



## Health and Safety Policy for Forest School South Otterington Church of England Primary School.



Policy, procedure and active management practice is in place to ensure the health, safety and well being of participants at all times and comply with relevant regulations. Forest School leaders and staff are competent, appropriately trained and actively use health, safety and hygiene policies and procedures. All Forest School participants have an awareness of the appropriate health and safety elements.

### SITE

#### 1. Use of the Site

The site being used is the Nature Garden at South Otterington School. We have been using this site for Forest School sessions since September 2017.

#### 2. Distance

The site is at the bottom of the school drive on the school grounds.

The children are led by the Forest School leader and supervised by parents and teaching assistants. They walk in single file down the right hand side of the school drive. The Forest School leader is at the front of the line and a teaching assistant at the rear of the line. A head count is completed before we leave the school yard and again once we are inside the nature garden and sitting at the log circle. Once we get to the bottom of the drive one adult closes the school gates at the bottom of the drive and stands in front of them. The Forest school leader unlocks the gate and goes into the nature garden first leading the children. A teaching assistant will be the last person through the gate and close it after themselves. The gate at the bottom of the drive will remain closed while the children are in the nature garden.

When returning to school at the end of the session a head count will be completed at the log circle and an adult will stand in front of the gate at the bottom of the school drive. The Forest School leader will lead the children in single file up the left hand side of the drive with a teaching assistant at the back of the line. The children will remain in this line until they enter the school building.

#### 3. Boundaries

The boundaries are the fence around the nature garden. The children are told not to go out of the gate and are not allowed to climb over fences. The children are not allowed in the pond.

#### 4. Dead Wood and Fallen trees

When the site checks are done as part of the risk assessment the Forest School leader will scan the tree canopy for any dead wood, any branches that have snapped off and may cause a hazard from falling. If there is such a danger the site will not be in use until the wood can be removed. Fallen trees need to be checked to make sure that they are resting on the ground and are stable and not likely to roll around.

## 5. Bees and Wasps

During Forest School sessions all adults should be vigilant for the presence of bee or wasp nests. If they are found then contact must be made with an agency that can dispose of them. Until the nest is removed Forest School sessions would not take place. All adults should be aware of any children with a known allergic reaction to stings and the trained first aider should be aware of emergency procedures to follow if anyone has been stung.

## 6. Nettles

As the site is covered in nettles in the summer months children are all advised to wear long trousers and long sleeved tops to prevent nettle stings. The first aider will carry anthisan cream which can be applied to nettle stings. The first aider will also carry piriton syrup which can be administered for bee and wasp stings and for nettle stings. Parent permission must be sought by telephone if there is a need to administer piriton medicine. Children are all shown what nettles look like before entering the site.

## 7. Poisonous plants

As part of the risk assessment the Forest School leader will be aware of any poisonous plants found on the site. All children are told not to put anything in their mouths unless told to do so by an adult. The trained first aider will be aware of emergency procedures should a child swallow something poisonous.

## 8. Pond

Children are warned of the danger of the pond which is located in the centre of the site. They are not allowed to run in the nature garden as access round the pond is very narrow and they are at risk of falling in. Children are not allowed to put anything in the pond or take anything out of the pond. If there is an organised activity looking at plants or animals in the pond children will be closely supervised by an adult and their hands will be cleaned with hand gel and then thoroughly washed when back at school.

## **Rules in Forest School**

The first session that the children attend Forest School they will be told that this session will involve a lot of listening to the Forest School leader. They will have to listen to and understand the rules that we all need to follow to keep us all safe while we are here.

Children may be asked if there are any rules that they would like to add and parent helpers will also be asked if they think any rules should be added. The activities of different weeks will bring their own sets of rules and these will be introduced at the beginning of the session while the children are sitting at the camp area.

Basic rules for Forest School are:-

1. It is important to listen to the Forest School leader and to all adults.
2. Everyone must do as they are told immediately (this may be for safety).
3. We treat each other with respect.
4. We are aware of those around us.
5. We never walk inside the log circle (there may be a fire there).
6. We treat all plants and animals in the nature garden with respect.
7. The Forest School leader always walks at the front on the journey to the nature garden.
8. Never put anything in your mouth unless told to do so by an adult.
9. Respond to whistle – short blasts return to camp, one long blast run to sound of whistle.
10. Children may carry sticks in the nature garden but must be aware of the people around them. If they are waving sticks dangerously then an adult will tell them to put the sticks down. Children are not allowed to bring sticks back to school.
11. Children are allowed to climb trees to the height that their hand can reach from the ground. Their feet must always be pointing downwards. Children will be shown how high

they can climb on their first session at forest school. All adults to be aware of how high children are climbing.

