



CSS

Children's
Support
Service

Children's Support Service Forest School Policy

September 2019

Forest School Policy

In order to ensure that all children and adults understand the expectations when embarking upon a Forest School session, a code of conduct will be agreed, this will include positive statements. The Forest School Agreement for the Children's Support Service is as follows:

Site Consideration.

The forest School environment is home to a number of plants and animals. In entering the site, it is important to respect the natural environment by considering the impact of our actions. We will always leave the Forest School site in a better condition than when we found it.

Health & Safety

Each Forest School session will last a minimum of 90 minutes.

Forest School sessions will be led by a level 3 practitioner, who has an up to date **First Aid Qualification**.

All children and adults will be made aware of the boundaries to the Forest School site. At the start of each Forest School session these will be reinforced and any children taking part in Forest School for the first time will be taken around the site.

A register will be taken at the start of each Forest School session. To ensure that each adult is aware of those children undertaking each activity with them, children will take their name badges and place them next to the activity that they are taking part in.

Children should ensure that they bring suitable clothing for the time of year, including waterproofs and wellington boots in the winter and sunhats in the summer.

Emergency contact details of all children **and any supporting adults** together with any food allergies and medical conditions will be laminated and taken to each forest School session.

Each adult will have a mobile telephone with them in case of an emergency. Each adult will have a copy of each member of staff's telephone number to assist in the case of an emergency.

Administration of Medicines

The administration of medicines follows that laid out in the main school policy.

Toileting

Whilst using the Forest School site at Fairview Road, children will have access to the toilet facilities. Before and after using these, they will need to inform an adult. A toilet card will be kept in an agreed place in order that only one child at a time goes. Children will be trained to move their name to show they have left the Forest School site to go to the toilet.

Strategy For a lost Child

Before leaving for Forest School, each adult will have a list of children for which they are responsible for. At regular intervals, adults will ensure that these children are within the Forest School site. In the event of a child being unaccounted for, one member of staff will be sent to look for that child. Help will be sought from support staff to assist. The Forest School Leader will be responsible for contacting the Police and the parent/guardian of the child in addition to the Headteacher. It will be established between adults and children when and where the last sighting of the child was.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of an unforeseen accident occurring, the Forest School Leader will contact the Emergency Services.



Safety Around The Fire

Before developing a working fire pit, children will firstly need to agree a number of rules, and demonstrate that they are competent in keeping to these. This may include teaching students how to light a fire, it is important that they become familiar with where the fire site will be and the safety procedures to adopt whilst around it. In order for this to occur, a pretend fire will be used. Once they have become accustomed to adhering to these features and understanding that this will be the fire pit, the process of making fire can then commence!

In order for students to make fire, it needs to be understood as to what fire needs in order to be made. They will be taught that fire requires fuel and oxygen and a fuel source. Heat triggers a gas in the fuel and it is this that lights the wood. Students should be taught that you never rush fire. The thickness in the wood should be varied, from small, thin pieces to thicker.

Students will be taught that they are trying to create enough heat for the gases to be released.

Following this, students will be taught how to create the fire. They will use wool pads, which will then be fluffed up and a small dab of Vaseline placed in the middle. Students need to be aware of the direction of the wind when lighting their fire. The wind should be on your back when lighting a fire, as fire needs air as well. Thin, spaghetti size pieces of stick should be gathered, followed by pieces of finger width, and gradually increasing in thickness. These should then be arranged in piles of similar thickness. These should be leant against each other to create a canopy style. A tunnel should then be created in order to provide an opening for the fire. Fire strikers, such as flint and steel should then be used to create the spark to start the fire. These are used by pushing your dominant hand away from you into the direction of the Vaseline. The non-dominant hand should be used to hold the fire striker. All students should be reminded of the fire rules and how to extinguish the fire safely.

There should be 2 clear exit points from the fire. When lighting a fire, there should always be 5 litres of water in the area in order to extinguish should the fire get out of control or to put it out at the end. There should always be a first aid kit and a fire glove around the fire. Logs around the fire will be pegged so that they cannot move. There will be a distance of 1.5 metres between the edge of the fire and the seating platform. These will be all the way around the logs.

Tool Use

Prior to using each tool, children will be taught their name and the purpose for their use.

