

# Forest Schools Policy

## SOUTH NORMANTON NURSERY SCHOOL

Adopted at the meeting of the Full Governing Body on **27<sup>th</sup> September, 2021**

Minute Number **16/22**

Chair of Governors



### Record of Policy Amendment / History

Version/ Issue	Date	Author	Reason for Change
2	04/10/16	RD	Updated policy
3	03/10/17	RD/DP	Amendments in yellow
4	07.10.18	SA	Reviewed - change to day of sessions to Friday
5	22.09.21	PH	Updated policy

This policy has been considered and written in conjunction with our Rights Respecting School's charter adapted from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child.

'In our school, we believe that every child has the right to play, learn and grow in an inspiring, empowering and safe environment protected from harm and treated fairly. We believe that each one of us has a responsibility for the world and its inhabitants, both of which deserve respect and nurture.'

South Normanton Nursery School Charter

# South Normanton Nursery School

## Forest Schools Policy

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### Introduction

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. This fully supports our vision of:

'playing together, learning together and growing together'

This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. The child is never put in a position where he/she will fail so success is attained. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

## **Purpose/Aims of Forest Schools**

- To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

## **Environmental Considerations and Conservation**

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest Schools. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest Schools Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused and an alternative area will be found and risk assessed if necessary.

## **Legislation and Forest School**

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out for Forest Schools are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and CRB checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures at Forest Schools are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

## **South Normanton School Policies and Forest Schools**

Staff attending Forest Schools sessions should be familiar with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid policy,
- Risk Assessment Policy and Risk Assessments particular to WAH
- Asthma Policy if asthmatics are attending sessions
- Food Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality & Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Particular attention is paid to the following areas:

### **Health and Safety**

The Forest Schools curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the Forest Schools Coordinator's File in school.

The Forest Schools Leader has an up-to-date certificate in Paediatric First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangement. All staff have paediatric first aid training. A first aid kit and emergency inhaler is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and walkie talkies are carried. The school will contact the parents.

Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

### **Safeguarding**

Forest Schools sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by members of staff and parent volunteers.

Everyone involved in Forest Schools is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.

All South Normanton Nursery School staff have current DBS checks.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers and a "My Concern" entry will be completed as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times.

## **Equality and Inclusion**

During Forest Schools all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued. Those children who cannot access the forest on a Friday session will have the opportunity to access Forest Schools activities in the nursery outdoor setting.

## **Behaviour**

At Forest Schools we operate within the Behaviour Policy of South Normanton Nursery School. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the wellbeing of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school. All children have the opportunity to safely access Forest Schools activities in line with their specific needs.

## **Medical and Emergency Contact Details**

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office.

## **Emergency Action Plan**

This EAP (Emergency Action Plan) is kept in the forest schools bag at all times

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff (TA) would direct the emergency services to the casualty, Debbie, as ITC First Aider, would attend to the casualty until the Emergency Services arrive. The casualty would be accompanied to hospital the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher or a member of the SLT. The remaining children will return to the rest of the Nursery immediately.

The school office would be informed after dialling the Emergency Services and return back to school immediately. The adult accompanying the casualty would return to school once the child was in the care of their parents/carers.

In the event of an adult needing emergency attention it must be judged whether they need to be accompanied or support may be required. Decisions taken must ensure the safety of the children within the group and accompanying adults.

In the event of the Forest School Leader needing emergency assistance it would be expected for a member of staff to return the children to school and another adult would stay with the casualty.

Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school.

Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

### **Risk Assessments and Risk Management**

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest Schools Site Assessment
- Forest Schools sessions: including Sensory Activities, Minibeasts and Shelter building
- Tool use
- Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the Forest Schools Handbook and in the Forest School File.

### **Safety Sweep and checklists**

The Forest School leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site. The safety sweep will be recorded on a safety sweep form and kept in the Forest Schools file.

