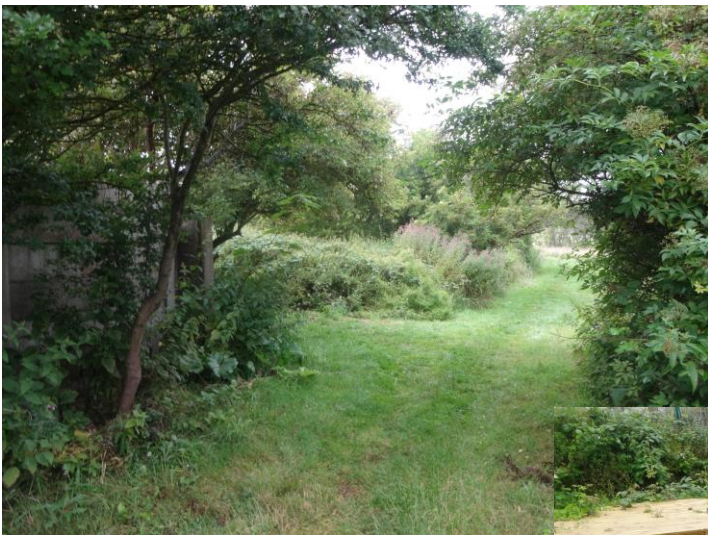




# Forest School

# Handbook



## Purpose of Forest School

Forest School sessions provide children with the opportunity to explore and experience the natural world through practical activities in the outdoors which will in return help promote confidence, independence and self esteem.

By using resources available in the outdoors and the children's interests we hope to stimulate further imagination, creativity and enquiry skills.

Forest School sessions shall not be limited to children of a certain age; children in year 2, 3 and 4 will all have the opportunity to attend sessions on a rolling programme so they experience the site in all seasons e.g. year 2 children will attend sessions in the summer, the same children in year 3 will attend in autumn and again in year 4 in spring.

Forest School sessions will take place at St Nicholas CE Primary School. Children will attend sessions throughout the year and in all weather!

## Activities

Activities will depend on the age and experience of the children attending. Where possible activities will link to the curriculum being covered in school, but will also link to children's individual interests. Activities will also be planned to teach the children about the natural world, changes in seasons and managing the natural environment in a sustainable way.

Possible activities include:

- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games for team building
- Natural crafts
- Using tools e.g. saws and knives
- Nature exploration
- Scavenger hunts
- Imaginative play

## Staff

**Forest School Leader:** Mrs Helen Firminger  
OCN Forest School Leader  
BSC (Hons) Geography, PGCE (Early Years)  
Outdoor First Aid/First Aid for Outdoor Incident Management/  
Emergency First Aid in the Workplace

**Forest School Assistant:** Mrs Dot Stanton  
Level 3 Certificate Supporting Teaching and Learning in  
School

## **Forest School Routine**

### **Equipment to be taken to every session**

- Register with emergency numbers and contact numbers
- Mobile phone
- Medical forms
- Asthma inhalers, other medication relevant to individual children
- First aid kit
- First aid book
- Incident log/Accident book (See Appendix J for incident log sheet)
- Personal protective equipment
- Hand washing kit
- Fresh water
- Spare clothing
- Handbook with all policies, procedures and risk assessments
- Snack kit

Other equipment will be taken to site as necessary for different sessions e.g. tool kit, fire lighting kit, tarpaulin, puppets, craft equipment.

### **Procedures to be carried out before each session:**

- A site hazard sweep will be done to check for any litter, glass, animal faeces etc. Any items will be collected using disposable bags and gloves.
- A written record will be kept of each hazard sweep (see Appendix A), stating which hazards were found and how they were dealt with.
- Check of weather conditions, if it is extremely windy or thunder storms are likely then a session may need to be cancelled.

### **Session Outline**

- At St John's children to go to toilet and change into appropriate clothing.
- Board the minibus for transport to St Nicholas School
- At St Nicholas School children to walk in pairs through the car park to the outdoor area. Forest School Assistant to go to school office to sign us in.
- Once at the outdoor area, children can run ahead to the bridge leading to the fire circle.
- Enter the fire circle, sit down and discuss forest school rules.

- Play a group game, linked to the session focus where possible.
- Give instructions, including session focus, adult led activity (linked to curriculum), resources available.
- Free time to explore, take part in adult led activity, self initiated play.
- Snack time back at the fire circle, washing hands.
- Reflective time – what have the children enjoyed, what would they like to next session, any problems or issues they want to discuss?

### **Procedures to be carried out at the end of each session:**

- Extinguish any fires. Collect all resources and count back in to storage boxes. Collect any rubbish and check the site is left as we found it.
- Children can run ahead to car park gate and then walk in pairs through the car park back to the minibus. Forest school assistant to go to school office and sign us out.
- Return to St John's, remove outdoor clothing and wash hands.

