



Forest School

Policies and Procedures
Handbook

This handbook should be read by all Forest School staff, Forest School volunteers and parents of those children attending Forest School sessions.

The policies and procedures contained in this handbook are additional to the policies and procedures of the setting, which are continually reviewed and updated by the setting's Leader and Committee. All staff members are required to keep up-to-date with these policies and procedures.

Further details of all Pre-School's policies and procedures can be found on our website www.thamespreschool.co.uk or are available to read in hardcopy from the office.

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Weather Conditions

On the day of the Forest School session the Forest School Leader will check the weather forecast for any potentially extreme weather conditions. These conditions may require that the session activity is changed or has to move location.

If the weather is deemed, by the Forest School Leader and the Pre-School Leader, to be unsafe for the children to be out in, an alternative Forest School themed activity will take place inside of the setting, unless the setting itself has had to be closed. If the setting has had to close for any reason, then the Forest School session will also not go ahead and that session will be made up at the end of the 6 week programme.

Risk Assessments

General site and activity risk assessments have been carried out by the Pre-School's health and safety designated member of staff. Alongside these assessments, the Forest School Leader has carried out Forest school specific risk assessments. All risk assessments can be viewed on request. Hard copies can be found in the Pre-School office.

Insurance

The Pre-School's insurance company has been contacted and all activities involved in running our Forest School are covered by the existing insurance policy.

Emergency Procedures

The Forest School Leader will carry either a walkie talkie or mobile phone, dependent on the location of the session to enable direct contact with either the Pre-school or the emergency services. All staff members have had full paediatric first aid training, as well as the Forest School Leader who is also level 3 qualified in outdoor first aid. Ratios will allow for the children to be kept safe, and in ratio, even if one adult was to leave the location.

The Forest School Leader will carry contact details and important medical information for all participants with them during the Forest School session.

Setting up and packing down guidelines

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure that all tools are kept in a good usable condition and that the first aid kit is kept well stocked and in date.

On the day of the Forest School session the Forest School Leader will check that all equipment required for that session is ready and packed.

She will then check the areas in which Forest School will take place and perform the daily risk assessment.

Any equipment that can be carried to site and left, will be set up by the Forest School Leader or staff prior to the children arriving for their session.

At the end of the session the Forest School Leader will make sure that the site is cleared and everything is safe.

Kit List

The following items will always be carried by the Forest School Leader to all Forest School sessions.

1. Register and emergency contact details
2. Consent forms including medical details
3. Walkie talkie or mobile phone (location dependent)
4. Risk assessments
5. Session plans
6. First aid kits including burns kits
7. Accident forms
8. Tarps and ropes for shelter
9. Drinking water
10. Fire safety water
11. Snacks
12. Wipes and hand gels
13. Tissues
14. Camera
15. Kelly kettle, cups and a spoon
16. Activity appropriate tools and safety cards
17. Personal protective equipment for all adults and children
18. Fire starting equipment
19. Rubbish bags
20. Toileting items if necessary (trowel, toilet roll, lighter etc)

Fire Safety Policy

Our Pre-School understands the importance of vigilance to fire safety hazards. All staff, volunteers and children involved in the Forest School sessions will be made aware of the fire safety procedures set out in the policy.

Campfires and the use of storm (Kelly) kettles are an important part of Forest School and will be used in most of our Forest School sessions. We aim to ensure that all children and adults taking part in Forest School sessions involving fires and storm (Kelly) kettles will do so safely and with as little risk as possible to their health.

Location

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for the campfires. These areas will have been checked by the Forest School Leader to ensure they are not susceptible to spread fire. A log surround will also be placed to prevent spread and in most cases a fire pit will be used.
- The storm (Kelly) kettle is only to be used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- A seating area will be created approximately 2.0 m distance from the fire pit. Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- Whilst the children are present, an adult will remain by the fire at all times.
- Children are only allowed to approach the fire with permission from the Forest School Leader.
- On occasion the fire may be left to burn down ready for cooking, whilst the group partake in another activity. During these times the Forest School Leader will check that the fire is safe to leave, put up signs for the public and lock the gate to the fire area. The Forest School Leader will also keep visual contact with the fire.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children; they are advised to turn their heads to one side, placing their hand across their face, to close their eyes and ask an adult to help them count to 30.
- If the wind direction is obvious, then the Forest School Leader will avoid placing a seat in the area of the smoke.

