



FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK

St. Mary's RC Primary School
Forest School Project



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Forest School Ethos

Forest School Ethos at St Mary's

At Forest School we believe that you...



- ... have the ability to be curious about the natural world around you
- ...should be able to play freely. We think that it helps you learn!
- ...should all have access to the outdoors regularly so you can appreciate the beauty of God's world
- ...have the right to be creative with your class and interact in new ways
- ...should be encouraged and helped to learn co-operation, team building and communication skills
- ...should have an awareness of the environment and how you can help keep it safe
- ...should have a knowledge and understanding of the natural world
- ...will improve your physical health and mental wellbeing by being outside

ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL aims to provide:

- The experiences to take inspiration from the wonders of God's world and to be curious, fascinated, interested and inventive in its exploration.
- The freedom to explore different ways of 'being', feeling, behaving and interacting as children are given the physical, mental and emotional space to be active and interactive
- Opportunities to meet challenges and learn to assess their own risks
- The opportunity to developing imagination, resourcefulness and inventiveness.

Forest School Rules and the Countryside Code

Children are encouraged to be involved in making decisions about their environment and safety; however, there are a few rules that the learners will be made aware of at the start of their involvement in Forest School sessions. Behind each rule, there is a range of learning opportunities that will encourage learners to engage with and understand these rules. They are:

Respect the environment

This will involve learning how our actions may affect the living things around us. This may be achieved by encouraging children to distinguish living things from dead and agree that nothing alive should be picked or destroyed.

Stay within the Forest School boundary

Boundaries will be identified during the first Forest School session and children will be guided around the site to ensure they are aware of where they are permitted to play, explore and investigate.

Respect other people

At Forest School, we aim to create a feeling of belonging and unity. We expect all individuals to respect their peers, their belongings and their creations. Many activities delivered at Forest School aims to promote team building, communication and social and emotional development. Verbal or physical abuse is not tolerated at Forest School and individuals who behave in such a way will be asked to leave the session and may be excluded from the programme.

Looking eyes, Listening Ears

As our Forest School sessions are delivered in a woodland setting, there are numerous natural hazards. Each site and activity is risk assessed but individuals are encouraged to risk assess their surroundings and activities themselves. Using their eyes to watch where they are going and their ears to listen to safety guidelines will ensure they have a fun and safe experience at Forest School.

Snack and Drink provision

Only snacks and drinks provided by Forest School Leaders may be consumed on site. Wild fruits, berries and / or fungi must not be picked or consumed at any time. Children will be encouraged to successfully identify such items and discuss why they should be avoided.

Session Routine and Procedures

Each session will undoubtedly differ in many ways from the previous session in relation to experiences, learning, journeys, the environment and so on, but generally we follow the same structure for each session. This structure helps ensure that children (and adults) are physically safe and also creates an environment in which children are comfortable and secure enough to learn with confidence.

Procedures to be carried out by the Forest School Leader before each session:

- A thorough safety sweep of the Forest School site will be conducted to identify and remove or restrict access to any hazards that might cause injury or illness
- A site sweep form will be completed, on which any hazards that were identified will be documented. How they were dealt with or will be managed will also be recorded
- Check existing boundaries
- Check that trees, bushes and other foliage are safe, including the potential for falling branches or dead wood, thorns, protruding sticks at eye level and hazardous berries or fruits
- Check the weather – If the weather is, or has the potential to become a risk, such as high winds or storms, the session will unfortunately be cancelled

Session Routine:

- Individuals will be given the opportunity to use the toilet facilities and change into appropriate clothing (water proofs, wellington boots etc.) before their Forest School Leader arrives.
- The Forest School Leader will meet the children at their classroom. A head count/register will be taken and any absences noted.
- Brief discussion with children to ensure they are aware of any safety considerations when walking to the Forest School site. Ensure that there is an adult at the back of the group and any additional adults are distributed evenly amongst the group, unless they are a 1:1 support then they should remain with their child.
- Arrive at the Forest School site and make our way in to sit around the Fire Circle.
- Re-cap on the previous weeks' activities and discuss the Forest School rules
- Discuss the day's activities and any new and / or specific safety issues.
- Complete a short directed activity/group game
- Free Play / Individual directed activities: re-visit previous activities / story-telling / muddy play / den building etc.
- Tidy up the equipment – working as a team.

- Wash hands and gather together around the fire circle to have a snack and a drink and discuss the tasks completed and suggestions for the next session.
- Walk back to the collection point, use toilets and change out of outdoor clothing.

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

- Ensure the fire is completely extinguished (if applicable) and the fire site is left safe.
- Check all the tools against the tick-list and store them away.
- Check any other resources (books/ identification sheets etc.)
- Knives should be logged back in and stored in a lockable container.
- Lock gate when leaving the site.

