Blaenavon Heritage Voluntary Controlled Primary School



FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

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COG:

INTRODUCTION

As part of our enriched curriculum children will be given opportunities to attend our Forest School site.

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974

This Act states that employers have a general duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, their employees' health, safety and welfare. In particular they should provide a safe place of work, safe systems of work, safe equipment and adequate instruction, training and supervision. They also have a duty to consult employees on health and safety arrangements.

Pupils' and volunteers' health and safety are protected under section 3 of the Act.
This document will list the procedures and policies relevant to Health and Safety at Work.

PURPOSE

This document will list the procedures and practices relevant to Forest Schools and to Health and Safety at Work.

1 HEALTH

- The forest leader will have the appropriate training to allow him/her to lead a forest school, including an up to date outdoor first aid qualification, a recognised forest school qualification.
- The forest leader will comprehensively assess risks using the forms in this policy.
- The forest leader will carry an emergency bag containing a full First Aid kit (see Accident and Emergency Procedures). Once accidents have been reported the forest leader will consult with the Head teacher and other appropriate adults as to whether the accident could have been avoided and what new procedures would be necessary to avoid the accident.
- The forest leader will ensure medication is taken when required by individual children. (See medication procedures).
- The forest staff will ensure children clean their hands when eating food and that they clean their hands before handling any food. (See Food Hygiene Procedures).

2 SAFE PLACE OF WORK

- The forest leader will assess risks. (See Risk Assessment – paragraph 9.3 below).

3 SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK

- The forest leader will ensure clear communication between herself and other adults involved with forest school at weekly planning meetings in order to ensure safe systems of work.
- No member of the group will lift or carry objects that they cannot comfortably and safely carry.

4 SAFE EQUIPMENT

- The forest leader will inspect tools and equipment regularly.

- Appropriate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) will be provided when required.
- Adequate training and supervision will be provided as required.
- The forest leader is a fully qualified HLTA and is accredited (or is undertaking) accreditation with the Agoned Cymru.
- The forest leader will train adults involved with Forest school at regular meetings and when in the forest.
- The forest leader will supervise the forest school staff and organise the supervision of the children by the staff.
- The forest leader will train the children in the use of any tools. (See Tool Usage – Paragraph 7.5 below).

5 CONSULTATION WITH STAFF

- The forest leader will discuss session content and activities with other members attending the session.

6 EMPLOYEE DUTIES

- Employees have a duty to look after themselves and their colleagues and co-operate with their employees, enabling compliance with legal requirements. They have a duty to look after anything to comply with Health and Safety law.
- The forest staff will be expected to look after themselves and each other as well as the children. They will be expected to be proactive in the area of health and safety. They will be expected to look after tools and equipment and report any damage. (See Tool Usage – Paragraph 7.5 below).
- Forest school sessions will take place at our secure Forest School site in the school grounds in all weathers except high winds, when alternative activities may be offered.
- The Health and Safety of all Children and Staff attending Forest School sessions is a priority which is considered at all times. All activities and the site are thoroughly risk assessed by the Forest School Leader. Sometimes, however, the children may acquire scratches, bumps, small cuts and other minor injuries from ever-present countryside hazards.

7 OPERATING PROCEDURES – FOREST SCHOOL SESSIONS

7.1 Forest School

After the site has been checked and made safe and secure, children will be collected from relevant rooms, dressed appropriately, (depending on the weather conditions) and taken to the Forest School site. If the weather is considered too adverse, children will not be taken out and alternative activities will be found.

A variety of activities will be offered to the children but the ethos of Forest School ensures that all children can be involved in group or individual activities and their contribution will be valued. They will be given the support they need to stay healthy, safe, and enjoy and achieve through learning.

7.2 Protective Clothing

All children will be dressed appropriately when attending forest school sessions. Wet weather gear will be provided for the children and will be worn

if the weather demands it; whether because of rain, wet ground or the activity means the children will need to be protected.

Footwear needs to be appropriate for activities and shoes, trainers or wellies will be worn and will be provided by school if the children do not have their own. As sessions will take place throughout the year, suitable clothing should be taken into consideration. Sunhats and sun cream (provided by parents in line with Torfaen County Council Policy), gloves or hats depending on the weather.

In cold weather, clothing will be appropriate and activities designed to keep them warm. In warm weather the same rules will apply: no child will be put at risk from the weather.

Protective clothing work gloves will be worn during activities.

7.3 At the Site

Safety is paramount and children will be made aware of the rules to keep themselves safe. Staff will act as role models to help the children prepare to think for themselves. Children will be involved in structured and free play activities but they will be supervised at all times.

