



St. Peter's Catholic Primary School

FOREST SCHOOL POLICY AND HANDBOOK

Ratified: October 2020

Last Reviewed: June 2023

Next Review: June 2025

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share the same commitment. We follow Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Procedures. For more information go to www.gsrb.org.uk

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Incorporating Child Protection Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Forest School Policy & Handbook

Our Forest School values

At St Peter's Catholic Primary School, we believe that Forest School is an opportunity for our children to learn, explore and discover using the natural environment. This is implemented through carefully planned, regular sessions throughout the year, where child initiated learning is strongly promoted.

These valuable learning opportunities take place in our specially designated outdoor Forest School area situated on the school site. The sessions are planned and led by our Forest School leader.

During the sessions an appreciation of the natural environment is promoted, teamwork and thinking skills are supported and children are encouraged to be reflective about their achievements and choices.

Forest School creates confident, independent learners who foster a long term love and respect of nature and the world around them.

Our Forest School Aims

By using the opportunity to learn in our Forest School we aim to promote and support children to:

- Develop their own personal and social skills
- Be confident in working both independently and as part of a team.
- Solve practical problems and face challenges
- Use tools appropriately
- To create and build
- To pursue knowledge that interests them
- To learn how to take risks and manage failures
- To build confidence in decision making and evaluate risk
- To develop practical skills
- To understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- To explore connections between themselves and the natural environment
- To reflect on learning and experiences
- To develop their language and communication skills
- To improve fine and gross motor skills
- To become self-motivated learners
- To improve their concentration skills

To enable this, we will provide:

- A suitable and safe Forest School area
- An experienced Forest School Leader to lead the sessions
- Exciting and relevant activities that spark the children's interest
- Appropriate clothing for weather conditions
- Tools and equipment to promote learning and discovery
- Opportunities for children to manage their own risk

Equal Opportunities

In accordance with the school Equal Opportunities policy we aim to make the Forest School sessions accessible to all children regardless of gender, race, religion or disability. Forest School is a conducive learning environment for everyone and can meet the needs for all age groups and abilities. All Children have the basic right to take risks, make mistakes and become independent learners through their own experiences.

Health and Safety

The safety and well-being of the children and staff at St Peter's Catholic Primary School is of paramount importance and all aspects of this have been taken into consideration.

Risk Assessments

A site risk assessment is carried out annually at the beginning of the school year unless circumstances, such as a significant change to the Forest School area, demand that another one be taken out in-between those dates. A copy of the site assessment is attached to this policy (Appendix 1).

A further risk assessment is taken out for any activities that deem to have a risk that is not addressed in the general site assessment. This will include the use of fires and fire related activities, such as cooking, the use of tools and activities using the enclosed pond area.

Safety Sweep

A safety sweep is completed by the Forest School leader each morning before the daily sessions begin. The safety sweep checks the following:

- The Weather conditions; checked before-hand and during the session
- The pond gate is shut and secure
- The manhole covers are in place and secure
- Any loose branches are removed
- Any low branches that may cause injury are cut back or removed
- Any brambles that may cause injury are cut back or removed
- Stinging nettles are removed from walkways and areas used for sitting/kneeling. In other areas they are brought to the children's attention so they can be mindful of them.
- Any mushrooms or fungus are checked and removed if necessary and brought to the children's attention so they can be mindful of them.
- Any low lying tangled branches that could cause a trip hazard are removed if possible or brought to the children's attention.
- Any large pot holes are filled
- Any animal faeces are removed and disposed of appropriately
- Any dead animals are removed and disposed of appropriately

First Aid and Medical Equipment

The Forest School leader must hold a current and relevant First Aid certificate that is both in date and provided by a professional, recognised awarding body. A fully stocked First Aid kit must always be taken to the Forest School site for every session. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to restock the First Aid kit, ensure it is taken out to each session and make all other adults aware of where it is kept during the session.

All staff attending each session must be aware of any medical or dietary needs the children may have. Any relevant medication or equipment must be brought out with the child/children and a designated adult must take full responsibility of this during the session.

Any accidents or treatment for illness/injury used during the session must be recorded using the white slip system and reported to the class teacher on return to the classroom. The Forest School leader must report any injury or illness they have witnessed and treated to the DSL by filling out a form.