Essential Equipment List

The Forest School leader will provide and be responsible for the 'Essential Equipment' box containing the First Aid bag and accident book. The burns kit being kept in the 'fire box'. The 'Essential equipment' box will be taken outside for every session. Other children and adults should not use anything from this box unless instructed to do so, or if implementing emergency procedures. The box will always include these items:

- First Aid kit and accident book
- Session folder including :
 - A copy of risk assessments needed for that session
 - Register with allergy information and medical details
 - Location details, including grid reference
- Tissues and hand wipes
- Accident report book
- Spare gloves and hats (weather dependant)
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Snack item
- Any individual medications that may be required by children in the session e.g. inhalers/epi-pens

First Aid Kit

- Contents will be in line with HSE recommendations:
- Will cater for above the number of children expected on site.
(Additional items may be supplemented).
- Will be regularly checked for expiry dates, and replaced when needed
- Depleted stocks will be replenished from an existing back up kit before next session

Clothing Requirements for Forest School Sessions

During the winter months, children and adults should come prepared to each session with:

- Woolly hat and scarf
- Gloves
- Thick jacket/ Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Fleece
- Long sleeved sweatshirt
- Spare socks
- Wellies/ walking boots/ sturdy shoes

*Children should come to school dressed ready for their Forest School session and their full school uniform must be brought to school to be changed into after the session. **A carrier bag for wet or dirty clothes is essential.**

In the summer months, children and adults will need to come prepared to each session with:

- Sun hat
- Sun cream
- A thin, long sleeved top and jumper
- Trousers
- Sturdy shoes/ walking boots or wellingtons
- A waterproof coat

This clothing list applies to everybody involved in Forest School sessions, and is important for a number of safety reasons. Please be aware that sandals/ flip flops **are never** suitable for Forest School sessions, and that not wearing appropriate clothing will mean you cannot take part in the session.

Roles and Responsibilities

All visitors need to complete the Forest School Medical Form (see appendix) and return it to the Forest School Leader prior to taking part in sessions.

Requirements of the Forest School Leader

It is the duty of the Forest School Leader to:

- Provide users and staff with the relevant information relating to Forest School before sessions
- Ensure that all equipment and resources are safe to use, with the accompanying personal protective equipment
- Undertake a risk assessment and site safety sweep before each session
- Brief the adults involved on the health and safety considerations before each session
- Come prepared with a First Aid kit and the other items listed in the 'Essential equipment' section of this handbook

Role and Responsibility of Teachers and Teaching Assistants

- Adult: child ratios must be adhered to at all times
- minimum of 1:4 for EYFS1
- minimum of 1:8 for KS1 & KS2
- Children who have 1:1 support will be accompanied by the relevant adult.
- Children do have the opportunity to use the facilities before the session, however should a child need to go again adult ratios must be maintained.
- Ensure that any medical information is given to the Forest School Leader before the session. (Can be found in the school medical booklet)
- Only use tools if the Forest School Leader has said it is okay to do so and adhere to all safety rules when doing so. If unsure, please ask.

- Stay within the Forest School boundary. If you need to leave the site at all, please inform the Forest School leader first.
- Look after the Forest School Site - Includes not picking things, unless the Forest School Leader has said it is okay to do so, and looking after the environment.
- Alert the Forest School Leader immediately if anyone (adult or child) requires first aid, or has had an accident – no matter how minor.
- Ensure you are familiar with the Forest School rules and assist learners in following them.
- The behaviour of the group is the responsibility of the group leader. Reflection areas will be available for those individuals who need time to think about their actions. Individuals that express behaviour that puts themselves or others at risk will be asked to leave the session. It is the responsibility of the group leader to ensure the individual(s) are escorted off site and taken back in to school.
- Dojo points will be handed out in accordance with the existing behaviour policy in school.

Please note:

Forest School is intended to be **child led** – During free play please allow them to play and learn as independently as possible, and try to resist the temptation to demonstrate or suggest ideas. Keep your distance (except when using tools and supervising tree climbing), get involved if children invite you, but don't feel too bad if you find yourself standing and watching for much of the session.

Notes for Volunteers and Helpers

Firstly - Thanks for offering your help today – it's really useful to have an extra pair of hands. Hopefully this information will give you some insight into how you can best support the children, and also point out some of the necessary do's and don'ts.

Before the Session

- **Assisting with setting up the site** - Transporting equipment to the Forest School Site, erecting tarps, assisting with putting up the parachute, putting out equipment / resource boxes and any other reasonable tasks requested by the Forest School Leader.
- **Helping to make sure the site is safe** – Checking if existing dens are structurally safe, picking litter (*gloves and bags will be provided), checking the site boundary and informing the Forest School Leader of any hazards that may have been missed.

During the Session

- Look after the Forest School site (includes not picking living things and respecting the environment).
- Help to ensure that all children are safe.
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth (to prevent disease or poisoning).
- Only use tools if the Forest School Leader has said it is okay to do so, and follow the safety rules for tools.
- Stay within the boundary (if it is necessary to leave the site, please inform the Forest School Leader first)

Volunteer Procedures and Guidance

Before joining the group, visitors must read and complete a medical form. Leaders are also responsible for ensuring volunteers are aware of any policies, procedures and risk assessments which relate to their involvement.

Please be aware that this is a discovery opportunity for the children, where they can be in control of their learning and experiences as far as possible, so please try not to direct them too much or demonstrate how to do things, but by all means, feel free to get involved and extend their learning if they are happy for you to do so!