In line with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), activity and site risk assessments will be completed for each session and will be reviewed and made available for all staff to peruse and amend, where needed.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002) requires staff to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill health. Those who attend forest school need to be aware of berries, fungi or other plants and species that may cause illness and how to treat if they occur. These dangers will be identified in the risk assessments and action taken.

7.4 Tool Usage

Tools will only be introduced into the sessions when the forest leader feels the children are able to use them safely.

The forest leader will:

- Carry out risk assessments for each activity and ensure there is a safe working area.
- Assess that tools are fit for purpose and be responsible for the maintenance and safe storage of tools.
- Ensure everyone is familiar with the safe operating procedures which apply to each tool, eg how to carry tools safely, safe working position for using tool etc. and include this in the session plan.
- Children should be encouraged to take responsibility for their tools and know where they are at all times.
- Be responsible for providing any personal protection equipment necessary for safe use of tools.
- Be responsible for ensuring all adults can use the tools safely, move the tools safely and are aware of the safe operating procedures for each tool in use.

- Tools will be stored in a secure bag with a checklist to ensure they are all returned at the end of the session.

7.5 Fire Safety

At some point during the Forest School sessions, and only when the Forest School Leader feels it is safe to do so, a fire may be lit. A fire should only be used for purpose, as with any other tool, and only when the situation has been thoroughly assessed. The daily risk assessment should be carried out and if there is a strong wind or conditions are very dry a fire will not be lit.

Children will have been instructed on safety rules and will be supervised at all times to ensure their safety.

1. The position of the fire will be 1.5 meters from children, who will be sitting at the log circle and know that they must not cross the circle but walk around in order to stay safe. Games will be played to ensure children understand safety rules: children will be asked to move around the log circle, swapping positions with people opposite, ensuring the children move around the back of the circle and not go through it.
2. Fires will be lit by one person and children will be encouraged to come and toast food in small groups, 1 or 2 at a time, always closely supervised.
3. A burns kit is an essential part of the first aid provision.
4. A fire blanket and 5 litres of water in an open top bucket are taken out to the site for fire safety and to put out the fire at the end of the session. The water is always clean and fresh in case a burn may need to be submerged in it.
5. When a session has concluded, the forest school leader will ensure that the fire is put out completely, embers raked over and the area put back to its original state.
6. When the site is developed and sessions extended to other year groups, children will be instructed on fire lighting, and when ready, given opportunities to light fire themselves.
7. Children will always be closely supervised during these sessions.

7.6 Returning to School

When the children have finished their session they will help to return the site to its original condition, unless a piece of work is being left to continue with at another time. This is to help them understand the impact we have on our environment and what we can do to minimise it.

Dens will be taken down; branches and logs put back or into piles to encourage mini beasts, fires thoroughly put out and raked over.

Children are then taken back to school and clothing removed and stored ready for the next session.

8 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

8.1 Confidentiality

Rationale: In order to protect children, parents, carers and staff to ensure everyone in this school community is absolutely clear about the issues of confidentiality and what the school's procedures are in respect of this matter. The school recognises that the safety and well-being of children is of paramount importance, as is respect for the privacy of everyone in this school community.

8.2 Working with Children & Families

The school recognises that its work with children and families sometimes involves staff dealing with confidential information. This information, whether verbal or written, provided by parents or carers, is treated confidentially.

1. Parents are informed of records being kept on their child and informed of any addition to this.
2. Parents/carers have access to their child's records only.
3. Children's records are kept in individual files and stored securely in a locked cabinet.
4. Files are available to inform meetings such as case conferences, progress interviews, etc and are able to be accessed at these meetings by the member of staff in charge.
5. Children's personal details cannot be passed on to an individual outside the relevant departments of the authority without the parent/carer's consent or even inside those departments without the Head Teacher's knowledge.
6. School staff will not discuss matters relating to children or their families in any public arena.
7. Children may sometimes give out information about themselves or their families which parents/carers would not wish to be known. School staff will therefore deal sensitively with information divulged to them by children, when this does not relate to possible abuse. If there is a disclosure of abuse this will be reported to the school's Child Protection Officer.

The school is aware that abuse occurs in our society. It recognises it has a prime responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of children and has a duty to report any suspicions of abuse to the local authority.

1. Any evidence relating to a child's personal safety is kept in a separate secure, confidential file by the Head Teacher.
2. Contents of the file are open only to the Head Teacher and the Child Protection team.
3. Parents/carers will have access to records relating to their child.
4. Blaenavon Heritage Primary School ensures that any details concerning staff which should remain confidential or are requested by staff to remain confidential, e.g. telephone numbers, are kept in secure locations by the Business Manager and the Head Teacher.
5. All information on any individual complies with current Data Protection rules and guidance issued by Torfaen County Council.

