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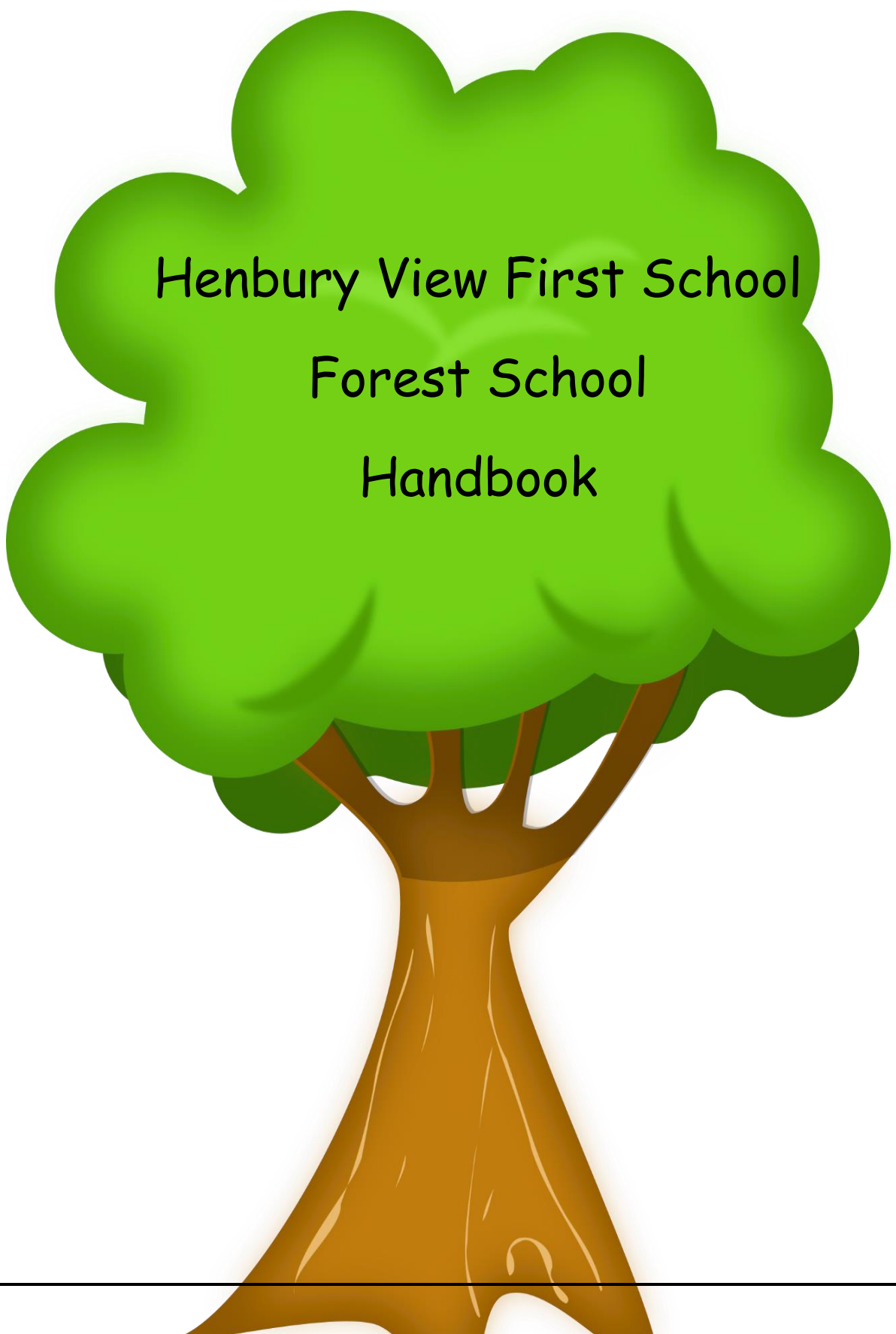
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Henbury View First School

Every Child Matters, Every Moment Counts

Headteacher: Mrs S Wall

Assistant Headteacher: Mr D Saunders

A large, stylized illustration of a tree with a thick brown trunk and a large, rounded green canopy. The text of the title is centered within the green canopy.