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

A Parental/Guardian letter will be sent home to inform them at the start of a Forest School 'block', detailing the information related to their child's Forest School sessions. Parents complete a medical information form at the start of each academic year which is used to form a whole school medical booklet, this is made available to all staff members, any medical information for a child is written on the groups register.

Every visitor must complete a medical form, which will be kept in a folder in the 'Essential Equipment' box. This folder will contain confidential information, and as such, must only be accessed by the Forest School Leader or other school staff. This information will be stored in a locked cabinet when not in use.

A copy of the emergency procedures card (see copy below) will always be in the emergency folder, along with any medical forms (if applicable). The box and folder will be taken on site at every session. Medical forms will then be stored in a locked cabinet when not in use during a session and destroyed when no longer needed.

Emergency Procedures Card

Site Name: **St Marys RC Primary School**
Belgrave Street
Radcliffe
Manchester
M26 4DG
Tel: 0161 723 4210

Nearest A&E
Fairfield General Hospital
Rochdale Road
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 7TD
Tel: 0161 624 0420

Co-ordinates for the site - 53.565,-2.3382

Emergency Procedures

The following procedures should be implemented for Forest School sessions:

In case of a medical emergency (i.e., serious injury, poisoning or illness)

The Forest School Leader will co-ordinate the emergency procedure.

Stage One

Any adult who witnesses or is involved in an emergency, such as a serious injury or suspects him/herself or another person to have a serious illness, should immediately alert the Forest School Leader / delegated First Aider.

The Forest School Leader should:

- Raise the alarm to other leaders/adults
- Assess the situation – is it safe for you to approach?
- Appoint someone to take responsibility for the rest of the group.

Stage Two

The assisting adult will gather children away from the casualty but nearby so the group remains together. The assisting adult will ensure the other children are safe and then will be available to support the Forest School Leader if necessary. The assisting adult should call the school office to request for back up support. Any other adults will remain with the children at all times.

The Forest School leader should:

- Protect the casualty and others from danger – is there anything you need to stop/change to reduce further incident?
- In the event of a serious incident if the fire is lit, it should be extinguished by an assisting adult. Any tools will be gathered and put in a safe place. Resources and other materials will be left.

Stage Three

The Forest School Leader will decide what action is appropriate and put this into effect.

The Forest School leader should:

- Check vital signs
- Delegate person to get folder containing consent & medical information form

- Delegate group supervision and contact **emergency services – 999**
 - Speak slowly and clearly
 - Describe incident and give patient description/current status
 - Advise of location

Stage Four

The assisting adult will then phone the school office to keep them updated on the situation, explaining that an ambulance has been called. The school office staff will provide extra assistance to organise the movement of the Emergency Services.

The Forest School Leader should:

- Administer First Aid if applicable
- Delegate direction of emergency services
- Remain with the patient from the moment they are made aware of the incident so that any symptoms can be effectively monitored and reported.

Stage Five

Extra assistance will arrive and will organise the movement of the Emergency Services (if appropriate).

The remaining group should make their way back to school/nursery.

The Forest School Leader should:

- Complete hand-over procedure with delegated group supervisor before the group departs from the site.
- Delegate a person to contact the child's parents using the details on the child's consent form.

Stage Six

Incident / accident report will be completed and recorded by the Forest School Leader. This should be photocopied and given to child's parents. If required a RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) form should also be completed. All risk assessments should be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Missing Child Procedure

If anybody suspects a person may be missing, they should immediately alert the Forest School Leader or another member of staff.

Stage One

The activity will be stopped, the group brought together and a head count completed. The Forest School Leader will appoint staff/volunteers to look after the group. If the fire is lit, it should be extinguished and any tools collected and stored in the delegated tool area immediately.

Stage Two

The perimeter of the Forest School Site will be searched and then the inner area of the site. If the missing child has not found after an initial sweep of the site, the group should assemble in a safe place (preferably the fire circle) and establish when and where the missing child was last seen. The Forest School Leader and assisting adult will continue to search the site (known hazardous areas first, e.g. water, drops, mud, barbed wire) whilst this is being confirmed.

Stage Three

If after the perimeter check the child has not been found, the Forest School Leader will alert the School office. Extra assistance will arrive and volunteers will assist with the search. The group supervisor and any supporting adults should lead the group back to school. The Forest School Leader should keep in regular telephone contact with the school office.

Stage Four

If the child is still missing after a thorough search of the site the emergency services will be contacted. A search party will be organised and the advice of the police will be followed in relation to searching for the missing child.

Stage Five

The incident should be reported in the school diary and an incident report completed.

Fire Procedure

Stage One

If you come across an unexpected fire or if your own fire gets out of control, the Forest School Leader should ensure that the group are moved away to a safe position.

Stage Two

If it is a small fire that you feel that you are able to extinguish yourself safely, use a fire blanket or water from the fire safety kit to put it out.

Stage Three

If the fire is out of control, the Forest School leader should call the Emergency Services on 999 for assistance to extinguish the fire. They should also call the school to request for additional back up to assist taking the children back to school with the assisting adult. The school office staff will provide extra assistance to organise the movement of the Emergency Services. The Forest School leader should stay in a safe position with a view of the fire site to wait for the Emergency Services.