### **Toileting Procedure**

- Children inform a member of staff, they will then be taken to the school toilets by an adult (not the forest school leader)

### **Clothing**

#### Autumn/Winter

- Several layers
- Warm socks
- Hat, scarf, gloves
- Waterproof trousers and jacket
- Sturdy boots or wellingtons

#### Spring/Summer

- Waterproof trousers and jacket
- Sun hat
- Sturdy boots or wellingtons
- Long trousers

## Health and Safety

St John's Cof E Health and Safety Policy (see Appendix B) sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to the health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors to school. In addition to this, the following points are additional measures relevant to Forest School sessions and in line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

<b><i>Employers must</i></b>	<b><i>How this will be done</i></b>
Tell you about risks to your health and safety.	All adults to read risk assessments prior to each forest school session.
Tell you how to do your job safely.	Adults will be introduced to activities by the forest school leader and safety considerations discussed. The forest school leader will always be the person in charge.
Ensure that safe working practices and appropriate policies are in place to safeguard its staff and users.	Accidents and incidents will be recorded and reviewed as to whether they could have been avoided. Forest school leader will make changes to policies and procedures as appropriate.
Inform you how to get first aid.	Forest school leader will have a first aid kit and administer first aid.
Tell you what to do in an emergency.	Staff will be given a copy of the Emergency Procedures at the start of their involvement in forest school sessions.
Provide you with any protection you may need to fulfil your role.	Relevant safety equipment e.g. gloves will be given to anyone who needs it. Any tool use will be on a 1:1 adult: child ratio.
<b><i>Employees must</i></b>	<b><i>How this will be done</i></b>
Take care of their own health and safety and that of people who may be affected by what they do (or don't do).	Adults must actively manage risks by reporting, reducing or removing them where possible.
Co-operate with others on health and safety, and not interfere with, or misuse, anything provided for health, safety or welfare.	Follow the Health and Safety advice given during the session by the Forest School Leader, or seek advice if uncertain. Nobody should interfere with safety equipment, such as the First Aid Kit, other essential equipment, or protective equipment.

## **Other Legislation Related to Policies and Procedures**

- Children's Act 1989
- Liability Insurance
- The following laws and guidance - Disability Discrimination Act  
Race Relations Act  
Sex Discrimination Act  
CRB Checks  
Every Child Matters

## **Parental Consent**

Parental consent for forest school participation will be acquired prior to the first session beginning. See Appendix H for a copy of the letter. Parents will also be asked to complete a medical form at the same time. See Appendix I for a copy.

## **Photographs**

Any parents who don't wish their child's photograph to be used sign an 'Image Non-Consent Form' on enrolment at school. The forest school leader will have a list of children whose photograph cannot be taken. The form can be found on the school website.

## **Tool Use Policy and Procedures**

Children attending forest school sessions will have the opportunity to use some or all of the following tools:

Bow saw

Bill hook

Bit and Brace

Potato Peelers

Bush craft Knife (Year 4 and beyond)

Loppers

Secateurs

### **General rules for tool use**

- Tools are used with children with 1:1 adult supervision only.
- The forest school leader is responsible for overseeing safe use, maintenance and storage of all tools. Safe use and storage sheets for each tool can be found in Appendix C
- Tools must be used in the designated area.
- The first aid kit must be to hand when using tools.
- All tools and associated activities to be risk assessed – see Appendix D.
- A list of items stored in the tool boxes is attached to the lid of each box and used as a check when counting tools back in after sessions. The list can be found in Appendix C.
- Sharp tools are kept in a separate locked tool box.
- Sharp tools e.g. knife, saw, bill hook to be used only with forest school leader supervision. Forest school assistant can supervise bit and brace, loppers and potato peelers.
- Tools must not be carried away from the designated area and returned to the tool box immediately after use.

## **Fire Lighting Policy and Procedures**

Fires and campfire cooking are an important and exciting part of forest school. St John's aims to ensure that all children and adults can participate in fire lighting and campfire cooking safely. Before any fire lighting takes place it will be thoroughly risk assessed by the forest school leader. (see Appendix D for risk assessments)

### **Location of fires**

- Fires will only be lit within the fire circle area away from low branches.
- Temporary fires will be lit in either the fire bowl or a temporary pit dug by the forest school leader.

### **Positioning of children and adults**

- Fire area is surrounded by wooden benches at least 1.5m from where the fire will be. Children and adults know to exit the area walking behind the benches, not in front.
- An additional boundary in the form of a square of sticks will also be placed around the fire.
- When the fire is lit, children must ask permission before entering the area.
- Children and adults are taught never to walk across the fire circle, even if there is no fire, they walk around the outside. A fire will only be lit when the whole group has sworn they can do this.
- Once seated around the campfire, children must remain seated unless directed to move by an adult.
- If there is a clear wind direction avoid seating children in line with the smoke where possible.
- Nobody is to throw anything into the fire.

