

## **12.0 Forest School**

### **12.4 Forest School Health and Safety Policy**

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## **4.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

### Overview:

The health and safety of learners, staff and other users of the grounds will be of primary importance. Everything will be done to promote good health, to keep everyone safe and to protect them from danger.

### 4.1 Risk management and assessment

Due to the nature of Forest School the activities that are carried out may be of greater risk to participants than normal.

We believe that informed risk taking is an essential part of learning and development and so although there are risks that need to be considered in various activities, there can also be huge potential benefits that participants can gain. The National Trust 2012 report, "Natural Childhood", highlights that taking risks and learning to become independent are key factors in a child's physical, emotional and mental development and well-being.

The safety of the adults and children within the forest school setting are of great importance and therefore risk/benefit assessments will be made on all activities before carrying them out. Procedures will be followed to minimise risk and to identify hazards that participants may face. Regular health and safety checks will be carried out to monitor Start Right environment and equipment. In addition, an activity risk assessment will be established prior to any activity that may require it. These will include: shelter building, cooking on an open fire, cutting wood, forest walks and tool use (see *Appendix 8.4*).

#### 4.2 First Aid provision

The normal outdoor experiences of being stung by nettles, scratched by brambles or occasionally bruised by fall or trips are expected within forest school and the children are encouraged to accept occasional stings, bumps and grazes as part of the learning experience. If they fall whilst running on a slippery patch in the woodland floor due to mud, they will learn how to handle this in future.

However, Start Right Forest School does endeavour to be as safe as possible and there will be a trained Forest School and Paediatric First Aider on site for each session and a first aid kit will be accessible if needed. The first aid equipment list is detailed in *Appendix 8.2*.

#### 4.3 Administration of Medication

Any medication that parents ask us to give to children must be prescribed by a doctor. Medicines are to be kept in a secure cupboard out of the reach of children or in the fridge inside the house. They must be labelled with the child's name. The 'permission to administer medicines' form must be completed. A record of when medicines are given and by whom must be kept.

#### 4.4 Staff/helpers qualifications, training & responsibilities

At each Start Right Forest School session, there will be a Level 3 Forest School Leader present and a minimum of 3 additional adults. All staff have been CRB/DBS checked and have a paediatric first aid and food hygiene qualification. Children will not be left unsupervised with any visitors who have not provided a CRB/DBS. All staff have regular Safeguarding and Health & Safety updates.

The Forest School leader and assistants will aim to provide an environment that is safe. Before each session, the Forest School leader will brief the assistants on the activities planned and what is required of them to facilitate learning. A guide for Parent helpers is available for new helpers, so that they are informed of what Forest School is about and their role (see *Appendix 8.1*).

#### Forest School Leaders & Relevant Qualifications:

**Hannah Baker:** BA (Hons) in Primary Education with QTS

Level 3 Forest School Leader

16 Hour Forest School First Aid

ITC Level 3 Award in Paediatric First Aid

**Emma Whittingham:** Level 3 Forest School Leader

16 Hour Forest School First Aid

ITC Level 3 Award in Paediatric First Aid

#### Supporting Staff:

**Emmanuelle Fairchild** (Fri)

**Sue Gosney** (Weds / Fri)

NVQ3 Childcare Diploma

**Claire Jefferies** (Tues / Thurs)

CACHE DiP (NNEB)

**Stacey Smith** (Tues / Thurs / Fri)

Level 2 NVQ in Childcare Learning & Development

#### 4.5 Equipment and Use of Personal Protective Equipment

##### 4.5.1 Equipment:

The use of hand tools by the children will be used occasionally to aid in their learning, self-discovery, practical skills and self-confidence.

- The adults and children using the tools will be taught to use them appropriately to minimise risk and injury to individuals.
- All tools will be checked by the Forest School leaders before use to see if they are fit for purpose. If any of the handles are loose or equipment is not working properly they will be discontinued from use. The item that is damaged will be taped up to signify that it is damaged and put in a bucket which is for discontinued tools and will be disposed of.
- Tools will be kept in the Forest School shed, when not in use, which is only to be accessed by the Forest School leader and assistants. This shed is locked when not needing to be accessed.
- All tools will be counted out before use and counted back in at the end of the session. If any are missing a thorough search will be made to find the missing item.
- Safe working distances will be taught, maintained and observed by participants and those leading and assisting the session. The term 'blood bubble' will be used to describe the area of danger that people cannot enter when working with tools. This distance is the arm's length of the user plus the tools distance away from any other person.
- Tools will never be left outside the shed unattended.
- When not in use the bow, hand and hack saws will have their safety guards put on by an adult. The secateurs and loppers will be locked into a closed position.