Serious Injury to the Forest School Leader Procedure

Stage One

If the Forest School Leader is involved in an accident then another responsible adult should call the school office to request for back up support and the school first aider. If required they should then call 999.

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Describe the incident and give patients description / current condition
- Advise of location

Stage Two

The back-up member of staff and other remaining adults will gather the group of children and take them back to school to keep them safe. The assisting adult will stay with the casualty, following guidance from Emergency Services and will monitor their wellbeing.

Stage Three

If the fire is lit, it should be extinguished by an adult. Any tools will be gathered and put in a safe place. Resources and other materials will be left.

Stage Four

The school office staff will provide extra assistance to organise the movement of the Emergency Services and they will contact the Forest School Leaders next of kin.

Stage Five

Incident / accident report will be completed and recorded. If required a RIDDOR form should also be completed.

Serious Injury to the Forest School Assistant Procedure

Stage One

If the Forest School Assistant is involved in an accident then the Forest School Leader should call the school office to request back up support. If required they should then call 999.

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Describe the incident and give patients description / current condition
- Advise of location

Stage Two

The Forest School Leader or remaining adults will direct the group of children to a safe location. Once back up has arrived and there are enough adults the children can be taken back to school to keep them safe. The Forest School Leader will stay with the casualty to provide First Aid following guidance from Emergency Services and will monitor their wellbeing.

Stage Three

If the fire is lit, it should be extinguished by an adult. Any tools will be gathered and put in a safe place. Resources and other materials will be left.

Stage Four

The school office staff will provide extra assistance to organise the movement of the Emergency Services and they will contact the Forest School Assistants next of kin.

Stage Five

Incident / accident report will be completed and recorded. If required a RIDDOR form should also be completed.

Health & Safety - Procedures & Guidance

Forest School Leaders are to adhere to ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL H&S Policy with particular responsibility to:

- Ensure the health, safety and welfare of all leaders, children and adults
- Provision and maintenance of safe working systems and equipment
- Ensure policies and guidelines are in place for employees protection, particularly with regards to use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- Ensure site for session is safe for appropriate tasks
- Ensure safety and absence of risk to all on site
- Accept a personal obligation for their own and others safety which is reflected in their conduct
- Carry out risk assessments and provided suitable personal protective equipment where deemed necessary
- Complete accident forms, records and monitoring and evaluating of systems

All other adults and children must;

- Take responsibility for health and safety of self and others who may be affected by their actions
- Follow procedures that are put in place by the leaders
- Not intentionally misuse, damage or interfere with any health and safety equipment
- Acknowledge own limitations and follow direction by trained, appointed persons (leaders)

Accident Reporting Procedure

Definitions:

Accident: An unplanned, uncontrolled event, which has led to injury to people, damage to equipment or the environment.

Near Miss: An unplanned, uncontrolled event that could have led to injury to people, damage to equipment or the environment.

Incident: A happening, event or occurrence caused by ignoring or not adhering to set rules, boundaries or laws.

Procedures and Guidance

- Leaders will maintain the site and working areas to ensure that risk of accidents is as low as possible.
- Leaders will have specialist first aid training for the outdoors and appropriate first aid equipment will be taken to every session.

- All accidents and incidents must be recorded using appropriate forms in emergency folder in essential equipment box.
- All major accidents reported to the SHE committee
- H&S / Tools talk on site before every task
- Leaders will carry an emergency procedures card in the essential equipment box.

Reporting Procedure

In the event of an accident or incident leaders to note down all relevant information and transcribe into official accident book/relevant form as soon as practical. Leader to pass completed form to ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL in line with school policy.

Blank accident/incident sheets to be kept in emergency folder/essential equipment box. To be taken out to site at all times. Accidents must be transcribed into official ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL accident book as soon as is practical.

RIDDOR Reporting Procedure

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

Employers/Forest School practitioners must report to RIDDOR:

- Deaths
- Major injuries
- Serious burns
- Over seven day injuries (i.e. person is unable to perform normal duties for more than 7 consecutive days)
- Injuries to members of public or people not working/participating where they are taken from the scene of an accident to hospital
- Some work related diseases
- Some dangerous occurrences (something not resulting in an injury but could have done)

How to Report:

- Call incident contact centre on 0845 300 9923 or complete a form
- Incidents can be reported online via the HSE website:
www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm
- Once completed a copy of the form will be sent to ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL to keep for ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL records.

Who Reports:

St Mary's RC Primary School Business Manager (Chris Faulkner) is responsible for reporting any of the above to the incident contact centre for RIDDOR.

Risk Management

Risk Assessments are the tool that identify and act upon hazards to people that a leader accepts a level of responsibility for. Risk Assessments are not in themselves a protection from harm but methodologies by which Forest School practitioners monitor and demonstrate their commitment to H&S.

A five step Risk Assessment will be conducted for the Forest School sites. These steps are as follows:

1. Identify the Hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record findings and implement measures required
5. Review the Risk Assessment and update accordingly.