Henbury View First School Forest School Handbook

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Henbury View's Forest School

Our Forest School ethos endeavours to support children to develop self-esteem, independence and confidence through outdoor, child-led play. We take a holistic approach to learning and development and offer a mixture of problem solving, free play and creative activities as well as some more specific bushcraft style skills (e.g. knot tying, fire lighting and tool use). At Henbury View Forest School we aim to foster a connection to and love of nature, through play, observations and outdoor exploration. The children are given time and space to explore, take risks and make discoveries for themselves alongside peers and school staff. Although independence and risk taking are essential Forest School goals, our qualified leaders will, always be close by, to guide and reassure. Each Forest School session is child-led and designed to meet the needs of individuals ensuring Henbury View children grow in self-confidence, as well as developing their physical, emotional, cognitive and social skills.

Our Commitment to the Forest School ethos and principles

- Our Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visit; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- Our Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

- Our Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being development and learning.
- Our Forest School aims to promote holistic development, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative children.
- Our Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- Our Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice

Adapted from the Forest School association

<https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>

Promoting Learning and Development

Henbury View Forest School leaders play a key role in fostering an environment where children feel safe, empowered, and inspired to explore and learn. Our approach will be child-centred, focusing on the following principles:

- **Facilitating Exploration and Independence:** We have a stimulating environment, offering opportunities for open-ended play, exploration, and discovery.
- **Building Relationships:** We will foster trust and respect, creating a positive and inclusive space where children feel secure to express themselves and take risks.

- **Promoting Emotional and Social Growth:** We will encourage collaboration, empathy, and reflection, we will support children to develop social skills and emotional resilience.
- **Modelling and Encouraging Respect for Nature:** We aim to demonstrate and promote sustainable practices and a deep appreciation for the natural world.

All adults involved in Forest School sessions will be encouraged to adopt a similar child-led approach, prioritising the following behaviours:

- **Observe, Don't Direct:** Resist the urge to instruct or intervene unless necessary for safety. Allow children the space to lead their learning.
- **Support Independence:** Encourage problem-solving and critical thinking by asking open-ended questions rather than providing answers.
- **Foster Positive Interactions:** Demonstrate patience, empathy, and encouragement, helping build a supportive community where every child feels valued.
- **Celebrate Effort and Progress:** Acknowledge achievements, big or small, focusing on effort and personal growth rather than outcomes.

Forest School Risk-Taking

At Henbury View Forest School, we believe managed risk is vital for learning and growth. Taking risks helps participants develop confidence, problem-solving skills, resilience, and an understanding of safety. We are committed to encouraging personal growth, decision-making, and adaptability in a supportive environment.

All activities are carefully planned and supervised to ensure risks are appropriate and manageable. Children are guided to assess, and handle risks themselves, fostering independence and lifelong skills.

Risk-taking is central to our ethos, promoting curiosity, confidence, and a deeper connection to nature.

Our written Benefit- Risk Assessment (BRA) procedures ensure that all children (and adults) at Forest School remain as safe as possible, whilst allowing the children to experience some degree of appropriate 'risk', important for their learning, development and enjoyment! We plan our activities and write our B.R.A considering the benefits of the activity for the children. Our assessments are working documents and are updated and amended regularly.

