

CUTTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY NO. 216

FOREST SCHOOL

AIMS

The Forest School Association has worked to produce the following 7 basic principles, in which all participants are viewed as:

- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- able to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- able to experience regular success
- able to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- able to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

Research in other settings has shown Forest School to be inspirational, attitude changing and challenging. It raises expectations and develops insights into individual learning styles and schemas. It is personally and socially uplifting so laying the foundations for other learning.

In our Forest School work at Cutthorpe Primary School we aim to embrace a different approach to learning through the nurturing, support and development of the individual child.

The Role of the Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader will:

- Create a positive environment which encourages and reinforces caring, nurturing and positive behaviour towards one another, the environment and equipment.
- Promote effective relationships in which all are accepted, valued and treated equally.
- Be mindful of the need to maintain safety at all times
- Provide a positive role model for all children and volunteers
- Place the needs of the children, including needs linked to their preferred learning styles, social and behavioural needs at the centre of the Forest School curriculum to maximise individual success and raise self-esteem.
- Give verbal praise to children demonstrating good work, good behaviour, cooperation and good group work.

Forest School site

Our FS site is Ingmanthorpe Wood, owned by Mr Hodgkinson (parent), with whom we have a written agreement. Appendix 1 The site is accessible from school by a short 15 minute walk, which does not involve crossing a road. Children and lead/rear adults wear high-visibility vests on the walk in and out.

It is an area of designated semi-ancient mixed woodland with a flat 'camp' area, sloping ground and a small stream. There is no public access. It provides opportunities for all aspects of Forest School activity including tool use and fire lighting.

Environmental Impact Statement

Every activity carried out in the outdoors will have an impact on the immediate environment. We plan to keep this impact to a minimum and to respect the rights of the landowner as well as the woodland. There may be times when the site is not be used to avoid disturbing nesting birds, new lambs, pheasants. These times will be discussed and mutually agreed with the landowners.

School groups will only use agreed access routes to the site, as designated in the site risk assessment.

Where necessary, the FSL will maintain and repair sites within our agreed area with or without the assistance of the landowners. This process will be discussed and mutually agreed with them.

Maintenance of site boundaries such as fences and gates will remain the responsibility of the landowners, as will the management of tree safety.

Educational value

It is expected that exposure to the woodland environment and FS activities will stimulate a positive learning experience, particularly for individuals and groups of children who may be unable or unwilling to learn in a more conventional way. It also provides opportunities for the children to experience risk, where they learn to make decisions to mitigate this. The benefits of risk, emotional as well as physical, are immense in the development of the whole child.

In addition to providing opportunities for Forest School activities, the site also supports learning in many areas of the curriculum, including Maths, Science, Geography, Art and Design, Design Technology, PSHE, and is ideal for stimulating language for Literacy.

The following policies and documents are the minimum requirements for the safe running of Forest School activities. They are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them.

All members of staff and volunteer helpers have a duty to follow these policies and should be familiar with their contents. A sheet is provided in the Cutthorpe All Visits Risk assessment pack where volunteers must sign to state they have read, understood and accept their responsibility in following the risk assessments and procedures.

Documents which will be carried by the FS lead are as follows:

- The completed EVOLVE document for each trip, following approval by the EVC and Head
- An Adults on Trips form, completed by all staff and helpers, containing adult emergency contact details and signature to show acceptance of risk assessments
- School emergency procedures
- Global Permission forms for all children in the group
- Activity/Site risk assessments
- Dynamic risk assessment form to be completed on site
- Accident/incident form

Activity Risk Assessment

Each block of planned activity sessions will have its own risk assessment. This may include stream dipping, tool use and fire lighting by the FSL or the children (when the FSL considers them ready to undertake this in a carefully monitored and controlled way.)

[Appendix 2](#)

Child Protection (Forest School Version)

- All staff members will have current DBS checks and training in Safeguarding.
- All volunteer helpers will have current DBS checks; a list is kept in the school office.
- Any child protection or safeguarding issues will be raised with the FSL (DSP with responsibility for safeguarding) in the first instance, or with the Headteacher as soon as the group return to school. Any concerns will be dealt with confidentially.
- Any situation that occurs during a forest school session in which a child's or children's safety is compromised will be dealt with immediately by the FSL and other school staff members. The child will be removed from the dangerous situation and the incident dealt with. If this involves an adult or

another child, that person will be removed from the situation and if necessary the group will return to school.

- In the case of a member of the public causing concern a phone call will be made to school or the police and the emergency procedure put into place.

Clothing Policy

At the beginning of each group of sessions, parents of the children due to attend will be given a suggested kit list with minimum requirements. Children will only be allowed to leave school to attend FS sessions if they are suitably clothed for the activities and the weather. Clothing and rucksacks will be checked by school staff before leaving. Spare clothing and footwear will be available for children whose parents cannot provide them, or to allow children who were due to access a session but have forgotten their clothes to do so. This will be funded by donations of out-grown clothing and/or grants applied for.

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Eating Policy

Only food brought in to site will be consumed by the members of the group. This may include children's own snacks, provided by the FS leader, or food commercially bought and cooked over a fire, with correct regards to food hygiene. The FSL may give supervised permission for children to sample seasonal plants, such as nettles, wild garlic, blackberries. It is advisable for the FSL to hold a food hygiene training certificate.

Emergency Procedures

Cutthorpe Primary Forest School's main priority in everything it sets out to achieve is to keep all children safe. All staff members and volunteers will be fully

cognisant with the emergency procedures and will sign a sheet in the risk assessment to confirm this.