### **Safety**

- Only the forest school leader can light fires. Fires can only be lit using a striker. No flammable liquids to be used to start the fire.
- A fire blanket, burns kit and water should always be available close to the fire.
- Fire gloves must be used when adding fuel to the fire.
- If children are adding fuel they must wear gloves, be supervised 1:1 and taught to place the wood, not throw it on.
- When roasting marshmallows there should be no more than 2 children plus the forest school leader at the fire. Children should be knelt on one knee and wearing fire gloves. Any long hair and loose clothing fastened back.
- The fire will never be left unattended.
- Children will have the opportunity to ask questions and learn fire safety prior to fire lighting sessions.



## **Extinguishing the fire**

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of the session.
- Where possible all fuel should be burnt to ash and once cold dispersed over a wide area of the site in a fine layer.
- It is the forest school leader's responsibility to ensure the fire is correctly extinguished.

## **Food Hygiene Policy and Procedures**

High food hygiene standards are maintained by:

- Forest school leader doing a full generic risk assessment and also risk assessments for any individual activities. (see Appendix D for risk assessments)
- Food/ingredients will be stored at correct temperatures prior to the session and checked to ensure they are in-date and not subject to contamination by pests, mould etc. A cool box will be used to transport and store any ingredients requiring refrigeration prior to use at the Forest School site. All such ingredients must be used within 2 hours.
- All cooking equipment will be checked for cleanliness and damage prior to the session.
- Waste food will be wrapped in bags and taken off site to be disposed of.
- Warm water, soap and towel will be provided for children to wash hands prior to any food being prepared or consumed.
- Forest school leader will check medical records to ensure nobody has access to foods to which they are allergic.
- Cooked food will not be re-heated.

## **Transport to Forest School Sessions**

Children will be transported to and from sessions in the school minibus. St John's School minibus policy (available from the school office) sets out clear guidelines and procedures for the use of the minibus in transporting children. In addition to this, the following points are additional measures relevant to forest school.

- The minibus will be driven by the forest school leader. The forest school assistant will also be on the minibus.
- Children will be collected and dropped off in St John's and St Nicholas's school car parks.
- On arrival at St Nicholas's children to walk in pairs from the minibus with the forest school leader at the front, to the playground gate.
- On return to St John's children to remain with the forest school leader until collected by a parent/guardian.
- Waterproof clothing to be put on before entering the minibus and removed after leaving the minibus.
- Very wet/dirty waterproofs to be removed or pulled down before getting on the minibus to leave St Nicholas School.
- Forest school equipment to be transported in the space at the front ensuring the aisle and doors aren't blocked.

## Medical Procedure

On enrolling at St John's school all parents/guardians complete a Medical Form. Copies of these will be taken to every forest school session. St John's School Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (available from the school office) sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to supporting children with medical conditions or who require medication.

## Accident and Emergency Procedures

If an emergency occurs during a forest school session, the forest school leader will maintain/resume control of the group as a whole. However, responsibility may be delegated as necessary; all adults at the session must be made aware of this possibility. Most emergencies can be resolved at site by removing the group from the potential threat and providing first aid. However in the event of a serious incident, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The forest school leader will establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible (see scenarios listed below).
2. The forest school leader will secure safety of the whole group – stop all activities, call group together, remove from threat, inform all adults of any changes to allocated roles.
3. The forest school leader will establish names of the casualties and administer first aid.
4. Emergency services will be contacted as necessary, ideally by a different adult to the forest school leader.
5. If hospitalisation is needed, the forest school assistant will accompany the casualty.
6. The forest school leader will inform St John's School of the name of the casualty, nature of the emergency and action taken so far. School will inform the police if deemed necessary. School will contact parents of the casualty. St Nicholas's school office will also be informed.
7. The forest school leader will write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence. Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts **after** the incident. Copies of all these will be passed to the head teacher at St John's and at St Nicholas's Schools.
8. The forest school leader will complete an accident report form as soon as possible. Contact HSE or LEA (RIDDOR)

**NB:** No-one in the group should speak to the media. Any enquiries from journalists must be referred to the head teacher. No-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties, nor sign anything relating to accident liability without clear advice from the LA or relevant Trades Union.