In the event of an emergency situation the 'Emergency evacuation procedure' must be followed:

If a child has a serious accident whilst at Forest School, the FSL (Charlotte Sysum) will stay with the casualty and dial 999 and/or administer First Aid if necessary. All other children are to evacuate the area with another member of staff (if one is present) who will lead them back into school. Either the FSL or another member of staff who may be present (depending on the situation and whether life-saving First Aid is being administered) will alert the office of the incident either in person or by mobile phone. If a serious situation occurs which requires all of the children to be evacuated members of staff will lead the children back into school out of the safest and most accessible exit of the FS site

A mobile phone is taken out to every Forest School session to maintain communication with school and, if necessary, can be used to call emergency services directly.

The 'Emergency evacuation procedure' is part of the site risk assessment which is located in the Pavilion building. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure all other staff are aware of the procedure.

Staff Ratios

The Forest School Leader can bring out up to 15 children on their own. If the number is higher than 15 then one other member of staff will be required to attend session. Children who require one to one support must come to Forest School with a designated adult to support them.

Toileting

Children are encouraged to go to the toilet before coming out to the Forest School site, however, toilets are provided in the Pavilion building if they need to go during the session.

Equipment

All weatherproof clothing, apart from wellington boots, is provided by school. The Forest School leader and Class Teacher/Teaching Assistant will liaise before the session about appropriate clothing for weather conditions, that is additional to what is already provided; this may include extra layers or sun hats.

All other equipment, including tools, and resources are also provided by school.

The tools used by staff and children are safe and fit for purpose and will only be used in the way they are designed for. Children and staff will always be shown how to use tools appropriately and safely before using them independently. Certain tools and resources will only be used with an adult overseeing the activity. Tools are stored safely in a locked area where children cannot gain access to them.

List of Equipment and Resources

Forest School rucksack; to be taken out every session:

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • First Aid kit | • Mobile phone | • String |
| • Tissues | • Secateurs | • Gloves |
| • Pen/pencil and notepad | • Sheath Knife (for adult use only) | • Animal waste disposal bags |

Additional contents may include:

- Wool
- Sharpie pens
- 'Bertie Bat' (Forest School mascot)
- Kabab sticks
- Gloves for children
- Fire tin consisting of fire steel and tinder
- Scissors

Tools:

- Hammers
- Nails
- Bow saws (Adult/Upper KS2 only)
- Saw horse
- Potato peelers
- Trowels
- Loppers (Adult/upper KS2 use only)

Other Forest School equipment and resources:

- Paint brushes
- Watering cans
- Large bucket
- Rope
- Logs
- Canopy
- Tarpaulins
- Paper
- Crayons
- Wool of varying colour and texture
- Observation trays
- Mud kitchen and equipment

The Role of The Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader is responsible for planning and implementing sessions that are both appropriate and educational, and where relevant, linked to the class theme. Plans for the Forest School sessions are usually planned a maximum of one week in advance to enable the inclusion of any particular areas of interest the children may have. This means that the sessions are always interesting and relevant and provide a quality, valid learning experience.

It is also the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to promote child-initiated learning that can develop independence and promote self-confidence and responsibility. During the sessions the Forest School Leader will both initiate learning and observe learning; knowing when to support children in a way that will allow them to further develop their learning.

It is the duty of the Forest School Leader to encourage and inspire individuals of any age through positive experiences that promote confidence, self-esteem and motivation. Our Forest School has been developed to help children reach their personal potential and allow them to become self-motivated learners.

COVID-19 ANNEX

With the full opening of schools (September 2020) access to Forest School for EYFS, Y1 and Y2 pupils will commence with effect from 1 November 2020.

In order to ensure Forest School complies with our COVID-19 Risk Assessment the following systems of controls will be implemented:

All children and staff must wash their hands before and after each session

Whenever possible, children should wear their own waterproofs, but if school waterproofs are needed they will be quarantined for 48 hrs in a separate room after use.

The Forest School leader will have a bottle of hand sanitiser available on site for all children to use after they have used a tissue, if they have coughed, or if soap and water is not readily available.

Children will be encouraged to maintain a distance from each other where possible.

All equipment used during a session will be placed in a box at the end of the session and will not be used again for 48hrs.

