

FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

Statement of Intent

My Little Explorers uses natural outdoor woodland areas to offer children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover many areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity.

Implementation

Our Forest School sessions will be delivered by qualified Level 3 Forest School leaders. They deliver this program following the guidance set out in this document. A copy of all policies and procedures can be requested, this contains vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Equality and Diversity:

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc. My Little Explorers has an Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy and an Equal Opportunities Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs.
- Ensuring that once on site rules are followed and continue to risk assess during the session.
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
- Administration of first aid and checking first aid kit.
- Supervision of fire use, following procedures set out in this document
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
- Organising emergency procedures.
- Ensure site is left as it was found after every session

Staff/ students / volunteers: will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times, support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

Health and Safety Policy:

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play if they are considered too dangerous. Ratios within the woodland area will depend on the age of the children but generally 1 adult to 6 children for school age children. All staff and helper will be DBS checked. Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School Leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice.

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School
- Equipment and Activities
- Open Fire
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools (hammers, bow saw, peelers), where applicable

Emergency Procedure:

In the event of an emergency the following will happen;

- Flute will be played
- Children advised to put tools down by other adults in surrounding areas and to await further instructions.
- Forest School Leader to assess situation and remove any hazards.
- Once any hazard has been removed the leader will deal with the incident or follow the first aid procedures in the case of an accident.

Lost child Procedure

- As soon as it is discovered that the head count at any particular moment does not agree with that recorded at the start of that session, the Forest School Leader will be informed.
- If an immediate recount still shows a shortfall, all activities will be suspended and flute call will be used to rally all group members.

- One adult will be released for a five-minute search of the immediate area, whilst another adult occupies the remaining children with a game/song or story. The main aim to prevent anxiety escalating amongst the children, the flute will be played to recall again.
- If the five-minute search does not discover the missing child/children, the teacher and/or Forest School Leader will take the group back to base/school, retracing the paths taken earlier. One adult will stay in the area to continue looking, contact will be maintained by mobile phone.
- If the group and leader cannot locate the missing child/children, and if the searching adult has not found anyone, the school office will be notified to alert any supporting staff to help in the search.
- At this point, the Headteacher will be notified by the Forest School Leader of the current situation. The Headteacher may choose to alert Police and Parents and follow the appropriate policy and process.
- Forest School Staff should immediately make a record of events and timings and last known position of the child/children. These will be recorded in the Forest School incident book.

First Aid Procedure:

- A number of staff within the school (including the current Forest School Leader) are qualified first aiders and will administer the care needed.
- First aid kit will be taken to all sessions and will be checked regularly
- Whilst dealing with a first aid incident, the leader will ensure the safety of all other children within the group by advising other adults present of the situation and ask them to monitor the other children, if alone children will be call to the area that the leader is in and if necessary all children will be taken indoors.
- Seek emergency help if needed.
- There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school.
- Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms
- Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into woodland.

Child Protection:

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader and accompanying adults to ensure the safety of children when on a forest school session. We are committed to creating an environment in which children are safe and free from harm. It is the role of the Forest School Leader to minimise the risk of abuse taking place:

- By educating children how to stay safe and speak out
- Taking appropriate action should any allegations arise and following the school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- Adults including parent helpers working within forest school sessions need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they

may disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves. Any volunteer or member of staff who finds that a child is telling them something which concerns them should:

- Listen to the child, allowing them to lead the discussion
- Keep calm and offer some reassurance and accept what the child says without challenge
- Make NO promises. You cannot 'keep a secret'. You should make it understood that there are limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure
- Inform the designated member of staff in School
- Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation including; the date, time, the location and what was said by the child and yourself. Keep it secure and hand the record to the designated member for child protection as soon as possible.

Any suspicion of abuse will be promptly and appropriately dealt with in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Children Policy.

Behavior Procedure

The Forest School leader will follow the school's Behavior Policy, however if the behavior of an individual, or group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others safety at risk then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School leader.

Weather conditions

Following the Forest Schools ethos of.....'there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!' Children are advised to dress warmly and wear waterproofs if necessary. However, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather;

- In the case of high winds of 25mph or more or gusts of over 40mph determined by the met office online.
- In the case of extreme temperature determined by a met office amber weather warning
- It is the schools responsibility to ensure children are appropriately dressed, the forest school leader can refuse to lead a session or may make the session shorter if the children are not dressed appropriately.

Food safety and Hygiene Procedures:

During a forest school session children are taught to sit around the fire circle to eat and not to walk around with food. Most forest school sessions include a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities. There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and prepared and our forest school leader has the appropriate food hygiene certificate.

Food Preparation, transport and storage;

- Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner (blue plaster or ideally gloves) before handling and preparing food.
- Food will be stored in clean containers and transported in a cool bag to and from the site, with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.
- Raw meats will be stored separately to any other foods.
- All 'use by' dates will be checked on foods before eating.
- Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage container.

Handling, cooking and eating Food;

- A fresh, clean, bucket of warm soapy water will be available for children to wash their hands before handling food or utensils
- Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire procedure. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.
- Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

Clearing away;

- ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults.
- The area is checked to ensure there is no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.
- ALL utensils and pans will be washed at the station in hot soapy water and stored away correctly.

Use of Tools procedure

- Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tool use guidance documents will be carried by the leader during each session and tool use ratios will be at the discretion of the Forest School Leader. Ratios will be set out in the session risk assessments.
- Relevant personal protection equipment will be worn at all times.
- Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory.
- Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children.
- They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used.

Use of Fires procedure

- A Forest School Leader must always be present when a fire is lit and must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire.
- Fires will be built in a designated fire area: if a tarpaulin is placed above the fire it should be approximately 8 foot above the fire and seating will be at a distance of 1.5 meters.
- Children will be reminded of the fire circle procedures at each and every visit.
- Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log, step over and sit down on the log seat.

- Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
- Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).
- The fire box containing fire retardant gloves, first aid kit and fire blanket should be placed close to the fire circle along with a covered bucket of clean cold water.