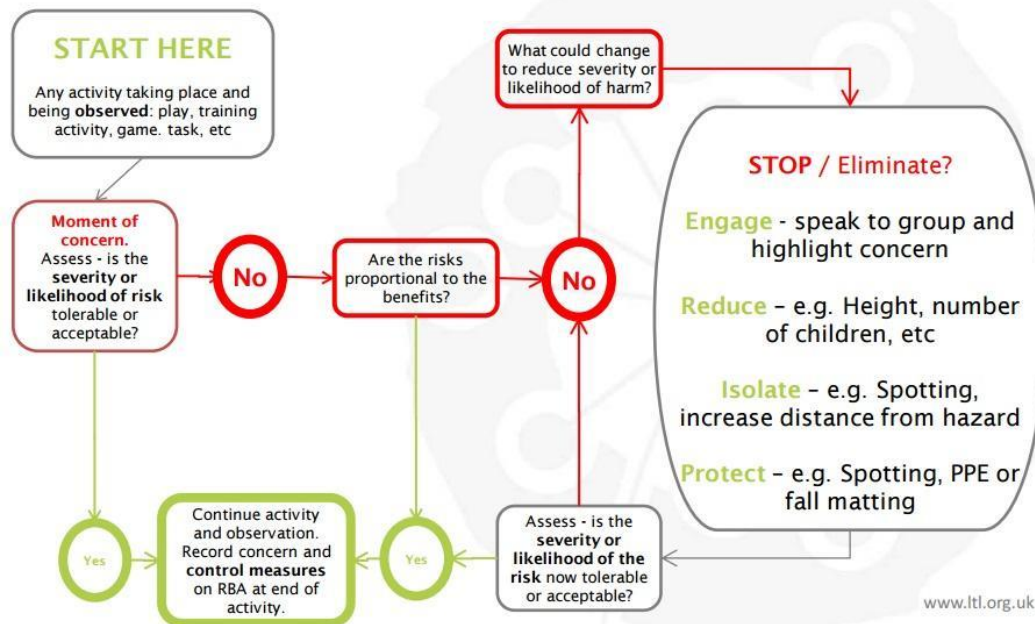
Risk Benefit Analysis example

Considering the benefits...		
1. What type of activities are going to take place on this site?	2. What are the benefits of enabling these activities to take place?	3. What specific hazards have been identified from carrying out these activities?
Tool work	<p>Physical skills - fine and gross motor developed by manipulating knives, peelers etc and back and forth with large sawing motions.</p> <p>Cognitive Skills – learning new skills; creative skills; making an item and using their own ideas within the design.</p> <p>Holistic Learning- Builds resilience; fosters teamwork; turn taking; risk taking</p>	Using sharp tools can be risky if not shown how to carry and use them correctly. Sharp knives can penetrate skin and must be used in a controlled environment.

During sessions all Leaders will be expected to adhere to a dynamic risk assessment model first developed by Learning Through Landscapes.

Dynamic Risk Benefit Assessment Procedure

Learning Through Landscapes believe that not every risk can be pre-judged. Therefore we operate Dynamic Risk Benefit assessments, through our staff members, to support the Risk Benefit Assessments in place. The process for these dynamic judgements is below.



In addition to our risk benefit assessments, we will complete regular site risk assessments and activity risk assessments. These risk assessments ensure children, staff and the Forest School site is safe and protected.

Site and activity Risk Assessment examples

The Hazard	Who could be harmed?	How could they be harmed?	Control and Who will carry out control measure and when.	Benefit of exposure to this risk	Likelihood Rated from Low Medium High	Severity Rated from Low Medium High	Level of risk (with control measures in place)
Stumps and logs	Children and staff	Soft Tissue Injuries: Sprains, Strains, Bumps, and Bruises	Remove hazards from walkways, Walk, don't run. All participants always	Cognitive, Problem-Solving. Confidence, Resilience. Woodland management	Medium	Medium	Low

Activity	Who could be harmed?	How could they be harmed?	Control and Who will carry out control measure and when.	Benefit of exposure to this risk	Likelihood Rated from Low Medium High	Severity Rated from Low Medium High	Level of risk (with control measures in place)
Fire lighting	Children and staff	Burns, smoke inhalation	Fire rules adhered to at all times, P.P.E used , fire kept to manageable size	Confidence, resilience. A real sense of wonder, a lifeskill.	Medium	High	Low

Policies and procedures

Forest School Play policy

At Henbury View's Forest School, we believe that play is a fundamental part of children's development. Through play, children explore the natural world, build confidence, and develop physical, social, and cognitive skills.