Peelers

The first tool that will be used is a peeler, and it will be demonstrated how to carry the tool before embarking upon its use. Students will then individually demonstrate how to transport the peelers before embarking upon using them. Students will be taught the importance of space and direction when using each tool. This will be referred to as the blood circle, and ensures that each child are sat the correct distance away from the person next to them. Next, each child will be taught that we cut away from our bodies and will demonstrate how to do this. Children will then experience the use of this tool by whittling. After they have finished, I will ensure that each child places their peeler on the floor in front of them, and each child individually brings their peeler back to the correct place, ensuring that they oil it before placing it away. This will be applied to each of the different tools.

Secateurs and Loppers

When each child has understood the safety aspects an environment will be created in which the use of another tool is required. This may involve secateurs and the loppers. Again, the reason why we use them will be explained, as will the safety features. The main feature for both of these two tools is ensuring that they are in a locked position when transporting around. When using secateurs, it will be explained the size of each item to cut, which should be no more than the diameter of a 5 pence piece. The sense of space and direction will again be emphasised, modelling where to stand if people both cutting together, and this will involve the blood circle. A demonstration will then be made of how to use the secateurs correctly, which involves ensuring that the 'smiley face' is being made by the blades. On a further lesson, loppers will be introduced, and the same safety features will be followed. One person needs to be holding the wood to be cut. The occasions when we use loppers will be explained, which is for items over 5cm in diameter. The importance of oiling both the loppers and secateurs at the end will be explained.



Saw

When introducing the saw, it will be explained that the size of wood that it is used to cut. Students will be shown that a crocodile pattern is made, and how sharp the saw is. Following this, the set up position will be explained which if kneeling down involves placing one leg at 90 degrees on the ground forming a right angle and the other leg upright. Remembering the blood circle, the children will establish where someone else using a saw should sit. Once this has been established, the importance of supporting the item to be sawed, and where to place the other hand will be explained. A glove should be worn on the non-cutting hand to act as a preventative measure against any incorrect cuts being made. When cutting the wood one person should be holding it. A demonstration will then follow of starting cuts on a piece of wood. These will involve sawing at a 45 degree angle and moving the saw in one direction, which will be towards you. This should be done gently in order to start the sawing process with a groove into the wood. Students should ensure that they choose a sensible place to saw as once the cut is near to completion this may result in the items underneath being sawn.

Knives

Knives will not be introduced into the group until it has been established that the child can be trusted to use these appropriately. It may involve a gradual progression with children carrying knives, placing them in and out of their sheaths before actually using them. Those that have demonstrated safe and effective practice using the above tools will be shown how to use a knife. Knives will always be locked away, even when travelling. They will be numbered with a permanent marker to ensure that they are all back at the end of the session. Children will understand that a knife lives in a sheath, and to ensure that it is securely in place, a click will be heard. The concept of the blood circle will also again be stressed. The knife should be held with a clenched fist, and a tapping stick should be used to strike the knife. The children will be taught to look at the way the grains are arranged in the wood so that they are cutting the way that the grain is going. Small pieces of kinder wood will be used to start the children off. The knife should be in the non dominant hand, with the tapping stick in the dominant hand. Students will be taught to sit parallel to the wood being cut, kneeling with one leg flat on the



ground (the same part of the body as the non-dominant hand). The other leg (dominant hand side) should be at right angles. In order to stop the students cutting into tarmac or concrete, a plank of wood should be placed underneath. This will also ensure that the knife won't get blunt as well as a result of striking the concrete. When the student has finished with the knife, they should always clean with the blade away from them. The knife should then be placed back into the sheath with a secure click being heard.

Tree Climbing

Before climbing any tree, a child will first need to check with the Forest School if the tree is safe to climb, and that they have suitable footwear. This will involve a visual risk assessment and where possible the Forest School Leader to test the strength of each branch the child intends to climb. The Forest School Leader will be considering the width of each branch and its stability. Once this has been established, there will then be an agreement as to the height that the child can climb. This would normally be double their height. Children will be reminded not to exceed their capabilities and to always maintain three points of contact (i.e. hold on with both hands while moving feet) at all times.

Food Hygiene

Before touching any food to be either cooked or consumed either on the fire or on the forest school site, children will wash their hands. Hand sanitizer will be taken to each Forest School session. After the conclusion of each Forest School session, children will also wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water.

Volunteers/Adult Helpers

Before embarking on a Forest School Session, all adults, including parental helpers will need to have an up to date DBS. They will be made aware of the theory behind Forest School by having access to a document entitled 'Guidelines For Staff and Parents'.

Cancellation

Forest School will take place throughout the year and in a variety of weather conditions, such as rain and the cold. However, there may be occasions when it isn't considered safe to do so. Forest School may therefore be cancelled in the event of high winds, extreme weather conditions or not enough staff being available. This will be at the discretion of the Level Three Forest School Leader.

