

Milverton Community Primary and Pre-School

Forest School Policy



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Rationale

It is the mission of Milverton Primary School to develop the full potential of everyone at our school in an environment guided by the Values of Care, Aspire and Belong. To help fulfil our mission, we have introduced Forest School provision at our school in order to help educate the whole child. Forest School is an inspirational process, that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.

What is Forest School?

We refer directly to the principles and criteria for good practice by the Forest school association:

Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

Vision Statement and Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School as operated at Milverton. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risk, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. Our Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

Develop self-esteem

Develop self-confidence

Form positive relationships with others

Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others

Learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults

Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety

Learn specific skills which link into the curriculum

Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a forest environment

Milverton's Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will be worn. During high winds or lightening it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods. The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development, all under the premise of 'play.'

Health and Safety Considerations

In the first instance please refer to Milverton's Health and Safety Policy. The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times throughout any Forest School activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders. The Forest School programme provides children with opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst being independent in their learning, they will develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their actions have consequences.

The Forest School Leaders will carry out risk assessments at the beginning of each term which will take account of seasonal changes. A dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken before and during each session to determine that the planned session is appropriate for the environmental conditions and the condition of the site. In addition to this the site is assessed daily by the school Caretaker who will assess the area for any dangers.

Behaviour policy

In addition to the Behaviour policy, children agree to follow additional behaviour rules. Understanding that they may be asked to use the safe space to reflect or be removed from the session if their behaviour becomes unsafe for themselves or for others around them.

The Forest School Leaders and other practitioners regard their duty of care when working with pupils as extremely important. For the safety and protection of all individuals – children, staff and volunteers - we ensure the following:

Everyone involved in Forest School is briefed on health and safety and risk assessment of the site. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding incorporating Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan. This is undertaken as part of induction and orientation of all staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers must undertake to adhere to the guidance contained within all these policies. All members of staff at Milverton Primary School undertake Child Protection training. Any concerns are reported to the Head Teacher or SENDCO, the named Designated Safeguarding Leads, to ensure the school's safeguarding and child protection policy can then be followed.

Assessing and Reducing Risk at our Forest School

At our Forest School we undertake a range of activities which contain a theoretical degree of risk. Through careful supervision, full training and good practice, we aim to ensure that accidents are avoided and that risks are reduced to manageable and acceptable levels. We have full written risk assessments in place for:

Site

Weather conditions and general welfare

Group

Individual

Buildings and shelters

Rope and String

Fire

Food

Water

Kettle

Collecting natural materials

Being off the ground

Blindfolds

Billhooks

Saws

Penknives and Potato peelers

Mallets

All these Risk Assessments can be found on the school server. They are constantly reviewed and regularly updated in order to reflect the safest practice possible at Milverton.

Clothing

Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. During winter months pupils are expected to wear sturdy footwear or wellington boots, hats scarves, gloves and waterproof outerwear. Sunscreen and hats should be worn in the summer months. It is part of school policy that staff do not apply sunscreen to children, they must do this themselves.

Fire

Children are taught and reminded of the fire circle rules from their first visit to Forest School. These are:

Walk around the outside of the logs.

Step over and sit down on the logs when entering the fire circle.

Stand up, turn around and step over the logs when leaving the fire circle.

Walk in a clockwise direction within the fire circle.

Keep the area around the fire circle free from debris.

NEVER cross the fire circle.

Only enter the fire circle with permission of the forest school leader or assistant when the session is underway.

When near the fire, always use the respect position. The respect position is a kneeling position used to safely maneuver around the fire and when working in the fire pit area. It is taught to the children at their first visit to forest school and they are regularly given reminders of it.

Not to add wood to the fire without the leader or assistants' knowledge.

The activity of '5 minute fires' is not undertaken until the leader or assistant has risk assessed the area for suitability.

Cooking and Eating at Forest School

Forest School Leaders and other adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

Open fire cooking is only permissible in the designated areas and under adult supervision.

The respect position should always be used when near the fire.

All food is stored in appropriate containers and conditions.

Only clean equipment is used.

Any dietary requirements are noted and catered for.

Food will be cooked correctly.

All equipment and waste is cleared away.

Tools

The safety of all participants is of paramount importance. Participants ensure that tools are used safely by adopting the following:

Tools are stored correctly in school and checked after each session.

Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of the tool use session.

Leaders ensure that tool talks are given before any tools are used. This includes the use of the respect position for safety.

Children are supervised at all times whilst using tools of any description.

Inappropriate use of tools will not be tolerated and will result in immediate withdrawal from the task.

Leaders are responsible for the long term maintenance of tools.

First Aid

Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid. A First Aid Kit is always available on the Forest School site. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that the First Aid Kit is brought onto the site at the commencement of the session and returned to school after each session. In cases of minor injury, such as cuts and grazes the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and complete a first aid note for the injured person to take home. The leader will also record the incident in the first aid log and reflect whether the incident should influence future practice.

Emergency Procedures

It is vital that emergency procedures are adhered to. These are in place to safeguard pupils and adults alike. If a serious incident takes place, it will be essential to carry out an investigation promptly.

Should a serious incident or accident occur, the Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of other participants by adopting the '1, 2, 3 - whistle' call. Participants will be made aware of this procedure for calling everyone together in initial sessions of Forest School. In cases of emergency the Forest School Leader or other trained adult will administer first aid to the casualty. They will inform the school office who will alert parents and/or emergency services if necessary. They will inform the head teacher if the incident requires further medical treatment. If an accident occurs to a pupil, member of staff or visitor that requires help in addition to first aid e.g. Fire, Ambulance and Police then the LA must be informed of the circumstances as soon as possible. An accident form will be completed and a copy emailed to the LA. In the event of serious injury (this includes amputation, serious burns, acute illness, fracture, loss of sight or consciousness, or if detained in hospital over 24 hours, or death); the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must be informed. These notifications are a legal requirement.

In the case of the fire alarm sounding students will gather at the nearest adult and be taken to the fire assembly point where they will be supervised to return to their class for registration. The forest school leader will ensure that the fire circle is left in a safe condition before attending the fire assembly point.

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leaders have the overall responsibility for:

Safety and risk assessment

Planning of sessions, evaluation and feedback

Liaising with school staff and governors

Administration of first aid

Responsibility for first aid kit, accident book, etc.

Supervision of tool use

Supervision of fires and cooking area

Understanding the needs of children with SEND

Emergency procedures

Volunteers and trainees

With support from the Forest School Leaders volunteers and trainees are responsible for:

Modelling good practice

Supporting and talking to pupils to extend their learning as appropriate

Additional support when Forest School leader is supervising tools or fire activities

Additional delegated jobs

Report any incidents to the leader

Report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate person

Report any concerns regarding the forest school leader to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Equal Opportunities

In the first instance please refer to the school Equalities Policy and Scheme. All people involved in Forest School sessions will be treated with respect and equality. Our priority is to ensure that children and adults have access to a safe and secure environment. We believe that any contributions made by staff, volunteers and participants in our sessions will be listened to and appreciated.

Evaluation Procedure

The Forest School Leaders have developed a long term progressive plan. They undertake to reflect and evaluate each session after its completion. At the end of each term the leaders meet to reflect on current activities, take into account feedback from all participants and then use this to inform future planning.

This policy should be agreed and signed by all staff and volunteers:

To be reviewed:

The contents of this policy should be read alongside the following policies:

Health and Safety Policy

Positive Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Special Educational Needs Policy

Equality Scheme

Accessibility Policy