Our Vision for Play

We aim to provide a safe, inclusive, and stimulating environment where children can engage in self-directed, imaginative, and adventurous play. We will encourage every child to play freely in nature and to take risks appropriate to their age and abilities.

Principles of Play at Forest School

- Child-led: Play is initiated and directed by the child. Adults act as observers, supporters, and facilitators.
- Nature-based: The natural environment is central to play. We encourage children to use natural materials and explore the changing seasons.
- Unstructured and Open-ended: Children are free to choose how and where they play, within agreed boundaries.
- Risk-aware, not risk-averse: Risk-taking is essential for learning. We support children in assessing and managing their own risks.

Managing Risk in Play

- Risk assessments are regularly conducted and updated for all play areas and activities.
- Children are encouraged to participate in dynamic risk assessment, developing their judgment and decision-making skills.
- Staff receive training in risk-benefit analysis and support children to stretch their abilities safely.

Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. Feedback from children, parents, and staff will inform policy development and implementation.

Environmental Planning Policy

This Environmental Plan outlines our commitment to sustainable practice and environmental stewardship at Henbury View Forest School. We recognise the importance of protecting the natural environment and educating children in their role in conserving and respecting nature.

Henbury View Forest School Commitment:

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- Reducing our ecological footprint
- Promoting sustainable practices among staff, children, and the wider community
- Encouraging a connection between children and nature

Respect for Wildlife and Nature

- All activities are designed to minimize disruption to wildlife habitats
- Children are taught to observe wildlife respectfully and avoid disturbing animals and plants
- No collecting or removing natural materials unless planned and sustainable

Learning and Awareness

- Environmental education is embedded throughout the Forest School curriculum
- Children are encouraged to explore environmental issues such as pollution, conservation, and climate change in age-appropriate ways
- Staff model environmentally responsible behaviour and support children to develop eco-awareness

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated to reflect new environmental guidance and best practice. Staff, children and parents are invited to contribute to ongoing improvements.

Environmental impact assessment examples

site survey form - assessing ecological impacts on our site					
	Impacts and actions for each ecological layer				
Education activities	Ground layer: (above and below soil)	Field Layer: (Plants to knee height)	Under storey Layer (Shrubs/s mall trees)	Canopy Layer (Tree tops, branches, trunks)	Actions (Note any actions you can take to reduce impacts)
fire pit	Fire pits, leading to burnt vegetation and change in chemical composition of soil.	Cleared area	Cleared area	Potential smoke damage and habitat reduction for birds and insects	Site of firepit. Consider two sites to minimise individual impact.
minibeast hunting	Removal or destruction of habitat. Destruction of 'minibeasts'	Trampling and foot fall destroying environment and habitat.	Limited impact as layer will contain limited interest children hunting	Limited impact as canopy layer out of reach for children.	Educate children on the need to respect the 'minibeast' and their habitats.

Land management

We plan to use to the site weekly, year-round with a limited number of children. The current plan is to use the site for 2 2 hr sessions one day a week with 14-16 children. The group will be supported by two adults. The site will be used in all weathers and across the school year. The site will be rested during the school holidays and will receive a full 7-week break during the summer holiday.

Ongoing maintenance will be performed as and when needed with major works carried out during the school holidays.