Travel to site/Transport

Children will be transported to and from the Forest School site by either mini bus or in a car belonging to a member of staff.

Adult/Child Ratios

Due to the nature of the children who attend CSS, there will be a ratio of one adult to three children.

Good Practice Guidance For Staff and Volunteers,

Guidelines For Staff and Parents

Please familiarise yourself with the enclosed information to ensure that you are ready to maximise the potential that Forest School has to offer!

1. Ethos

Forest School is a pedagogy and involves:

- Trust
- Risk Taking
- Child centred learning.
- Children taking ownership for their own learning, thereby initiating the structure of the session.
- Self- reflection
- Choice

- Play
- Children working at their own pace ☑ Promotion of self-esteem

Each Forest School session will have a beginning and endings to encourage social interaction and communication, therefore developing a culture of cooperation amongst peers, learning from each other and seeking advice where appropriate.

1. What is Forest School?

Forest school is an environment where we are all valued and recognised as individuals. Children are given ownership and autonomy on their choice of activities. It is carried out in a playful environment with the element of risk predominant. It may involve the use of a number of tools, such as secateurs, loppers, saws, and knives.

2. Ground Rules

Through play children will learn a variety of bush craft skills. Each adult should encourage each child within the group to express themselves. Each adult will be asked to undertake an activity within the Forest School session. There is no expectation of what children will achieve throughout. Each child will respond in different ways and we encourage all adults to engage in conversation with each child,

3. Tool Use

To encourage consistency, please consult the Forest School Leader (Richard Davies) before instructing any child on how to use any tools.

4. Help!

Please do not be afraid to ask any questions to the Forest School Leader. Your support is greatly appreciated, as are any

suggestions. Please remember to have fun, be playful and demonstrate to the children that you are enjoying yourself! This will then be replicated by the children!

5. The process of managing risk at Forest School.

Before undertaking any activity at Forest School, a Risk Assessment will be undertaken. There will be a daily risk assessment, undertaken in advance of the sessions. Where an activity is designated to be have a rating of substantial or unacceptable, further preventative measures will be undertaken to ensure that the Post-Action Risk Rating is reduced to moderate or below.

Long term risk assessments are the responsibility of the Forest School Leader and the Educational Visits Co-ordinator and can be viewed both on the staff shared drive and paper copies are available both in the school office and from the Forest School Leaders Classroom base. All volunteers and staff taking part within Forest School should familiarise themselves with this prior to the session.

6. Communication strategy

Parents/Guardians

Before participating within Forest School, parents will be fully briefed with regard to the theoretical framework and research of schools undertaking the Forest School programme together with the time and location of the sessions. Parents will also be asked to provide their signed consent allowing their child to participate, together with a programme of activities. A copy is shown below:



Dear Parents,

Forest Schools

Throughout this term, your child will be visiting our site at Fairview Road in Basildon to take part in an initiative known as Forest Schools. Forest School is a process of learning and development that takes place in a local woodland, usually as part of a programme of regular visits, offering children and young people the freedom to flex their imagination and learn in an exciting, natural environment. Research suggests that regular participation in Forest School sessions:

- Builds self-confidence and self-esteem
- Improves motivation and encourages cooperation
- Encourages responsibility, independence and the management of risk
- Improves language, communication and social skills
- Improves gross and fine physical motor skills
- Increases understanding of the natural environment and of seasonal change
- Encourages a positive attitude to learning

Within the environment of Forest School, children learn how to use a variety of tools, such as saws, loppers and secateurs. This will be both to manage the site and to produce woodland craft items. Before being taught how to use each tool safely, children will need to demonstrate that they can be trusted to use these. The lighting of a camp fire, by gathering and using appropriate woodland materials is also a main part of the Forest Schools programme. Children may also be cooking items over an open fire. Again, this will only be when each child has demonstrated an understanding of the safe procedure around a fire.

We would very much like your child to take part in the Forest School Programme, and believe it will provide an extremely positive impact upon their learning process, providing a range of positive experiences which are



transferable to everyday situations. If you are happy for your child to take part in the programme, please sign and return the permission slip below. Children will be transported to the Fairview Road site by either mini-bus or in a car belonging to a member of staff at CSS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

Mr R Davies
Primary Teacher

Name of child : _____

My give permission for my child to attend Forest Schools at Fairview Road,
Basildon

I give permission for my child to use the tools at Forest School

Signed: _____

Date: _____