All emergency contact details (adults and children), copies of permission slips and medical forms for the day, will be carried by the FSL. (Global Permission Forms)

The site grid reference and weather forecast for the day will be included in the site risk assessment pack.

Lost child

If it is discovered that a child is missing from the group, the situation will be taken very seriously from the outset and the following emergency procedure will be implemented:

1. The Forest School Leader shall be informed immediately.
2. Activity for the rest of the group will be suspended in order that up to two members of staff, including the Forest School Leader if appropriate, may be released to conduct a search which will last no more than 10 minutes.
3. The remaining children will be given a low risk activity to complete, within the Camp area by the remaining adults, being mindful not to increase anxiety of the group.
4. If, after the 10 minute search, the child has not been located, the Forest School Leader will phone the school, who will inform the police.
5. The school base contact will decide when to contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation.
6. Staff should corroborate details of the situation, including last known position of the missing child and any timings. These will be recorded on the Emergency Procedures Record Sheet.
7. If/when the child is subsequently found, the process will be reversed, and the incident recorded on the Incident and accident sheet.

Accident or injury to any member of the group, adult or child

1. The designated First Aider (FSL) will be informed immediately to assess and treat if appropriate.
2. The situation will be assessed and a decision made if necessary to call for an ambulance.
Site details and grid reference are written into the site risk assessment, as are the phone signal strengths for the major providers in that area. This can be found in the risk assessment.
3. The school base will be notified, and will use emergency contact details to inform parents/next of kin (in the case of an adult casualty)
4. The other adults will maintain a calm activity with the rest of the group in the camp area.

5. If a casualty is to be evacuated a decision will be made to abandon the session and the rest of the group will return to school.
6. One member of the staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
7. If the injured person is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the child's parent/next of kin will be updated about the situation by the staff remaining at school.
8. In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange to contact the parent/next of kin so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor or home.

Intrusion by member of the public - that cannot be resolved by reasoned conversation

1. Any member of staff not involved in talking to the person will call 999 for the police. Site details are available in the site risk assessment, which is in the risk assessment.
2. The children will be moved away from the situation towards the exit of the site by other adults.
3. The School base contact will be informed of the situation so far and any measures which have been taken to ensure the children's safety. If necessary, other members of staff will come from school to support.

Equal Opportunities at Forest School

Cutthorpe Primary School promotes the Equal Opportunities Policy in all aspects of school, including Forest School. It is our belief that all children regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, and ability should be able to access the activities we deliver. If there is any reason why a child cannot access the Forest School site, then similar activities will be planned for delivery to the group in the school grounds.

Fire Safety

Location

Only a previously agreed area will be used for campfires (see site maps)
Campfire areas are enclosed by logs or large stones to prevent the spread of fire and to protect children.
Storm kettles are only used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.
WE WILL FOLLOW DCC GUIDELINES ON THE LIGHTING OF SMALL FIRES.

Positioning of Children and Adults

Fire areas are away from seating logs, and at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit if on school grounds.

When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission.

When allowed to access the campfire, children must walk around the outside of the stones and wait. Once permission has been given, they must kneel in a safe working stance on one knee, ensuring there is no-one behind them to impede egress.

When seated around the camp area, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.

Children will be taught how to move by standing, stepping backwards and then walking around the outside of the area. They must never cross the fire area or block the exit of the person in charge of the fire.

Long sleeves and trousers should be worn.

Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.

Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and mouth and count to 30.

If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.

Hand Tool Safety

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence as well as manual dexterity. Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader(s) and will be inspected before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect.

Whilst using hand tools the adult to child ratio is increased.

- Staff to child ratio 1:2 for bow saws, bill hooks and knives and for KS1 children, all hand tool work 1:1.
- Staff to child ratio 1:8 (KS2) with hacksaws and peelers
- Tools will be kept in the Forest School tool boxes and only removed by the Forest School staff or adult volunteers. This will be locked when not in use.
- Children and adults are not allowed to point or run with tools.
- Knife blade and saw covers must be kept on whilst the tools are being transported.
- A glove must only be worn on the hand **not** holding the tool.
- When using knives to whittle, this must be done at the side of, and downwards of the body.
- Wood being sawn must be supported on a saw horse or a natural sawing break – hands must be kept away from the blade.
- All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session
- Volunteer helpers must receive basic training on the use of individual hand tools before being allowed to use them with children, and must state that they are confident and comfortable doing so.

Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.

Health and Safety (Forest Schools)

As with all school activities, Forest School staff will follow the guidelines for safe working practice as issued by the Health and Safety executive. The Forest School leader has Level 3 training and qualification in safe use of tools, fire lighting, and paediatric outdoor first aid. This will be updated as per requirement. Other members of staff or volunteers will only use tools and light/extinguish fires after training, and only if they are confident and comfortable to do so. Children will only use tools with supervision, as described in the Forest Schools Activity Risk assessment.

Site Risk Assessment Appendix 3

WE FOLLOW DCC GUIDELINES ON CLIMBING TREES

Weather

Only high winds (Beaufort wind scale over 7, wind speed 32 – 38 mph, or gusting over 50 mph) or unusually excessive hot/cold temperatures affect the delivery of FS sessions. As part of the dynamic risk assessment undertaken before every session, the FS leader will check the weather forecast in the morning, and again before the session (in the case of an afternoon session). If significant concerns are raised, the session will take place in the school grounds, or be postponed to a later date and normal lessons will take place.

Margaret Tokunaga

Forest School Leader Level 3

Outdoor/paediatric First Aid certificate (2 day – reviewed every 2 years)

Outdoor Food preparation certificate (July 27th 2016)

MT/May 2020

Adopted by the Governing Body July 2020

Minute No. 20.7.13