Tools and equipment and fires will not be used, however, if they were, the following would apply:

### **Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at Forest Schools**

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest Schools. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest Schools Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'. (These can be found in the Forest Schools File).
- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest Schools Leaders at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest Schools Leader feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest Schools activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- It is not expected for any other adult attending Forest Schools to use tools with children, only the Forest Schools Leader.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest Schools Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

## **Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest Schools**

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:

**Stand behind the log**

**Step over and sit down on log**

**Stand up, turn around and step over log**

**Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle**

In addition to the other resources, we will take a large container full of water.

**When lighting a fire:**

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.
- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest Schools:

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication and copies of any Care Plans and medical/dietary overview will be in the Forest Schools rucksack.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The Forest School Leader will follow the Effective Group Management Procedures outlined in the Forest Schools Handbook.

## The role of the Forest Schools Leaders

- The Forest Schools Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date Paediatric First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.
- The leader will carry an emergency pack to include a first aid kit and emergency inhaler at all times.
- The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The Forest School leader will **record accidents in the nursery accident book** and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

## Designated Person Responsibility for each Forest Schools session

Responsibility for overseeing Forest Schools - Ruth Davison

Forest School Leader - Debbie Proudler

(Risk assessments, safety sweep, and essential equipment, rucksack, planning, observations and next steps for learning).

## Communication

Forest Schools takes place on **Fridays in the large forest and can occur any day in our small forest area**. Information is sent home to parents before the start of a series of sessions. Parents are invited to participate in sessions with their child at the discretion of the Forest Schools leader.

## Forest Schools Rules

- keep yourself and your friends safe
- respect the forest

## Routines and Procedures for Forest Schools

Preparation - The Forest Schools Leader (Debbie) will do a sweep of the site prior to the weekly sessions.

Debbie will check the Forest Schools bag/trolley contains all essential items. The Emergency Action Plan is kept in the top of the bag/trolley and all Adults are aware of this. First Aid kit, inhalers, wipes are kept in the bag/trolley. The tool bag, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate. The Forest Schools Designated Leader will carry the rucksack to the site.

Waterproofs will be taken to the discovery den or appropriate area prior to session. Spare wellies are kept in the green shed for use if necessary. Children will usually take their own nursery wellies.

Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs. Forest Schools safety rules will be shared with the group. Children will put wellies on and walk to the site.

During the session children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment.

Back at school children will remove wellies outdoors before entering the classroom.

After the session Equipment will be washed and stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and hung on rails. Flasks and water containers will be emptied and cleaned out. Tools (if taken) will be cleaned and locked away in the Forest Schools shed. The essential equipment bag/trolley will be put away and any items used replaced.

### **Cancelling Forest Schools**

Forest Schools may need to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds, or blizzards.

Forest Schools may not be able to go ahead if there are not enough adults to accompany us. If no replacement adult can be found then the session will be cancelled. The session may also be cancelled if the Forest Schools Leader (Debbie) is unable to attend. Campfires cannot take place without a Qualified Forest School Leader - Debbie (Level 3 Forest School Practitioner).

### **Essential Equipment Needed at Forest Schools sessions**

The Forest School rucksack - some equipment is taken to the forest prior to the session, and the following emergency equipment is in the rucksack:

- EAP (Emergency Action Plan)
- Mobile phone and walkie talkie
- Medical Care Plans, medical and dietary overview as appropriate
- Wet wipes
- First Aid Kit with protective gloves

- Inhalers and emergency inhaler
- Carry bag for dirty / wet items
- Space blanket

We would also take a ground sheet and string to erect a shelter as needed.

### **Clothing Requirements for Forest Schools**

The following are clothing requirements for all children, staff and are recommended for adult volunteers attending a Forest School session (even adult volunteers who are responsible for dressing themselves appropriately). If the Forest Schools leader considered that an adult volunteer's clothing was not appropriate and safe, they would be unable to attend the session.

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Waterproof trousers
- Stout shoes/wellies/boots

### **Toileting considerations**

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the Classroom. If necessary, children will be accompanied back to the nursery to use the toilet and return to the forest afterwards.

**This Forest Schools Policy has been written in agreement with the Head Teacher, Staff and Governors of South Normanton Nursery School. It will be reviewed every three years or if there are any changes made.**