Cooking

If food is to be cooked at Forest School, the Forest School Leader is responsible for ensuring that the food has been transported, cooked and stored in a 'safe to eat' manner.

Safety and Responsibility

- Only adults are permitted to light fires. This will usually be the Forest School Leader.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.

- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding wood to the fire, this must be done with 1:1 supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed and not thrown from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.
- Protective gloves must be worn when placing anything on the fire and when removing cooking implements from it.

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- 5 litres of water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

Storm (Kelly) Kettles

- Only the Forest School Leader or other staff members are to light the fire in the fire pan.
- The spout should always point in the opposite direction to the pan air inlet.
- The kettle is only placed on heat when the kettle is completely full.
- The kettle should never be heated with the cork in.
- Only the Forest School Leader or other staff members are to remove the kettle from the fire pan.
- When removing from the heat, fire gloves should always be used. To pour, place one gloved hand on the handle and the other gloved hand to hold the chain to tilt the kettle.
- Only ever use the fire pan provided.

Stick Policy

Although during the Forest School sessions the children will be encouraged to be imaginative with sticks, they will also have to follow the following rules:

- Sticks should be no taller than the person holding it.
- Sticks should be held near one end, with awareness of where the other end is at all times.
- Sticks should not be lifted above waist height unless directed to do so by the Forest School Leader, member of staff or volunteer.
- If lifted above waist height the child needs to be an arm and a sticks distance from the nearest person.
- Any child intentionally trying to cause harm to another person with their stick will no longer be able to carry on with the stick activity.

Climbing Policy

Forest School is all about the children learning to take their own risks. During Forest School sessions we will be allowing children to climb higher than we would usually allow within the setting. The following rules will however have to be adhered to;

- The child must make the Forest School Leader, staff member or volunteers aware that they are planning to climb.
- Children should not climb higher than 2 metres, which means that their feet should be no higher than 2 metres off the ground.
- The Forest School Leader will determine whether or not the tree is safe to climb.

Hand Tool Safety Policy

Our Pre-School is committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development.

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School, as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that all tools are maintained and kept in good working order. The Forest School Leader will check all tools to be used before each session to check that they are safe to use. All staff, volunteers and children will be taught how to handle tools safely before being allowed to use them. They will be taught how to use them correctly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the adult to child ratios will be increased.

To achieve this, the following procedures will be followed:

- Adult to child ratios will vary depending on the tool in use. The ratios will vary from 1:1 to 1:4.
- Tools will be kept in their own tool bag/box and only removed by the Forest School Leader, staff or volunteers.
- Adult and child-sized gloves will be provided and are to be used when appropriate.
- No glove should be worn on the hand holding the tool to help avoid slipping.
- All tools should be used at an arm and a tool's length from the closest person, except for the Forest School Leader who may need to assist during 1:1 supervision.
- Running with tools is prohibited.
- Pointing with tools is prohibited.
- The Forest School Leader will not permit a child to use tools if the child does not follow the guidelines and use them with care.
- Tool safety covers must be placed back on the tools as soon as they are no longer in use. Safety covers should only be removed and replaced by an adult.
- Wood being sawn must be supported by a saw horse or a natural sawing break - hands must be kept away from the blade at all times. Adults and children must be given instruction and demonstration on the appropriate and safe position with which to saw.

- When using peelers and knives to whittle, children will remain seated at all times, whittle away from their bodies to the side, ensuring they follow the safe distance rule.
- It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure that tools are counted back into the tool bag/box at the end of the session.
- Volunteer helpers must receive basic training on the use of individual hand tools before being allowed to use them with children.
- Tool anatomy and safety cards will be kept with the tools as reminders to all staff and volunteer.

Water Safety Policy

During some Forest School sessions there may be pond or river dipping to explore different water bound creations. Children will be kept a safe distance away from the water except when working 1:1 with the Forest School Leader. It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure that pond waters and river levels are safe before commencing any activities.