## **Scenarios**

### **Lost or missing person procedure**

Our forest school sessions mainly take place in securely fenced school grounds. Occasionally sessions may take place in wooded land behind the school with less secure boundaries which may be disorientating to some. If it is discovered that a child or adult is missing from the group, the situation will be taken very seriously from the outset and the following emergency procedure will be implemented:

- The forest school leader will be informed immediately.
- The rest of the group will be called back together, counted and the missing person identified. The forest school assistant will conduct a search lasting no longer than 10 minutes.
- The other children will be given a low risk activity to complete to keep their anxiety levels at a minimum.
- If after 15 minutes the missing person has not been found the forest school leader will contact the police by telephoning 999.
- St John's School Office will be informed so they can contact the child's parents/guardians.
- Forest school leaders to write a description of the missing person and what they were wearing and if they have any medical needs, plus a timeline of events.
- All details to be recorded in the incident book.

### **Emergency First Aid**

- The forest school leader will be informed immediately.
- The rest of the group will be called back together and given a low risk activity to complete to keep their anxiety levels at a minimum supervised by the forest school assistant.
- The forest school leader will attend to the casualty, check A-B-C, administer first aid and if necessary call 999 for an ambulance.
- Follow the Emergency Procedure from step 5 onwards.

### **Adverse Weather Conditions**

- With the onset of sudden extreme weather e.g. high winds, storm the group will leave the site and shelter in the outdoor classroom until conditions improve.

### **Hazardous Plants and Fungi**

The forest school leader will have done a thorough site risk assessment and identified any hazardous plants and made children and adults aware of them and the dangers they may pose. If a member of the group does have a reaction to a hazardous plant or fungi the forest school leader will be informed and first aid given. If the reaction is more serious then the Accident and Emergency Procedure will be followed.

## **Biting and Stinging Insects**

In the case of minor irritation administer first aid as necessary. If a member of the group with a known allergy is stung, follow the Accident and Emergency Procedure.

## **Pond Dipping**

Pond dipping will take place with adult:child ratio of 1:3 so the likelihood of a serious incident occurring is low. However if a child does fall in the pond these steps should be followed:

- If safe to do so an adult should walk into the shallow water to aid the casualty.
- Inform the forest school leader as soon as possible.
- Follow the Accident and Emergency Procedure.

## **Dogs and Members of the Public**

During sessions in St Nicholas's school grounds dogs and the public won't be an issue. However the land behind the school is popular with dog walkers and the times we have sessions there, may come into contact with them.

- In the case of unwanted attention by a member of the public then the forest school leader will step in and explain the children are taking part in a forest school session and ask them to move on.
- If the situation escalates to a dangerous level the police will be called and the Accident and Emergency Procedure followed.
- If a dog approaches the group and seems likely to cause trouble, everyone will stay as still and quiet as possible with their arms by their sides.
- The forest school leader will speak to the owner and ask for the dog to be quickly removed.
- In the case of a dog bite the Accident and Emergency Procedure will be followed.

## **Behaviour**

St John's School Behaviour Policy (available from the school office) sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to supporting children with behaviour issues. In addition to this policy the following procedure will take place at forest school.

- Remove other children from the area if deemed at risk.
- Forest school leader to use de-escalation strategies to help calm the child.
- Debrief the child after a period of calm.
- Log the incident.
- Inform parents/guardian.

## **Equal Opportunities**

St John's Primary School is committed to equal opportunities for all in the forest school sessions. We aim to ensure that the opportunities for learning, development and participation are available to everyone irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

Activities will be adapted to ensure that everyone can participate and we will provide all children with waterproof clothing and keep spare sets of hats, gloves and wellingtons to ensure bad weather doesn't prevent participation.

St John's Primary School has an Equal Opportunities Policy which outlines our working practice in this area. See Appendix E.

## **Safe Guarding Children**

St John's School Safeguarding Policy (see Appendix F) sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to safeguarding children in their care.

In addition to this policy the following points are relevant to forest school sessions.

- The minimum adult ratio of 1 adult: 8 children will ensure appropriate support and supervision at all times.
- All adults will ensure children have a safe environment at forest school in which to learn and develop.
- The forest school leader will ensure awareness of child protection issues.
- The forest school leader will support children in accordance with his/her child protection plan.

## **Confidentiality**

St John's School Confidentiality Policy (see Appendix G) sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to safeguarding children in their care. In addition:

- The forest school leader will maintain all paperwork and registers relevant to forest school.
- Confidential paperwork will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the school office.
- Relevant paperwork will be shared with a child's class teacher.
- The forest school leader will carry medical and emergency contact details relevant to all children in the forest school leader's rucksack. This will be stored in the class 3 which is locked at night.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A** Hazard Sweep Form

**Appendix B** Health and Safety Policy

**Appendix C** Safe use and Storage of tools sheets

Tool Box Equipment List

**Appendix D** Tool risk assessments

Fire and Cooking risk assessments

**Appendix E** Equal Opportunities Policy

**Appendix F** Safeguarding Policy

**Appendix G** Confidentiality Policy

**Appendix H** Parental Consent Letter

**Appendix I** Medical Form

**Appendix J** Incident Log Sheet