#### 4.5.2 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment must be available and stored in an appropriate manner so that it is fit for purpose when needed.

This includes items such as:

- Mats for sitting on when the ground is damp/wet.
- Wellie boots and waterproof clothing.
- Gloves for clearing woodland area / gathering natural resources for use in the session to protect hands.
- If gloves are used when using a hand tool, they should never be worn on the hand holding the tool as it lessens the grip on the item held which affects the control of the tool.

Only adults will remove cooking equipment such as pans and kettles from the fire, using a fire proof glove.

The Adults and Children at Forest School need to be suitably dressed for going outdoors. Children are asked to supply their own wellie boots that are kept in the Start Right Reception and are asked to change into them at the start of the forest school session. If they do not have their own boots there are some extra boots of various sizes available.

Waterproof coats, trousers, jumpers, hats, gloves and scarves are provided by Start Right.

#### 4.6 Welfare requirements

##### 4.6.1 Toileting Procedure:

Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before the start of a Forest School session, if children do need to go to the toilet whilst at Forest School they can take themselves to the toilets situated in the back garden or be supported to do this.

##### 4.6.2 Hygiene:

In some sessions we may make food to cook over the fire and drink hot chocolate.

When food and drink are being prepared and consumed in Forest School there will be water and soap available to wash hands and clean surfaces to prepare food on.

Sensible precautions must be adhered to by all those handling food items, which will be overseen by the Forest School leader and assistants.

##### 4.6.3 Allergies:

When food or drink is being prepared or consumed within a Forest school session, the Forest School leader will check for any known allergies within the group and make a note of these to ensure that they are not given anything to eat or drink that will cause an allergic reaction. An alternative will be provided for those who are allergic to an ingredient in the food/drink being prepared eg. Hot chocolate that does not have milk product in for those who are lactose intolerant.

#### 4.7 Contingency and cancellation

Forest School may need to be moved indoors to the Art Room if there is severe weather such as high winds or thunder and lightning storms. The activities will be adapted to suit the new surroundings.

#### 4.8 Emergency and Incident management

Although every care is taken to ensure that no serious accidents occur there may be a time when this does happen.

In the event of an emergency such as a serious accident, where a child or adult is seriously injured, the following procedure will be followed:

- The Forest School leader will make an assessment of the situation whilst keeping calm and helping to help keep the rest of the group calm.
- First aid will be administered if needed. Whilst the first aid is being administered, the other adults should ensure that the rest of the children in the group are kept safe. This may mean taking the group back to the house where reassurance will be given to them.
- If the incident requires the emergency services, an adult will be asked to telephone them using their personal mobile phone, whilst the First Aider attends to the injured person(s).
- All accidents that happen within Forest School will be recorded in the Accident book, and the adult collecting the child from school will be informed at the end of the day (or contacted during the day depending on the seriousness of the injury).

#### 4.9 Reporting near misses:

Due to the nature of Forest School being led in an environment where there can be unknown factors that could cause serious injuries there is a need not only to report accidents but also incidents that are "Near misses" where serious injury or death could have been the result. These occurrences are likely to be few due to the precautions that have already been put in place to prevent serious injury or death, but if an incident like this does occur these need to be documented in the accident book and existing policies, procedures and risk/benefit analysis need to be reviewed.

#### **4.10 Insurance**

The Health and Safety co-ordinators at Start Right are Caryll and Peter Ingerslev.

Individuals within Forest School at Start Right are covered by the school's insurance, which states that Risk assessments are up to date and comprehensive (See *Appendix 8.4*), and that a Qualified teacher is present during the sessions.

Those training for Forest School (Level 3) qualification are allowed to lead sessions; but need to be overseen by a Qualified Forest School teacher for insurance to be valid.

#### **4.11 Complaints Procedure**

If a complaint is raised by a parent about anything to do with a member of staff within a Forest School session or about anything that has happened within a Forest School session, the Forest School Leader will be asked to talk to the parent. The concerns raised will be treated seriously and dealt with fairly. It is hoped that most concerns will be able to be resolved quickly and informally through discussion and any actions needing to be made will be dealt with appropriately.

If the Forest School teacher does not feel they can deal with the matter, they will refer the concern made to Caryll or Peter Ingerslev. They will contact the person who has made the complaint as soon as possible and attempt to resolve the concern.