Three-year plan Land Management Plan

	Area of management	Management method	Resources needed	Carried out by	By when
Year 1	High frequency areas and high footfall zones	Pathways maintenance and creation	Wood Shavings Stone chippings Wooden border	Forest School leaders	Ongoing Completed by summer term 2026
	Fire Pit, Tool area, Art area	Zone Creation	Rope and stakes to differentiate zones	Forest School leaders	Prior to May 2025

Year 2	Planting and encouraging new tree growth	Planting and maintain saplings	Wild wood planting kit form Woodland trust Support from Dorset Wildlife Trust	Forest school leaders and children	Apply for packs before August 2025 and packs to be delivered in November 2025
	Pond	Pond regeneration		Forest school leaders, children and Dorset Wild life trust	Ongoing completed Winter of 2026
Year 3	Wildflower Meadow	Create and plant wild meadow.	Seeds Gardening equipment Natural fencing materials	Forest school leaders and children	Begin ASAP Maintain, establish annual growth by 2027

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated to reflect new environmental guidance and best practice. Staff, children and parents are invited to contribute to ongoing improvements.

Forest School Fire Policy

The use of fire at Forest School provides valuable learning opportunities and helps develop children's understanding of safety, responsibility, and respect for nature. Henbury View's Fire Policy outlines our approach to managing fire safely during Forest School sessions.

Purpose of Fire Use

- To provide a rich, sensory experience in nature
- To support learning around science, survival, and safety
- To support traditional outdoor skills and knowledge

Fire Circle Design and Setup

- Fires are only lit in a designated fire circle area, clearly marked and established beforehand
- The fire circle includes a minimum safety distance (e.g. 1.5 meters) from the fire to seated children
- Seating is arranged in a horseshoe or full circle with a clear entrance
- A water bucket and first aid kit are always on hand

Fire Safety Rules

- Children must only enter the fire circle with adult permission
- No one can run or play in the fire circle
- Children must kneel on one knee (the 'respect position') when tending to the fire
- Loose clothing secured
- No items are thrown or placed into the fire without supervision

Lighting and Managing the Fire

- Fires are lit by trained Forest School Leaders using appropriate fire lighting techniques
- Only dry, untreated wood is used for burning
- Fire size is always kept small and manageable
- Fires are never left unattended

Cooking on the Fire

- All cooking is fully supervised by an adult
- Children are taught safe practices including tool handling (e.g. skewers, pans)
- Food hygiene practices are followed
- Allergies and dietary requirements are checked in advance

Extinguishing the Fire

- The fire is fully extinguished at the end of each session using water
- Ashes are spread and covered if appropriate to the site
- The fire site is checked before leaving to ensure no embers remain

Risk Assessment and Supervision

A detailed risk assessment is completed and reviewed regularly for fire use. Fire activities are only conducted when weather conditions are suitable. A qualified Forest School Leader will supervise all fire-related activities.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. Feedback from staff, children, and parents may inform adjustments to fire safety practices.

Forest School Tool Policy

At Forest School, we use tools to support children's learning, confidence, independence, and connection with the natural world. This policy outlines how tools are introduced, used, and managed to ensure the safety of all participants and staff.

Purpose of Tool Use

- To develop fine and gross motor skills.
- To encourage responsibility, patience, and resilience.
- To foster teamwork and safe risk-taking.
- To enable practical tasks such as fire lighting, den building, and woodland crafts.

Tool talks & Training

- All children will receive a tool talk before using any tool, including:
- The tool's name and use.
- Safety rules for handling and using the tool.
- How to care for and store the tool.
- Children demonstrate understanding before being allowed to use the tool.

Risk Assessment and Supervision

- Tools are always used under the direct supervision of a trained adult.
- Ratios are risk-assessed; high-risk tools (e.g. bow saws, knives) may require 1:1 supervision.
- Adults model calm, safe, and purposeful tool use. - Tools are stored securely when not in use.
- Children are taught to walk safely (e.g., blade down, locked if possible).
- - A safety bubble (clear working space) is maintained during use.
- PPE (e.g., gloves) is used where appropriate.
- Tools are checked before and after each session for damage or faults.

Types of Tools Used (examples)

- Peelers and potato peelers (for whittling)
- Secateurs
- Bow saws
- Loppers
- Billhooks (for older children, with training and supervision)
- Fixed-blade knives (for older children, with training and supervision)

Storage & Maintenance

- Tools are kept in a locked toolbox inside a secure shed.

