

7.0 - FOREST SCHOOL

7.1 Forest School Health and Safety Policy Statement



Objectives of this document

- To identify the roles of all those involved in Forest Schools, with respect to health and safety
- To identify safety procedures so that they can be carried out effectively and without difficulty
- To develop suitable and sufficient risk assessment processes to ensure that risks are adequately controlled
- To develop effective communication systems throughout the setting
- To ensure that all those involved in Forest School are aware of all relevant health and safety documents
- To develop effective inspection/monitoring procedures; to ensure compliance with Health and Safety requirements.

Statement of Aims:

Due to the particular issues relating to the woodland, specialist tools used, and the lighting of fires in the Forest School, this document is addendum to the Pre-school standard Safety and Suitability of Premises, Environment and Equipment policies. Forest School Sessions offer learning opportunities for the children. Part of their purpose is to encourage participants to face new challenges and learn to take reasonable risks. In order to do that safely, the adults involved must know their role and ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out regularly and thoroughly.

Risks can be minimised, but they cannot be eliminated altogether, and health and safety concerns need to be balanced against the potential benefits of any activity. Children, and adults, will suffer the occasional bumps, cuts and bruises which are a part of everyday life, and the application of common sense will ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be, whilst enjoying all the physical and intellectual challenges of Forest School.

Responsibilities of the:

Parochial Church Council

- Maintain appropriate insurance cover.
- Have procedures in place to monitor and review safety of visits to Forest School sites.

Management Committee

- Ensure they are aware of the Forest School procedures and objectives and are informed of the health and safety procedures in place for Forest School.

Senior Supervisor

- Ensure visits comply with the regulations and guidelines.
- Be confident that the Forest School Leader is competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit.
- Adequate child protection procedures are in place.
- The risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place.
- The Forest School Leader or another member of the teaching staff is competent to lead the activity and is familiar with the site.
- The adult child ratio is appropriate.
- The Management Committee body has approved the visits.
- Parents have signed consent forms.
- Arrangements have been made for the medical and specific educational needs of children attending.
- Adequate first aid provision will be available.
- The mode of travel is appropriate.
- Travel times, pick up and drop off points are known.
- They have the address of the site and the numbers of the leaders' mobile phones.
- A school contact has been nominated, with details given to the group leader
- The Forest School leader, staff and school have contact details for the next of kin
- There is a contingency plan for any delays, including a late return home.

Staff attending Forest School

- Must ensure that the Senior Supervisor is provided with the information and details as above.
- They must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group, follow the instructions of the Forest School Leader and help promote positive behaviour.
- Ensure an appropriate ratio of adults to children.
- Ensure that adults have details of the school contact and that they have details of the emergency procedures.
- Ensure that the adults have details of children's medical or specific educational needs.
- Consider stopping the visit/activity (notifying the Forest School Leader) if they consider any risk unacceptable.

Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader should have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit. The leader should:

- Obtain the Senior Supervisor's permission for visits to the Forest School site.
- Follow the health and safety guidelines and policies.
- Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment.
- Clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned.
- Be familiar with the site.
- Be aware of child protection issues.
- Ensure that adequate first-aid provision is available.
- Undertake the planning and preparation for the visit, including briefing group members.
- Review activities and advise staff where adjustments may be necessary.
- Ensure that staff/adult are aware of what the visit involves.
- Consider stopping the visit if any risk is unacceptable and have procedures in place for this.

Additional Adults/Volunteers/other adults should be clear in their roles and responsibilities.

They must:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group.
- Not be left in sole charge of children.
- Follow the instructions of the Forest School Leader and teacher adults and help with control.
- Speak to the Forest School Leader if concerned about the health and safety of children at any time during the visit.

Children

The group leader must make it clear to children that they must:

- Follow the instructions of the leader and any other adults
- Look out for anything which might be a threat and tell an adult about it
- Attendance at Forest School sessions by children whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger (to themselves or the group) will be reviewed, and strategies put in place to allow them to participate wherever possible.

Parents

The Forest School Leader should:

- Provide both written information and briefing sessions to help parents to decide whether their child should go on the visit.
- Tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit.
- Invite parents to support Forest School sessions as a volunteer if they wish.

Parents will need to:

- Provide the teacher with emergency contact numbers.
- Sign a consent form.
- Give the teacher information about the child's emotional, psychological and physical health.

Supervision

During Forest School sessions for the children, they will be fully supervised by at least two members of staff from the pre-school, one of which will be the Forest School Leader and at least one other adult. Additional helpers may accompany the group after participating in a health and safety briefing session, and being given a copy of this guidance. Although volunteer adults are not left alone with the children, it is the setting's responsibility to ensure that adults who regularly help as volunteers are police checked. Usually a group will be no larger than fifteen

children and there will be a ratio of 1:3 adults to children. The number of adults will be increased if necessary to accommodate larger groups and children with specific educational or other needs.

Minibus

The minibus, if used will be driven by an adult from the setting and will be fully equipped with seat belts, which adults will ensure are fitted and used properly. All Adults driving the minibus will have passed the current Oxfordshire County Council minibus driving test. The driver of the minibus will ensure that all checks have been carried out prior to the visit and be aware that they cannot be in a supervisory role whilst driving. Teaching staff who drive should also take into consideration the effects of teaching and the working day before driving. The minibus will always be driven to within a maximum five minutes walk of the Forest School site. In the event of an accident/breakdown the attached emergency procedures will be followed.

