to reduce packaging and transportation.
- Use recycled and/or reclaimed materials/resources where possible.
- Avoid the use of plastic.
- Plan activities to minimise their impact on the site and the environment.
- Keep fires small and use them only when necessary for an activity.
- Use deadwood for fires, and source some firewood from elsewhere (responsibly).
- Dispose of any ash and burnt wood (hopefully only small amounts), with care and consideration of the environment.
- Use eco-friendly soap at our handwashing station to avoid dirty water damaging the environment.
- Take all waste off site to be sorted and recycled/composted where possible.
- Use only small amounts of natural resources from the site – bring in extra resources from other sources if needed for a specific activity.
- Only cut small amounts (and only when necessary) from live trees/plants, and where possible use resources that were cut as part of the site management plan (e.g. when clearing pathways or thinning saplings).
- Use a range of activities to educate the children about nature and the environment.
- Have leaders car share to get to the site.

Risk Assessments Guidelines

Forest School sessions cover a wide range of activities with associated risks, which need to be appropriately managed through risk assessments or risk benefit assessments. We need to understand the following:

- What the is the hazard/risk?
- Who could be harmed and how?
- What is the initial risk rating?
- What precautions can be taken to manage or control the risk?
- What is the new risk rating?

For a risk benefit assessment, we also need to understand the benefits of the activity and how they balance the risks.

If, after controlling for a risk and understanding the benefits, the risk rating is still too high, then the activity shouldn't go ahead.

All risk assessments should be reviewed regularly, and especially considering any changes such as new/different activities, changes to the site, different seasons, or in response to any accidents or near miss incidents.

		Severity				
		Trivial (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Extreme (5)
Likelihood	Rare (1)	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
	Remote (2)	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Occasional (3)	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
	Probable (4)	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
	Frequent (5)	Medium	Medium	High	High	High

Likelihood:

- Rare – unlikely to occur.
- Remote – unlikely, though possible.
- Occasional – likely to occur occasionally during standard operations.
- Probable – not surprised, will occur in a given time.
- Frequent – likely to occur, to be expected.

Severity:

- Trivial – will not result in serious injury or illness or damage of property or equipment.
- Minor – could cause illness, injury, or equipment damage but effects would not be serious.
- Moderate – can result in serious injury or illness, property or equipment damage.
- Major – can result in serious injury or illness, property or equipment damage.
- Extreme – capable of causing death and serious illness.

The table allows us to consider the severity of a risk alongside the likelihood of it happening, to give a risk rating (likelihood x severity). Low risk (green; up to a risk rating of about 4) can go ahead. Medium risk (amber; up to a risk rating of about 12) can go ahead if there is sufficient benefit, although further precautions and methods of managing the risk should be investigated. High risk (red; a risk rating of 15 or above) should not go ahead.

Risk assessments have been undertaken for the full range of activities on offer at Forest School, including the site itself. The checklist on the following page will be used before each session.

Daily Risk Assessment Checklist

Site:	
Assessed By:	
Assessment Date:	

Task	Completed?
Check weather conditions.	
Check register, medical information and emergency contact details are complete and are on site.	
Check first aid kit is on site and properly stocked.	
Check that a mobile phone with charge and signal is on site.	
Check that risk assessments and emergency procedures are on site.	
Visual check of the site to assess changes or new hazards with reference to the site-specific risk assessment.	
Visual check for wild factors (animal faeces, fungi, presence of bees/wasps/biting insects).	
Pathways and main areas checked (and cleared if necessary).	
Check that activity resources and tools are available and stored safely.	
Condition of pond platform and current pond water level.	