- Tools are cleaned and dried after use.
- Routine checks are carried out for wear, rust, or damage.

Review and monitoring

This policy is reviewed regularly or after any serious incident involving tools. Updates are made in response to new guidance, training, or best practice.

Forest School Cooking and Food Hygiene Policy

This policy ensures the safe preparation, handling, and cooking of food during Forest School sessions, supporting the health and wellbeing of all participants.

Food Hygiene Standards

- Hands must be washed with soap and water or cleaned with antibacterial gel before and after handling food.
- All surfaces and utensils must be cleaned and sanitized before and after use.
- Perishable food must be stored in cool conditions and used within safe time limits.
- Cross-contamination must be avoided, for example by using separate boards for raw and cooked food.

Cooking Safety

- Fires must be managed by trained Forest School leaders.
- Children must be supervised at all times near fire and cooking areas.
- Safe distance zones must be established around cooking fires.
- Cooking tools, such as knives and skewers, are to be used under direct supervision and returned after use.

Allergies and Dietary Needs

- A record of participants' allergies and dietary requirements must be kept within the main school and checked before any cooking session.

- All food must be clearly labelled where appropriate, and allergen information shared with participants and carers.

Waste and Clean-up

- Food waste must be disposed of responsibly, such as by composting or bagging and taking it off-site.
- Washing up is done using hot water and eco-friendly detergents where possible.
- All equipment should be dried and stored hygienically.

Review and Compliance

This policy is reviewed regularly or after any serious incident involving cooking and food prep. Updates are made in response to new guidance, training, or best practice. Non-compliance with hygiene or safety standards will be addressed immediately.

Forest School Welfare Policy

This policy supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of all participants by providing a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment during Forest School sessions.

Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Participants must wear weather-appropriate clothing to ensure comfort and safety in an outdoor setting.
- Essential clothing includes waterproof coats and trousers, sturdy footwear (wellies or boots), warm layers in cold weather, and sun hats or caps in hot weather.
- Limited spare clothing will be available to allow for changes in weather or accidents.
- Staff will advise parents/carers on suitable clothing in advance of specific sessions.

- PPE such as tool gloves and fire gloves will be provided for specific tasks (e.g. tool use, fire lighting) and must be worn as instructed.

Toileting and Hygiene

- A suitable toileting area will be designated and maintained for each session, ensuring privacy, cleanliness, and safety.
- Handwashing facilities or hand sanitiser will be available before and after toileting, before eating, and after contact with soil, water, or animals.

Shelter and Comfort

- Temporary shelters such as tarps or tents will be used to provide protection from rain, sun, and wind as needed.
- Rest areas with seating will be available to support participants who need to pause or recover.
- Drinking water will always be accessible via personal water bottles, and warm drinks will be provided in cold conditions.
- Staff monitor children's comfort levels continuously and adapt sessions accordingly.

Emotional Welfare and Inclusion

- Forest School aims to nurture confidence, independence, and social connection in all participants.
- Staff promote a culture of kindness, respect, and positive behaviour.
- Individual needs, including additional support requirements, will be accommodated where possible.
- Any signs of distress or discomfort will be addressed sensitively and promptly.

Supervision and Safeguarding

- All staff and volunteers are subject to DBS checks and safeguarding training.
- Ratios of adults to children follow Forest School Association guidelines and are adjusted according to the activity and age group.
- Any concerns relating to welfare will be documented and reported in line with Henbury View's safeguarding policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly or in response to significant incidents, updated guidance, or identified need.

Forest School Extreme Weather Policy

This policy will ensure the safety and wellbeing of all participants during adverse weather conditions while maintaining the ethos of outdoor learning in Forest School. Forest School operates in most weather conditions to encourage resilience and connection with nature. However, certain extreme weather conditions require modified activities, additional precautions, or rare session cancellation.