Our Forest School site, activities that we do and tools that we use are risk assessed and copies of these have been included. Our 'General Outdoors' risk assessment outlines some of the more commonly faced risks associated with the outdoor classroom. Those that are more specific to certain activities are included in individual activity risk assessments. School staff must actively implement the measures outlined and remain vigilant to the potential for risk arising throughout the session.

Any considerations will be pointed out to adults and children beforehand to help manage risk. All adults involved will be given a copy of the completed Risk Assessment for the site, and are obligated to manage or report risks under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

All activities and tools will be risk assessed for the suitability of the client group before the sessions take place. The Forest School Leader will assess their site before each session to ensure there has been no occurrence that would affect the site or the activities about to take place on it. The Forest School Leader is responsible for implementing precautions and reviewing and updating risk assessment forms as necessary, at a minimum once per year or if an incident or accident arises necessitating need to review practices. Seasonal changes may also require an update for some sites and activities, e.g. after high winds, storms, nettles etc.

Safety Sweep

Before each session, the Forest School Leader will conduct a safety sweep to identify any hazards and reduce or remove them if possible. Occasionally, in order to encourage children's awareness of safety, the children will also walk the boundary of the site to identify any hazards or risks that they think may need to be taken into consideration. Templates of both of these forms can be found at the back of this booklet.

Safeguarding Policy

Child Protection

Child Protection Procedures and Guidance (See also ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy and ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL Child Protection Policy)

Within this policy a child is considered to be anyone under the age of 18. The same safeguarding procedures are applied to those of all ages who are classed as vulnerable.

This policy recognises the following duties of care to young people or those considered vulnerable:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of any child.
- Be mindful of the welfare of all children.
- Act in a manner suitable for a role model at all times, ensuring language and behaviour are appropriate.
- Work with an awareness of Child Protection issues at all times.
- Report any suspicion, evidence or disclosure from a child with regard to any form of abuse to **St. Mary's designated safeguarding officer (Mrs R Gerrard)**.
- Ensure that other adults do not put any child at risk through their actions or expectations by placing a child in a position where health and safety is at risk.

Acknowledgement of responsibility

In regard to the children's welfare the Forest School Leader will implement the following points;

- All activities will be planned and risk assessed before commencing. Decisions may be made during the event to change the programme should concerns arise. (For example weather conditions)
- All work will be carried out with children's physical, emotional and sexual welfare protected as recommended in this policy.
- Tasks for other adults or carers will be clearly explained ensuring that procedures are followed.
- Tool use will be only be supervised by leaders, ensuring correct use and minimising risk of injury or harm.
- Ratios of the numbers of adults to children will be maintained as required.

Incidents and allegations

- Forest School takes place in a purpose built space however risks of children becoming lost or injured are a consideration. All activities have a thorough risk assessment, ensuring any possible health and safety issues are acknowledged and managed in a way that minimises risk. Activities which are deemed unsuitable or too high in risk will not be carried out. Health and safety is of high importance, however activities that hold low possible risk will still be undertaken as long as the benefits outweigh the risk.
- All leaders have received suitable First Aid Training for outdoor paediatric situations and a First Aid Kit will always be available on site.
- Actions and behaviour will be kept in a manner appropriate to the children working with to avoid misinterpretation leading to any allegations.

Accusations made against other adults

Should a child disclose abuse happening at Forest School or elsewhere the incident would be handled sensitively and reported immediately to Mrs R Gerrard.

Leaders must:

- Ensure safety and welfare of child. Make them feel comfortable and safe so they can talk openly.
- Do not probe or “feed” their story.
- Keep questions open (e.g. ‘Who did that?’ ‘What happened next?’)
- Avoid leading questions (e.g. ‘Was it your father who did this?’)
- Try to be emotionally calm around them and show no signs of shock or upset.
- Ensure child is aware of the seriousness of an accusation without overwhelming them and making them withdraw.
- Affirm what they have told you. ‘I’m glad you told me this. It was the right thing to do. Now I’ll arrange to talk to our Safeguarding Officer about what to do next’
- Make sure the child understands that in some cases you may need to tell other adults, such as social services.
- If there are urgent medical considerations contact the emergency services in the first instance.
- Record the incident on CPOMS in line with school policy..
- If accused is on-site, ensure that the child is in no danger. This may mean ending the session.

Accusations made against Forest School Leader

- If a situation arises which could be misinterpreted then this should then be discussed with adults and leaders immediately away from the children giving all details and reasoning.
- If an accusation is made towards/about the leaders or another adult, the session may need to be stopped. The school would then need to take responsibility about how the issue is handled in keeping with their policies.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- All leaders will be required to hold a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The reference numbers of these certificates will be kept on record by the office at ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL (can be found in appendix).

Confidentiality

- Children's identity will remain confidential. The group leader will hold consent forms, keeping them safely stored for as long as is required. Forms or details will be disposed of in our locked confidential waste bins. No photographs showing a child's identity will be used without a signed consent form from the child's parent or guardian.

Ratios

- At least one qualified leader and a second recognised responsible adult should be present at all sessions. Ideally, a second leader should also be present – especially for sessions where the fire will be lit.

Adult:Child ratios will be maintained at 1:4 for FSU and 1:8 for KS1 and KS2.

