

WOOD FOLD PRIMARY SCHOOL

FOREST SCHOOL POLICY



Policy written (date):	September 2022
Policy published (including on the website):	September 2022
Next review (date):	Ongoing to reflect practice

Statement of Intent

Wood Fold Primary School aims to use the natural outdoor woodland area to offer the 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.

Wood Fold Primary School has many additional policies which will be adhered to alongside this policy during Forest School sessions:

Behaviour Policy
Safeguarding Policy
SEND Policy
Health and Safety Policy
First Aid Policy

Legislation considered for policy

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Children Act 2004
RIDDOR (Accident Reporting)

Implementation

Our Forest School sessions will be delivered by our Level 3 Forest School leader. They deliver this program following the guidance set out in this document. A copy of all policies and procedures will be taken into the woodland on each visit, this contains vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Each year group has a planned Forest Schools Project for the duration of a half term.

Before the children complete each Forest Schools session, a thorough check of the school grounds is completed. (See Appendix 1- Risk Assessment).

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 Wood Fold Primary School 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:

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 what they are doing is deemed too dangerous. Ratios within the woodland area will be 1 adult to 10 children. All staff and helpers 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. The school has a Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy etc. to enhance aspects of health and safety

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School

- Equipment and Activities
- Open Fire
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives), where applicable

Emergency Procedure:

In the event of an emergency the following will happen;

- Emergency Whistle blown
- 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 unaware
- If an immediate recount still shows a shortfall, all activities will be suspended and “1, 2, 3, come to me” 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, “1, 2, 3, come to me” will be carried out once more.
- If the five-minute search does not discover the missing child/children, the Forest School Leader will take the group back to school, retracing the paths taken earlier. One adult will stay in the area to continue looking, contact will be maintained by walkie talkie.
- 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.

Behaviour Procedure

The Forest School leader will follow the school's Behaviour Policy, however if the behaviour 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 determined by the met office online.
- In the case of extreme temperature determined by a met office amber weather warning
- In the case of extreme cold of below '0' a session will be cancelled if it is near to this we will ensure children are appropriately dressed, sessions will be made shorter and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

Food safety and Hygiene Procedures:

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is 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 which include; toasting marshmallows/waffles and making s'mores. There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and prepared.

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.
- Any food needing preparation will be prepared in the school kitchen e.g. bread dough
- 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 and cleaning up;

- 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. Relevant personal protection equipment will be used bring fire building.
- Children will be reminded of the fire pit 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.

Environment:

Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. Wood Fold Primary School will promote environmental awareness and care for our environment. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported. The woodland will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. We will remove all litter and debris we take into the woodland and have regular litter picks to remove other refuse which is in the area. We will be caring towards our neighbours and try to minimise the amount of smoke and noise produced. Brambles and nettles

will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas of the woodland. Branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries for people entering the woodland unsupervised (without the Forest School Leader), they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored in the log store and used as fire wood. During the winter months, large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them. The hedgerow around the edge of the woodland will be maintained to encourage small wildlife to live in the woods. The forest school area is at the back of the field.

Monitoring of policy:

This policy will be reviewed annually or before should any incidents arise or laws and policies change.

Wood Fold Primary School

Forest School Risk Assessment - Sept 2022

Significant Hazards / Risks	Level	Control / Actions	Risk Benefits
Exploring the site Uneven ground, branches and trees roots on the ground. Branches and shrubs at eye level	Low	Children well supervised, awareness talks and reminders. There will always be at least 2 members of staff both first aid trained with a First aid kit and walkie talkie. Higher adult; child ratios.	Promoting physical development and awareness of the difference in surroundings. Encouraging children to be self-aware and support their peers.
Missing child A child may wander off or go missing during a Forest School session.	Low	Children told and asked to repeat boundaries and Forest school rules. Regular headcount. No access out of school grounds.	Children to realise the importance of following rules and working as a group. Building relationships and trusting each other.
Bites and stings from bees / wasps and stinging nettles.	Low	Warn not to catch bees / wasps and be aware of stinging nettles. Long trousers and closed footwear to be worn. Nettles to be cleared.	Opportunity to study how different insects move around. Displaying a positive approach to insects rather than being frightened of them.
Drowning A child may wander into the wild pond which is located on the left as you enter the Dragon's Den.	Low	Children to be well supervised and shown the pond area. All children should be advised to stay to the path. Low level fencing is in place. The fence should not be leaned against.	Children to realise the importance of following rules and respecting open water.