12. Children are not allowed to run in the nature garden in case they fall into the pond.

13. Children are not allowed to put anything in the pond or take anything out of it.

### **Roles in Forest School**

Jane Worgan is the Qualified Forest School leader and will be in charge of the Forest School sessions. Jane Worgan has an outdoor first aid certificate and will be the qualified first aider on Forest School sessions. A teaching assistant will help to supervise the sessions and will take over the role of leader if Jane Worgan was injured or dealing with an emergency. Parent volunteers will be there to help and support the children. They will not be asked to do anything that they have not been trained to do or are uncomfortable with. The roles of the children are to listen to the adults, to help each other and to follow Forest School rules.

### **Risk Assessment**

The Forest School leader will carry out risk assessments before the sessions begin. A copy of the risk assessments will be held in the school, the Forest School leader will carry a copy of the risk assessment.

Risk assessments will be completed for the site, for any children with specific behaviours and for the activities to be carried out such as tool use and fire lighting.

Risk assessments should be completed for each session and should be evaluated, dated and amended after each session.

All teaching assistants and parent helpers will read the risk assessment before the session and sign to say they have read it.

### **Bad Weather**

If the weather conditions are considered to be too dangerous to go to Forest School e.g. gale force winds or thunder and lightning, a decision will be made to cancel the session. It may be decided that it would be safe to conduct the session on the school field away from trees. If it is decided to cancel the session all parent volunteers will be informed. If conditions deteriorate while we are at Forest school a decision will be made to leave the nature garden and return to school.

### **Hygiene**

Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before setting out for Forest School sessions.

Children will be escorted back to school by a teaching assistant if they need the toilet.

Children will wash hands with hand gel before drinks and snack time.

Children will be encouraged to wash their hands on return to school.

### **Tool Use**

The Forest School leader will have been fully trained in the use of all tools that are to be used in a Forest School session. Tool use should be appropriate to the age of the children attending Forest School. A lesson plan should set out how the tool is to be used and the purpose for the use. A risk assessment should be completed for any activities using tools. Teaching assistants and parents should be aware of the lesson plan, should have read the risk assessment and be aware of the first aid emergency procedures in case it is the First Aider who is injured. All tools should be carried to the site by adults.

- Tools should be introduced by the Forest School leader
- A safety talk should be given by the Forest School leader
- All tools should be stored in a central tool area, these should be counted out and counted in
- Children should be supervised at all times with tools
- All adults working with tools should be shown how to use them safely.
- Procedures for care and cleaning of tools should be followed.

### **Care and Cleaning of Tools**

See attached sheet – 2.3 b Check, clean, maintain and store tools safely.

## **Use of Personal Protective Equipment**

The use of personal protective equipment will be outlined in all risk assessments for each session. Adults will be made aware of these before each session. Children will be told about personal protective equipment in the safety talk at the beginning of the session when the activity is being introduced.

Adults will be informed of the need for steel toe capped boots if they are planning to carry anything heavy. If they do not have these it is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to make sure that they are not carrying heavy objects.

Children may need to use safety gloves and safety goggles and may need to wear a fire gauntlet when working near the fire. It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to ensure that these are available and that the children are wearing them. All personal protective equipment must be kept in good working order.

## **Shelter Building**

The Forest School leader will produce lesson plans and risk assessments for the activities involved in shelter building. All adults on the session will have read the lesson plans and risk assessments and will be aware of emergency first aid procedures. All adults carrying heavy wood will be wearing steel toe caps. Children will be given a safety talk before the activity begins. It will be explained to the children before they begin that they we are not allowed to leave anything in the nature garden that wasn't already here such as sheets, rope, tape and that if they use these things to build their shelters they will have to take them down before we leave.

## **Fire Lighting**

When a session of fire lighting is planned a separate risk assessment must be carried out. All adults should be aware of the risk assessment, the emergency procedures and aware of the emergency first aid in case it is the first aider who is burned.

Fire safety equipment must be taken to the site. Fire blanket, bottles of water and a bucket for submersion of burns.