Certain situations will require higher ratios, including:

- Any group risk assessment which identifies high risk behaviour which may cause harm to self or others will require a higher ratio of staffing and will impact upon activities offered
- Any child with 1:1 support must be accompanied by their classroom support (or another available adult)

Medical Forms

- All parents/guardians will have completed a medical form at the beginning of each academic year for general school use. This will be shared with all staff allowing leaders to be fully aware of any medical information.

E-safety Policy

- All parents/ guardians at the start of each academic year are asked to complete a photographic consent form, this allows a list of children that cannot have their photo taken or put onto the website, etc to be created and shared with staff.
- A list of children without photo consent should be clearly displayed towards the front of the emergency file.
- Photos must only be taken of children whose parents have given permission for photos.
- Children and Adults must not take photos on their own personal camera devices, only those belonging to ST. Mary's Forest School Staff.
- Only St. Mary's school staff can upload and use the photos accordingly for publicity.
- Children can only take photos as part of an activity if all children in the group have permission for photos to be taken.

Daily Operating Procedures

Weather

It is our policy that Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers, with the exception of electrical storms and high winds. In the event of extreme weather developing during a session, it may be necessary to end the session early. This decision is at the leader's discretion.

Where to get the Weather Forecast

- Met office– 09014 722 061 or www.metoffice.gov.uk
- BBC weather – www.bbc.co.uk/weather

In high winds the Forest School Leader will consult the Beaufort Scale for advise. The full scale can be found on the Met Office website, see below for the upper end of the scale.

	<u>M/h</u>	<u>Km/h</u>	<u>Knots</u>		
8	39-46	62-74	34-40	Gale	Twigs and small branches break from trees. Cars veer on road.
9	47-54	75-88	41-47	Strong Gale	Larger branches break from trees. Light structural damage.
10	55-63	89-102	48-55	Storm	Trees broken and uprooted. Considerable structural damage.
11	64-72	103-117	56-63	Violent Storm	Widespread damage to structures and vegetation.
12	> 73	> 117	> 64	Hurricane	Considerable and widespread damage to structures and vegetation. Violence.

If the session needs to be cancelled because of weather conditions, the Forest School Leader should inform colleagues at the earliest opportunity.

Getting to the Site

The leaders will collect the group from their classrooms. The children and adults will stay together at all times, with a Forest School Leader at the front and a responsible adult at the back.

Travel Procedure to Off-Site location

Forest School Leaders will be responsible for asking the office to organize any transport needed, and ensuring they have the full information required. The Forest School leader takes responsibility for safe conduct to and from the site, this includes embarking and disembarking the transport at a safe point and gathering at a safe point once this is complete. This also includes acceptable behaviour and safe conduct.

All adults who are on the bus with the group are expected to support the leader with above mentioned tasks. The Forest School leader takes lead

responsibility for safe conduct to and from the site. The adults and children must remain in an orderly manner until told otherwise by the leader.

In some cases high visibility vests may be required, this will be stipulated on the site assessment form.

If roads need to be crossed, all members of the party will be fully briefed in a safe area before arriving at the roadside. The generally accepted method for quieter roads, where there are no pedestrian crossings/traffic lights is for leaders to choose a place which has high visibility for drivers (not on a bend or below crest of a hill for example) and two adults/leaders to stand in the centre of the road with children crossing in between the two adults. However, the method will be assessed for individual situations.

When walking with a group an adult will be present at the front and rear with other staff staggered throughout the line. The group will walk in pairs on paths or in single file on roadsides. If roadsides are walked upon or roads crossed the adult leaders must supervise and wear high visibility vests.

Before entering the site/beginning to walk the leader should discuss safety issues with the group (such as staying behind the leader, traffic awareness, terrain etc)

Fires

When fire lighting takes place the following equipment must always be taken on site:

- Bucket
- Sufficient water to fill the bucket at least 2/3 full
- Burns Kit
- Fire lighting box
- Fire blanket

Process:

- Each site has a permanent fire circle. The fire pit is 1m square and the seating logs in the fire circle are at least 1.5m away from the fire. The Forest School Leader explains that the children must walk around the fire circle and never through it to instil the behaviour before a campfire is created for part of a session; this is practiced from week 1 as part of our Forest School rules.
- A bucket of water, burns kit and fire blanket must be in easy reach of person/s lighting the fire.
- The Forest School leader demonstrates how to light a camp fire with cotton wool, hay, kindling and a fire striker. They will also demonstrate how to safely extinguish it by letting the embers die down, spreading the embers, then use water to extinguish the embers. A stick is then used to stir the embers ensuring they are out with no possibility of reigniting. The Forest School leader will check that it has

sufficiently cooled (using hand held over fire area). The Forest School Leader will count all the fire strikers back in at end of session to ensure they have all been returned.

Impact considerations:

- If possible, additional materials (tinder and kindling) should be taken to session, so naturally sourced materials are not depleted on site.
- Leaf litter to be removed from fire pit area.
- Only deadwood is used where possible, to reduce volume of smoke created
- Ensure deadwood is not collected from habitat piles/fences
- Careful consideration is given to the siting of the permanent fire circle to take into account any tree canopies and nesting birds.
- Check all fires are fully extinguished & remove all remnants from fire pit and either remove from site or hide from obvious view.