Definitions of Extreme Weather

- Extreme weather includes, but is not limited to:
- High winds (typically above 35 mph / 56 kph)
- Electrical storms (thunder and lightning)
- Heavy snowfall or icy conditions
- Excessive heat (above 30°C / 86°F)
- Torrential rain causing localised flooding or waterlogged ground

Risk Assessment and Decision-Making

- A dynamic risk assessment is conducted before and during every session.
- The Forest School Leader has authority to modify activities, change location, or cancel sessions based on safety concerns.
- Weather forecasts (Met Office, bbc.co.uk) are reviewed regularly prior to each session.

Weather-Specific Guidelines

- High Winds: Activities under or near trees will be avoided. Sessions may be postponed if wind gusts exceed safe limits. A weather report of 30+ mph wind gusts will result in a cancellation of Forest School sessions.
- Thunderstorms: Sessions may be suspended or delayed. Participants will return to the main school site for safety.
- Heavy Snow/Ice: School site and Forest School site conditions will be assessed. Sessions may be cancelled if snow level poses risks.
- Extreme Heat: Shade and hydration will be prioritized. Physical exertion and fire use may be limited or suspended.
- Heavy Rain: Sessions may continue with appropriate waterproof clothing. However, flooding or unsafe ground may lead to cancellation or relocation.

Clothing and Equipment

- Parents/carers must ensure children are sent to Forest school with appropriately for forecasted weather.
- A spare set of clothing, including waterproofs, is recommended for all participants.
- Shelter (e.g. tarps, tents) and warm/cool drinks will be available as needed.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly or following any incident related to extreme weather.

Policies shared with Henbury View

First School

Many of our policies and procedures will be in line with and shared with Henbury View First School. Here are a list of shared policies and procedures and website links.

Behaviour Policy- The school policy will be followed with the understanding that the Forest School ethos and practice may require flexibility in strict enforcement of the school's policy.

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=687&type=pdf>

First Aid Policy- At least one member of Forest School staff will hold an outdoor paediatric first aid certificate.

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=666&type=pdf>

Data protection policy-

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=695&type=pdf>

Health and Safety policy (school specific)-

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=686&type=pdf>

Safe Guarding and child protection policy-

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=729&type=pdf>

Visitor code of conduct policy-

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=707&type=pdf>

Prevent risk assessment and prevent policy-

<https://www.henburyview.dorset.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=617&type=pdf>

Insurance-



Department
for Education

Confirmation of risk protection arrangement (RPA) membership

The Department for Education's risk protection arrangement (RPA) is a voluntary arrangement for academies, free schools and local authority maintained schools. It is an alternative to insurance through which the cost of risks that materialise will be covered by government funds.

The following academy trust or multi-academy trust is a member of the RPA.

NAME OF MEMBER ORGANISATION:	Henbury View First School
MEMBERSHIP NO/URN:	147710
MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:	01 September 2025 to 31 August 2026
RPA MEMBERSHIP RULES:	Standard

(1)	EMPLOYER'S LIABILITY
Limit of Indemnity	Unlimited
(2)	THIRD PARTY PUBLIC LIABILITY
Limit of Indemnity	Unlimited
(3)	PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY
Limit of Indemnity	Unlimited
(4)	PROPERTY DAMAGE
	Loss of or damage by any risk not excluded to any property owned by or the responsibility of the Member including property the responsibility of the Member due to a lease or hire agreement Cover
Limit	Reinstatement value of the property

NOTES:

1. Indemnity is subject to the RPA membership rules.
2. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 of the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/2573), the Secretary of State for Education hereby certifies that any claim established against the named member organisation above in respect of any liability to the employees of the kind mentioned in section 1(1) of the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 will, to any extent to which it is otherwise incapable of being satisfied by the aforementioned employer, be satisfied out of moneys provided by parliament.
3. A General Principles Clause is included.

Signed: *S.E. Dawson*

Dated: 01 September 2025

Susan Dawson
Director of Commercial for Sector and Commercial Operations



Department
for Education