Significant Hazards / Risks	Level	Control / Actions	Risk Benefits
Poisonous Plants	Low	Site to be inspected prior to sessions, staff to be aware of poisonous plants and children not to pick anything that's living and growing, keep fingers out of their mouths.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding poisonous plants. Understanding the natural world and what they mustn't touch.
Allergies or children's existing conditions.	Low	All staff to be aware of any known allergies or existing conditions and be aware of treatment required.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding allergens.
Mushrooms and fungi	Low	Ensure children do not eat anything they find and keep their hands out of their mouths and wash them thoroughly after the session. Obvious mushrooms to be cleared away.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding mushrooms and fungi. Identify similarities to foods bought and eaten.
Building dens or other activities using sticks and branches - risk of sharp objects.	Low	Children to be aware of dangers and carry / hold sticks carefully being aware of others around them. Injuries / accidents to be dealt with accordingly	Opportunity to work as a team safely, to problem solve and scaffold each other. Opportunities to develop motor skills, practice knots and develop social skills.
Animal droppings	Low	Children to be made aware not to touch or pick up any animal droppings. Hands to be cleaned and anti bac gel to be used.	To help children to identify animals from their droppings and other traits. To understand the importance of hygiene.

Significant Hazards / Risks	Level	Control / Actions	Risk Benefits
Falling branches	Low	Site checked regularly to ensure no fallen or dangerous branches.	Children to learn to risk assess for themselves.
Using string	Low	Children to be instructed how to use string to make dens and tie sticks together. Close supervision.	Practicing knots and learning new skills involving following instructions. Encourages creativity
Sharp branches and thorns	Medium	Children to be aware, any cuts or injuries to be dealt with on site. Larger cuts / more serious injuries to be dealt with in school. In the event of severe injuries phone 999.	Children to be self-aware, identify dangers and scaffold peers. Encourages self confidence in a new and sensory environment.
Small tools Potato peelers, knives, saws,	High	Safety talk given and repeated. Close supervision.	Building confidence and gaining new experiences.
Cooking food	High	As fire lighting & campfire. Any food cooked will be under close supervision with the adult cooking the food and ensuring it is cooled before the children eat it.	See lighting and campfire. Children learn about cooking and being independent as well as learning life skills. Encourages creativity.
Larger tools - Sheaf Knife, loppers, bow saw and Billhook.	High	Safety talk given and repeated prior to use of tools. Strict use of tools on a 1:1 basis under very close supervision. Gloves to be used on the hand not holding the tool. Only trained Forest School Leader to use tools with children. and fire lighting.	Supporting communication skills: listening, understanding and learning new vocabulary. Hand and eye coordination, learning new skills. Risk taking & managing behaviour and frustration.

Significant Hazards / Risks	Level	Control / Actions	Risk Benefits
Fire lighting & campfire.	High	<p>Safety talk given prior to lighting each fire with reminder of rules for the fire circle, children asked to say / repeat the rules to ensure they have understood them. Fire circle laid out with clear boundaries; children only go in the fire circle when invited by the Forest School leader on a 1:1 basis. Water is always available at the side of the fire and sticks etc to be collected before the fire is lit. Gloves used when needed. Children to sit on logs/planks while the fire is lit.</p> <p>Only trained Forest School Leader to light fires with children.</p> <p>School to be informed.</p>	<p>Development of awareness and respect of fire. Working as a team and building trusting relationships and self-confidence.</p> <p>Children learn to be aware of danger and risk take as well as learning how to light and maintain a fire safely.</p> <p>Gaining new experiences that empower them to use their initiative and enjoy the natural environment.</p> <p>Supports mathematical development, sizes and sorting.</p>

Forest School Leader to provide a "timetable" so that the Caretaker(s) can ensure that the area has been checked prior to the children accessing the area.

The Caretaker(s) will inform a member of SLT or the Forest School Leader of any concerns they may have.

Risk Assessment undertaken by:

Karen McManus

Date:

September 2022