Tool Use

Our policy on tool use in sessions is:

- Only level 2 or 3 trained leaders will give tool talks.
- A tool talk will be given before every tool is used.
- Gloves to be worn on non-tool hand.
- Safe working distances (an arm's length and a tool away) are to be adopted.
- Tools are returned to the locked tool box after use.
- Tools are counted in and out by leaders.
- Tools provided are to be suitable for task.
- An adult to child ratio of 1:1 is essential when working with tools.

Further clarifications can be found in the Tool Use Policy and in the Forest School risk assessments.

Leaving site

After reflection upon the session the leaders will distribute kit for children and adults to carry. As with journey to site, one leader at front of group and one at rear. Leader at rear of group to check all children are accounted for and that no tools, equipment or litter have been left on site.

First Aid Procedures and Guidance

Practitioners will have specialist first aid training for the outdoors and appropriate first aid equipment.

First aid kits are stocked sufficiently to cater for the number of children and must be taken to every session. All first aid kits must be checked regularly, clearly labelled and stored in a designated place every session.

In addition to a standard first aid kit, a Burns Kit should be on site for all sessions where a fire will be used. Where practical first aid treatment should only be carried out by trained individuals. Any accident which requires first aid should be recorded in the accident book and parents informed either by leader or by school.

First aiders will not administer any drugs or remove embedded objects in keeping with current first aid guidelines. They will also keep their own welfare and that of the group in mind when assessing a casualty in a dangerous location. Plasters to only be applied to adults/leaders if they confirm they are not allergic and only to children whose parents have not objected to their use on their medical form.

In the case of a serious incident the emergency services will be contacted in line with the emergency communications procedures. In situations where further medical attention is required, but is not an emergency services issue, arrangements will be made by the school/parents for further medical attention.

Any clinical waste will be handled and disposed of by the Forest School leader.

Health & Hygiene - Procedures & Guidance

Food Hygiene

Leaders will follow good practice when preparing food by ensuring that participant's health and well-being is protected.

- Food is to be protected from contamination
- Food will be stored in clean, appropriate containers at Environmental Health recommended temperatures
- Raw and cooked food will be stored separately
- Food preparation will be carried out in most hygienic way possible on surfaces brought to the site
- All those handling food must wash hands with soap/use antibacterial hand gel before beginning
- Hot food to be checked to ensure it is cooked throughout
- Check consent forms for food allergies in the group before bringing food onto site
- Leaders to check best before and use by dates on all food
- Ensure children allow hot food to cool sufficiently before eating

Toileting Arrangements

Children will be asked to use the facilities before the session to reduce the need to go during the session. If a participant needs to use the facilities during the session there must be an adequate number of adults to supervise group and individuals without breaching child to adult ratios.

Hand Washing

Practitioners will ensure that hand-washing facilities are provided. Where soap and water are not possible, anti-bacterial hand gel will be available.

Vermin Prevention and disposal of litter

All litter will be removed from site after every session. Cooked foods and non-compostables will be removed and disposed of correctly.

Any litter discovered on site during daily risk assessment will be removed by the leader using gloves/litter pickers. Any larger items will be cordoned off and removed appropriately.

As long as litter disposal policy is adhered to the Forest School should not attract vermin.

Tool Use Policy

Tools

Maintenance Procedures and Guidance

Tools to be maintained in a safe condition and where necessary inspected to ensure this remains the case.

- Leader to check tools before each session for any damage.
- Leader to be notified of any damage to tools during session.
- Damaged tools to be removed from use until repaired by a trained person in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations or disposed of safely if not being repaired.

Storage Procedures and Guidance

- When not in use, tools to be stored in a lockable container, where the key holder is a Forest School leader.
- Whenever the toolbox is opened, the leader should notify those around that tools are being accessed.
- Tools only to be stored if cleaned and dried, with any relevant safety guards or covers in place.

Transportation Procedures and Guidance

- Tools always to be transported to and from the site within the locked storage container.
- All tool movement on site will be conducted in accordance with H&S policy and follow the relevant methods given in the tools talk.

Tool use procedures

- All tool use will be preceded by a tools talk delivered by the Forest School Leader to ensure that children have received adequate information, instruction and training.
- Tools will be suitable for the purpose of the activity.
- Tools will be used maintaining a 1:1 ratio.
- Tools only to be used when suitable PPE is available.

Tool checks – procedure

Forest School Leaders are responsible for checking tools before every session. Wearing gloves the leader will check;

- the handle
- the blade
- and cutting edge

Are firmly attached and free from damage and that any safety guards or covers are in place and suitable for their purpose.

PPE

Maintenance of equipment and storage procedure

All PPE will be correctly looked after and properly stored in dry, clean containers suitable for the size of the PPE. Any PPE that becomes wet or dirty will be cleaned and dried before use.

All PPE will be checked before use for defects or damage that may affect its effectiveness. Damage to PPE should be reported to leader and equipment withdrawn from use if necessary. Basic maintenance may be carried out by leaders and children, but complex repairs must be carried out by a specialist.