Public Access

The Forest School site is situated with the private grounds of Oriel College. The site is enclosed and there is no general public access to the Forest School site.

Fire Site

A designated area for fires is made within the Forest School Site. Seating will be arranged for the children to sit on at a safe distance from any fires lit. The children will be encouraged to walk around the designated area at all times and they will not approach any fires unless specifically supervised to do so. Water will always be available to safely extinguish fires and the fire site will be designed to reduce the risk of any spread of fire. (In addition, the leader may use a small gas-cooking stove, but paraffin stoves are not used.)

Toilets /hand washing

There are no toilets on Forest School sites, although children are allowed to use designated areas of the wood and are told how to do so with due care and consideration for hygiene, the environment and personal privacy. Sessions only last a maximum of two hours – and in practice most complete their session without the need to go. Only one of the leaders/staff will take a child to the toilet. There is no running water but for each Forest School session there will be a container of water on site. Antiseptic wipes will also be available.

Food/drink and hand washing

Special dietary requirements of all the children are noted and are made accordingly. If there are any changes the parents should make the staff aware.

All of the above information is recorded on the register and communicated to all adult helpers.

We provide a healthy snack while at Forest School.

Water is constantly available for the children to drink.

Storage of snacks is usually in fresh plastic bags or containers.

Swapping and sharing food is monitored because of allergies.

Food hygiene

All snacks are prepared before leaving for Forest School.

Snacks will be the sort of snacks that are not dependant on temperature e.g. Brioche, bread, fruit. All fruit will be washed before going to forest school.

Any food waste e.g. apple cores are left for the wild life, but the other bits of waste food will be taken back to the pre-school.

All dirty cups and flasks are taken back to preschool to be washed.

Any food handling around campfires will be monitored.

All hands will be washed as in the instructions for toileting.

First Aid

At least one adult will have relevant first aid training and a first aid kit, along with relevant emergency equipment, which will always be readily accessible. There will also be a mobile phone on site, and in the event of a serious accident the emergency procedures attached will be followed.

Risk Assessment

A full and comprehensive site risk assessment will be conducted prior to the first visit to any new site. This will be done by a member of the Oxfordshire Forest School staff, in conjunction with a member of staff from the Pre-school using the site. This risk assessment will be reviewed regularly. Using the risk assessment form, it will look at the general safety of the site and arrangements for completing any major works required before the children arrive. Once such work is complete, a visual check will be undertaken immediately prior to every session. Individual generic risk assessments will be used for the use of tools and some activities/actions. Any tools not specifically mentioned will be covered by the risk assessment of a similar tool or tool of a similar nature.

Individual activities will be risk assessed previously by the leader. Ongoing risk assessments normally consist of judgements and decisions made as the need arises, these will be recorded after the visit.

St. Clement's Preschool Forest School Emergency Procedures

Routine Session Procedures

- Register of children present in session taken to site and a copy left in school.
- A list of children's names, emergency phone numbers and any relevant medical information taken to site/left with school contact.
- The phone number of the school contact is taken and the leader's mobile number left with the school contact.
- Head counts are carried out on leaving school premises, and Forest School site.

The Forest School Leader/setting staff will take the following equipment for emergencies:

- Register with emergency numbers, medical details/school contact number.
- Emergency plan sheet with Grid Reference of site.
- Mobile phone.
- First Aid Kit.
- Water.
- Flask of hot drink (in colder seasons).
- Non Alcoholic wipes.
- Tissues.
- Survival Blanket.
- Spare Clothes.

Minibus Accident/Breakdown Procedure

- The OCC Minibus Driver guidelines should be followed.
- The Leader's responsibility lies with the safety of the party.
- The immediate responsibility is to deal with any problems that may be endangering the children's safety. This will be in consultation with the driver whenever possible.
- Once the situation is stable, contact the school to give information about the nature of the problem, delay expected etc., so that advice can be given and appropriate action taken.
- The setting should have in place an emergency plan for transporting participants back to the setting.
- The situation will be assessed so that the children do not move from a bad situation to more dangerous one. The driver and the Forest School Leader are responsible for managing the situation in a calm, decisive manner.

Late Return Procedure

- As soon as it is known that a group will return after the settings normal finishing hours the school should be contacted and informed of expected length of delay. This information can then be passed on to parents.

Minor Accidents

- The person trained in First Aid should tend minor accidents and assess the need for further action.
- The other adults should look after the rest of the group whilst the trained person treats the injury.
- The incident should be noted in the school accident book, and by the Forest School Leader.
- The Forest School Leader should inform the child's parents of the incident.

Serious Accidents/Emergencies

- A contingency plan should be worked out prior to any visit being made with each adult in a group taking on specified roles, as highlighted in the OCC document on emergency procedures. This might include:
 - First Aider to assess and deal with injuries.
 - Adults to look after the other children.
 - Adult to inform school contact/parents/emergency services.
 - Adult to direct emergency services vehicle to site.
 - Member of staff to accompany child to hospital
- No adult should accompany a child by themselves to hospital and no non-teaching adult should be left solely in charge of the children
- If a child requires emergency hospital attention, then the group should wait for an ambulance to reach them.

- As much information as possible should be gathered for the emergency services and the Grid Reference for the site should be noted somewhere.
- A plan for transporting the rest of the group back to the setting needs to be agreed.
- Any serious accident needs to be documented following OCC procedures.
- Adult who accompanies child must be known to the child.

This policy was adopted at an AGM of

St Clements Church Preschool

Held on

Date to be reviewed

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory

Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)

Chair
