



'Together we nurture the seeds for success'

Subject:	Forest School Policy
Issue date:	September 2022

Safeguarding Statement:

At Foley Infant Academy, we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by or invited to deliver services at Foley Infant Academy. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

Introduction

Forest School is a unique way of building independence, self-esteem, and a positive attitude towards learning in children and young people as they explore and experience the natural world for themselves. This fully supports our vision:

“Together, we nurture the seeds for success...”

Our main aim is to create a happy, secure and welcoming atmosphere in which effective learning can take place.

Our core values are kindness, individuality, community, resilience and growth.

We also try to provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment in which each child can develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in all aspects of their education, not just intellectually, but also socially, physically, and creatively.

Purpose/Aims of Forest School

- Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
- Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave.

Legislation and Forest School

In loco parentis

Common Law originating in 19th C. Enshrined in case law and legislation. Duty of care for those responsible for the care, custody and control of the children to take the same care that a reasonable, prudent and careful parent/guardian would take in the same circumstances.

[Health & Safety at Work act \(1974\) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations \(1999\)](#)

Employers have a duty to provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment with risk assessments and procedures laid down for serious and imminent danger.

[Health and Safety \(First Aid\) Regulations \(1981\)](#)

Requires employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees if they are injured or become ill at work. Members of the public and other non-employees are included in the first aid needs assessment and provision must be made.

[Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Regulations \(1992\)](#)

Requires the provision of device or appliance designed to be worn or held by an individual for protection against one or more health hazards. Requires user instructions and independent testing requirements.

[Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations RIDDOR \(1995\)](#)

Requires the reporting of any work related death or injury lasting over three days, disease or dangerous occurrence that may not have resulted in a reportable injury but which clearly could have (near miss).

[The Protection of Children Act 1999](#)

Created a system for identifying persons considered to be unsuitable for working with children. This makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers.

[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(2002\)](#)

Requires employers to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill health.

[The Children Act \(2004\)](#)

Places a duty of services to work together to ensure that every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve through learning, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being. (Every Child Matters).

School Policies and Forest Schools

Staff attending Forest School sessions should be familiar with the following school policies:

- *Health and Safety Policy
- *First Aid policy
- *Risk Assessment Policy
- *Food Policy
- *Safeguarding Policy
- *Equality & Inclusion Policy
- *Behaviour Policy

Particular attention is paid to the following areas:

Health and Safety

The Forest school curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the Forest School Handbook, along with the other policies. The Forest School Leader has an up-to-date certificate in Paediatric First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangement. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact list is kept in the Office and a mobile phone is carried. The school will contact the parents. Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

Staffing ratio for Forest School are one adult per fifteen children, this must include the trained Forest School Leader. A group of 30 children will have at least 2 adults at all times to ensure safety.

The Forest School Leader on a one to two basis, will oversee all activities that involve making fire or using tools. The other member of staff will then be able to ensure the safety of the remaining pupils.

Emergency Procedure

All staff, will be briefed on what to do in the case of an emergency. A whistle will be blown as a signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff, be silent and wait for instructions. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure the rest of the group are safe from danger and adequately supervised. An accident form will be completed later. A RIDDOR record will be created, along with an Accident report for any death, serious injury or 7 day injury.

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance:

- In serious cases, the Emergency Services will be contacted (see below) using the emergency phone carried by the Forest School Leader. Then the school will be notified. The school office will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- One member of staff from school will meet the ambulance at the school entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
- If the injured party is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the injured party's emergency contact will be updated about the situation by the school office staff.
- In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange to contact the injured party's emergency contact so that they can be collected and taken to hospital, doctor or home – as appropriate.

Emergency Contact Numbers:

Ambulance/Fire Brigade = 999

School Office = 01384 872382

Requesting attendance by Emergency Services

Dial 999 and ask for ambulance or fire brigade. Be ready with the following information:

School number – 01384 872382

School post code – DY7 6EW

Ambulance access – Car Park

Lost Child Procedure

In the event of a child discovered missing from a group, a whistle will sound for all children to gather around our base camp (fire pit). One adult will check the area while another member of staff will keep the children occupied with an activity.

The Forest School Leader will use a mobile phone to contact the main school building in case the child has gone back into school for toilets or any other reason.

If after 5 minutes the child has not been located, the school office will dial 999 to alert the police, then contact parents to inform them of the situation.

Staff will record details of the situation, including the last known position of the missing child and any timings. These will be recorded on the emergency procedures sheet.

Safeguarding

Forest schools sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by members of staff. Everyone involved is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them. All staff have current DBS checks. Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers and a Cause for Concern sheet will be filled in as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the class teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Equality and Inclusion

During Forest School all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

Behaviour

At Forest schools we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Foley Infant Academy. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the wellbeing of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency Contact details are held in the Medical Room and School Office.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest School Site Assessment
- Tool use
- Campfire Activities

These risk assessments can be found in the Forest School Handbook.

Safety Sweep and checklists

The Forest School leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at Forest School

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest School. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest School Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be given.
- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest Schools Leader at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest Schools Leader feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:2 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest Schools Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:

- Stand behind the logs.
- Step over and sit down on logs.
- Stand up, turn around and step over logs.
- Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle.
- In addition to the other resources, we will take a large container full of water.

When lighting a fire:

- Only the trained Forest School Leader will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle.
- The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.
- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere unless they are lighting the fire under the supervision of the Forest School Leader.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest schools:

- Everyone should wash or wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the Forest School Leader

- The Forest schools Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date Paediatric First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School Leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.
- The leader will carry an emergency pack at all times.
- The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The Forest School leader will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, e.g., trips, falls, stings, etc.

Forest School Rules

- Keep your hands away from your mouth
- Leave things to grow
- Keep within the set boundaries

Routines and Procedures for Forest School

Before the session, the Forest School Leader will do a check of the site prior to the sessions. The First Aid kit and any medication will be taken to each session. The tool bag, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate. Prior to the session children will be toileted and put on their outdoor clothing in the classroom. Children will put wellies on the outside the classroom door and walk in pairs to the site.

During the session, children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. They also learn how to light fires safely. The children learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools. This is a tightly supervised activity on a 1:2 ratio of adult to children. It is introduced gradually in small steps. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment. Back at school children will remove wellies outdoors before entering the classroom.

After the session, equipment will be washed and stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and hung on rails in the classroom. Flasks and water containers will be emptied and cleaned out. Tools (if taken) will be cleaned and locked away in the resources area.

Cancelling Forest schools

Forest School may need to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds or thunderstorms. Forest School may not be able to go ahead if there are not enough adults to accompany us. The session may also be cancelled if the Forest School Leader is unable to attend. Campfires cannot take place without a qualified Forest School Leader.

Essential Equipment Needed at Forest School Sessions

A box - containing the following essential items will always accompany the group:

- EAP (Emergency Action Plan)
- Mobile phone
- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- First Aid Kit
- Inhalers

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session:

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Waterproof trousers
- Spare socks
- Stout shoes/wellies/boots

Toileting considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the school. Any children needing the toilet during the session must be accompanied into school by an adult.

This Forest Schools Policy has been written in agreement with the Head Teacher, Staff and Governors of Foley Infant Academy. It will be reviewed annually.

Equality Statement

A disability equality assessment has been carried out on the policy and the guidance contained in it. Implementing this policy ensures that the same opportunities are provided to all pupils and supports Equality and Diversity.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed **every 2 years** by subject leads, SLT and Governors.

The Governors may however review the policy earlier than this if Government introduce new regulations or if the Governing Body receive recommendations about how the policy may be improved.