Conservation Procedures and Guidance

A key element of the programme is to use open space to help children develop their confidence, increase their self-esteem, build social skills and adopt positive behaviours. The continuous process and development of practical skills, tasks and activities on site is part of the programme and we acknowledge that Forest School has an impact on the site.

It is our policy to minimise the impact Forest School has the site through the following methods:

- An Environmental impact assessment will be carried out periodically and the control measures carried out by leaders.
- The leave no trace approach will be adopted.
 - Any remnants from fire will either be removed from site or hidden from obvious view.
 - At the end of the programme shelters and dens made from natural materials will be taken apart and made into habitat piles.
 - No non-natural material will be left on site (including rope and string).

Adverse Weather Conditions Policy

Our diverse weather

Due to our ever changing weather it may not always be safe or practical for a planned session to go ahead, but wherever possible, weather will be a feature of the sessions rather than a barrier to them.

Shelter: Our Forest School Site has a waterproof parachute above our fire circle and refuge can be sought here during periods of prolonged or heavy rain.

Clothing: Children will need to be adequately protected against the different weather conditions in order to fully participate and enjoy the sessions. Wherever possible, children should arrive with suitable clothing, such as sun hats, waterproofs, or gloves and scarves. Please see the clothes list for full clothing recommendations.

Weather dependent activities: Some activities will be dependent on the weather – Climbing trees, for instance, may not be safe in the rain. Similarly, the use of tools may be limited through the winter as the cold weather can affect our grip. A contingency plan will be made for such activities to ensure that the session still goes ahead.

Cancellation decision: Forest school staff will agree on whether a session has to be cancelled due to adverse weather. Safety, of course, will be the main consideration. Please see the Cancellation Policy for more information.

Extreme weather: It is unlikely that sessions will take place in stormy conditions. As most sessions last around 2 hours, very cold temperatures will mean a session has to be shortened or cancelled to avoid illness and discomfort. Heavy rain or strong winds may also cause cancellation, as will heavy snowfall or hot weather.

Cancellation Policy

There may be the rare and unfortunate occasion when the forest school session needs to be cancelled.

These will include but are not limited to;

- Extreme weather conditions (high winds, high/low temperatures, icy conditions)
- If an individual does not have appropriate clothing/footwear their session will be cancelled if the forest school leader cannot provide any.
- In the event of Forest School Leader absence (if no replacement leader is available)
- If the site has been vandalised and left in an unsafe condition

In any of these circumstances we would aim to give all involved as much notice as possible.

Equal Opportunities

Behaviour Procedure including Harassment/Bullying Procedures and Guidance (See also ST. MARY'S R.C PRIMARY SCHOOL Policies)

For children participating

It is the Forest School policy to create an environment, which is free from discrimination and is welcoming and values the positive contribution of all. Leaders will not tolerate any incident of inappropriate behaviour, harassment or bullying. Within the group, leaders operate a "three-strike" system where unacceptable behaviour would lead to exclusion from the session on receiving third warning.

Leaders to address the "three-strike" system at the first session and discuss with the group how the system works and designate a "time out" area, where those who have received their first or second warning go to calm down and prepare themselves to return to the group. All other children are not to go near anyone who is taking time out, though, if appropriate, the leader or another adult may go and talk to them about their behaviour.

If bullying and harassment is taking place within the group, the situation must be followed up as per St. Mary's procedure.

If the bullying and harassment complaint is made about the Forest School Leaders, the complaint must be passed on to Chris Jacques, Assistant Head/Forest School Co-ordinator for review and leader evaluation.

For adults and leaders

Appropriate behaviours for adults, leaders and volunteers are detailed in the code of conduct for staff and volunteers working with children.

If concerns or complaints arise from any source, the leader will deal with them promptly and fairly – by passing the information on to Chris Jacques who will follow procedure.

Inclusion Statement

Learning is most effective when children have the freedom to explore, without some of the limiting social expectations that children encounter, such as stereotypical views.

We actively promote the inclusion of all children and adults into Forest School sessions, and will endeavour to ensure that the opportunities for learning, development and participation are available to everyone, irrespective of race, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation or age. Forest School sessions are underpinned by a set of Equal Opportunities values, which are intended to ensure that children can fulfil their learning needs and reach their potential and learn without restriction. In order for this potential to be realized however, it is important that the adults supporting these sessions reinforce this ethos.

Equal opportunities values:

- Every child will be valued, enjoyed and celebrated
- Inclusion will be a thread that runs through all Forest School activities
- Forest School sessions will create a secure, accepting and inclusive environment, in which children can flourish
- Stereotyping will be actively discouraged to ensure that children feel free to explore and play as they choose
- Discrimination and exclusion for any reason will always be challenged

A vast majority of the activities and experiences on offer can be adapted to suit the different needs of children, and in order to do this effectively, we will sometimes consult with the class teachers to decide on how best to meet individual children's needs.

Confidentiality

- Information about children and staff will be handled and stored in line with the Data Protection Act 2018
- This information will not be shared or discussed with anybody who does not have the right or the need to access it
- Confidential information will be kept in a file marked 'Leader' in the essential equipment rucksack, which only the Forest School Leader should access
- Confidential information will be kept for 3 years since the last date that child attended.