Flora and Fauna Policy

During certain Forest School activities the children will get the opportunity to touch different flora and fauna. To ensure their safety the children will be instructed to do the following:

Flora

- Children should ask before picking any living flora.
- Hands should be kept away from mouths, unless picking flora that has been identified by the Forest School Leader as safe to eat.
- Safety gloves should be worn when touching flora that may prick or sting.
- The Forest School Leader will check the site for dangerous flora prior to the commencement of the session.
- After touching any flora, hands should be cleaned in accordance with our hygiene policy before eating or drinking.

Fauna

- Small fauna such as bugs and insects should be handled with care and returned to their natural habitat at the end of the session.
- Larger fauna will be observed from a safe distance and is not to be handled unless told it is safe to do so by the Forest School Leader.
- After touching any fauna, hands should be cleaned in accordance with our hygiene policy before eating or drinking.

Clothing Policy

As Forest School believes “there is no such thing as bad weather only a bad choice of clothes”, we will be out in all weathers. We, therefore, request that parents provide extra layers, hats and gloves, in cold weather and long sleeve tops, trousers and sun hats in the summer months. Weather appropriate footwear should also be worn; toes need to be fully enclosed even in the summer and wellingtons or warm boots worn in the winter. No sandals, flip flops or Crocs are to be worn. If children arrive with the wrong clothing they may be unable to participate in the Forest School session unless alternative items can be found. Clothing worn should be old clothing as it is likely to get very dirty and possibly damaged.

Waterproofs will be supplied by the setting. During sunny days, children will be required to wear sunscreen. This will be applied by the Forest School Leader or Pre-school staff, before the Forest School session begins, if the child has been attending Pre-school for that day. If the child has arrived at Pre-school for the Forest School session only, it is the parent’s responsibility to ensure their child is wearing sunscreen.

Missed Session Policy

If the Forest School Leader, or other staff members are unable to take a session, due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, then that session will be postponed and rescheduled at the end of the programme.

If, however, any child is unable to attend a session, for any reason, then that session will not be rescheduled for that child. Any activity that is essential to the rest of the programme will be offered upon the child’s return.

Toileting Policy

The children will be asked to use the toilet before leaving the setting. If a child/children need to go to the toilet whilst our activities are still on site or on St Sampson’s Primary School grounds, staff ratios allow for the child/children to be escorted back to the setting.

If we are further afield, we will carry a portable potty seat, tissue, a lighter and trowel to dispose of the waste.

All staff supporting the Forest School are DBS checked so are able to support children with toileting. Any children requiring a change of nappy/pull up will be changed. The soiled nappy/pull up will be double bagged and disposed of correctly at the end of the session. These children should bring spare nappies/pull ups to the session.

Hygiene Policy

Children will be using their senses to explore and touch various new and exciting things, they will therefore be asked not to put their hands near their mouths or eyes until they have been cleaned.

Before cooking or eating, everyone taking part in Forest School will be required to clean their hands. This will be done in one of the following ways.

- Water and natural soap
- Wipes and hand gel

Everyone will also wash their hands upon return to the Pre-School building at the end of the session.

Outings Policy

On occasion the Forest School session will take place further afield in areas such as Millennium Wood, North Meadow, areas around the Leisure Centre and grasslands just outside of the Pre-school. Prior to these sessions the Forest School Leader will complete a risk assessment of the area to be visited to ensure there are no major unforeseen dangers. Staff ratios will be increased dependent on distance to be travelled, road and public dangers observed during preliminary risk assessments.

Conservation Policy

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about an appreciation, respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to be aware of conservation issues of the environment around them.

It is important to bear in mind the ecological impact of running a Forest School and with that in mind consideration will be given to the following:

Fires will only be lit in designated areas or in the storm (Kelly) kettle. This will ensure that the site remains unaltered on departure.

Children will be educated not to pick anything living unless directed to do so by the Forest School Leader.

The Forest School Leader will ensure that areas where children are allowed to pick have an abundance of the resource required and will vary locations to maintain species levels.

At the end of the Forest School session it is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure that the area is returned to as close to its natural state as possible.