The fire pit should be set up on arrival at the site and the fire safely extinguished and fire pit removed at the end of the session.

## **Clothing**

Waterproof jackets and trousers will be supplied by the school for all children attending Forest School. Children will be told to bring wellington boots for all sessions. At the parents meeting the parents will be told that children's clothes will get wet and dirty so will need to be playing out clothes. Long trousers and long sleeves will be needed all year round due to nettles on the site. It will be stated that if children do not have appropriate clothing they may need to be left at school with another class for safety reasons.

## **Essential Equipment**

There are items of essential equipment that must be carried to Forest school every week. These are transported in the Forest School trolley. Other equipment that may be needed will be activity specific.

Essential Equipment

- First Aid kit
- Risk Assessment
- Lesson plan
- Mobile phone
- All adults to carry whistle, hand gel, notebook tissues
- Drinking water and cups
- Roll mat
- Groundsheet
- Spare clothes
- ipad
- Class list

## **Communication with parents**

At the beginning of the year all parents are sent a letter to tell them that Forest School will be taking place this year. They will be told what children need to wear, what they will be doing and will be invited to a parents meeting to give them information about what Forest School is, when their child will be going, what they need to wear and also asked if they would like to volunteer to help on the sessions.

Each year a display of forest school photographs will be displayed in the school for parents to see.

## **Legislation**

All current legislation that is held in school will be followed in forest school.

This includes:-

Equal opportunities and diversity policy

Health and Safety policy

Disability Discrimination Policy

Policy on checking criminal records

Teaching and Learning policy

Child protection policy

Behaviour policy

Special educational needs policy

Accident procedures

Incidents and near misses

Forest School policy

## **Ratios**

The legal ratios for school visits are:-

Under 5's – more than 1 adult to 6 children

Years 1 to 3 – 1 adult to 6 children

Years 4 to 6 – 1 adult to 10 – 15 children

When doing Forest School sessions it is preferable to have high adult/child ratios as the children will get more from the experience with more individual attention from adults. All adults are equipped with a notebook so are able to write down things that the children say that show they have acquired new skills and knowledge. They can also write down things that the children are interested in and would like to find out more about allowing sessions to be more child initiated and child led.

It is also important to have high adult/child ratios to ensure children's safety and to enable them to take risks with the support of an adult. When the Forest School leader is working 1:1 with a child with a tool or fire lighting it is important to have a teaching assistant to organise and supervise the rest of the children.

It is the aim for Forest School at South Otterington to be run by a teacher qualified as a Forest School leader, supported by a teaching assistant and helped by parent volunteers. The aim is to have a ratio of 1 adult to 5 children.

## **Insurance**

Forest School at South Otterington School is covered by the schools insurance. (See attached copy of insurance)

## **Forest School Leader Agreement**

The Forest School leader will hold a Level 3 Forest School leader qualification; will hold a current DBS check and will hold an Outdoor Paediatric first aid qualification.

The planning, risk assessments, site checks and organisation of adults and children is the responsibility of the Forest School leader.

At the beginning of each session the Forest School leader will ensure that all parent helpers have read the lesson plan and the risk assessment and will be aware of their roles during the session.

At the beginning of the session the Forest School leader will explain the rules of Forest School clearly to the adults and children. They will be reinforced weekly. All objectives, aims and learning intentions for each lesson will be linked to the National Curriculum and to the Early Learning Foundation Stage goals. A copy of the planning will be given to the class teacher and notes, photographs and evaluation will also be given to the teacher after the session for her record keeping.

It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to promote emotional intelligence, self esteem and appropriate behaviour and learning. This will be done by including a variety of

activities each week, by allowing the children to take risks and to revisit areas of interest on a regular basis. Where possible, learning will be child led and child initiated which will promote self esteem and confidence. Team work and group games will encourage good behaviour and cooperation. Praise and noticing good behaviour will be an aim of all adults at Forest School.

### **Consent Forms**

At the beginning of all Forest School sessions a parents letter will be sent home to explain to parents what Forest School is, how it runs at South Otterington School and inviting them to a parents meeting to give them more information. The letter will also include a consent form for them to sign, giving permission for their child to attend Forest School sessions. Any children not given permission to attend Forest School will stay at school and work with another class during those sessions.

Mrs Jane Worgan 2010

Updated by Mrs Jane Worgan 2013

Updated by Mrs Jane Worgan 2018