8.3 Accidents/Incidents

All situations should be risk assessed and strategies put in place before the children go out to the site but sometimes the unexpected happens. A register must be taken which remains with the class teacher. At the start of each session the group will have a health and safety talk.

8.3.1 Pupils' Minor Accidents

An adult at the scene should comfort the child and take him/her to the forest leader. The forest leader has an up to date emergency first aid certificate for outdoors and a photocopy of this is kept at the back of the forest school handbook. The forest leader should assess the injury and deal with it using the first aid kit located in the emergency bag. All incidents should be written into the forest school accident/ incident book also located in the emergency bag.

All minor injuries should be referred to the Head Teacher for decision as to whether they need to be transferred into the school's accident book and whether parents/carers need to be informed.

8.3.2 Staff Minor Accidents

All accidents should be reported to the forest leader and first aid should be administered by the injured person or another team member, using the emergency first aid kit.

8.3.3 Major Accidents Requiring Medical Attention

The adult present at the accident will contact the forest leader who will get the emergency bag. The remainder of the adults will escort the rest of the children back to the log circle and await instructions. The forest leader will assess the injuries and decide whether hospitalisation is required. She will then:

1. Instruct the adult at the scene of the accident to 'phone for an ambulance. The adult will describe the injuries and give instructions on where the injured person is from the directions sheet in the information folder in the emergency bag.
2. Comfort and administer appropriate immediate first aid using the first aid kit from the emergency bag.
3. The adult at the scene will 'phone the school to inform them that there has been an accident.
4. Accident procedures will then follow school procedures with the appropriate accident administration being the responsibility of the forest leader.

As sessions take place outside, the forest school leader should be mindful of the weather. If it deteriorates and becomes too cold, wet or windy and the children could be at risk from the elements then they should be taken back to school immediately.

Although the children's safety and well-being is paramount, there are other people who will be at the forest school site with them and their well-being should be considered too.

The Forest school leader carries a mobile phone with her at all times during the session, in case of emergency, when either school can be contacted or, in extreme circumstances, emergency services. If there is an incident where an adult attending the session is injured it is imperative that first aid is administered and the children are safe and reassured, with provisional supervision called for as soon as possible. Children should be taken back to school calmly and quickly.

8.3.4 Procedures for a Lost Child

The forest leader will consider this factor as a risk when planning activities and will ensure that the child/adult ratio is high enough to ensure minimal risk. As sessions take place in our secure site this is only considered a small risk but, if a child does become lost, the group leader will initially use the "123, where are you?" routine which will have been practiced in the first session of forest schools as a game.

8.3.5 Behaviour

The school's Positive Behaviour Management policy is referred to when incidents of unsuitable behaviour arise. All staff will behave as suitable role models, showing the children the behaviour expected from them. Children will be encouraged to respect one another and to share, being considerate of the feelings of other members of the group. All staff will be consistent in their handling of situations. Parents will be informed of problems that may have occurred at Forest school, so they are aware of how school is handling the situation. If unsuitable behaviour occurs and persists which is causing difficulties and may put others members of the group in danger, children will be removed from the area and brought straight back to the school.

9 HEALTH & SAFETY

9.1 Ratios

The ratio of staff to children will be to be 2:10, though it may occasionally be higher when some children are absent. There will be the correct number of first aiders present to meet with the legal requirements set out in the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974).

9.2 CRB

All Staff are CRB checked as will any other visitor or helper who attends the sessions. This is in line with School and Torfaen County Council Policy, adhering to the procedures set out and in accordance with the Welsh Assembly Government Guidance Circular 34/2002 -"Child Protection: Preventing Unsuitable People from working with children in the Education Sector."

9.3 Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is carried out for each session and activity, with the relevant documents completed. These will be regularly checked and updated as required. All members of staff will have access to these documents and their input is greatly valued. The ethos of Forest School is that all who attend should work as a team and their input is valued; this begins with planning and ensuring that all who attend are kept safe.

Site checks are done before sessions; areas are inspected by the school caretaker and the forest school leader. Any hazard seen should be made safe before the children enter the area, either by being removed or cordoning it off to make it secure.

9.4 First Aid

The aims of first aid are to:

1. Provide immediate assistance for any possible accident whilst ensuring safety for all.
2. All staff receive regular training to prepare to deal with serious injuries which will help allay fears and may even help with prevention. The training and preparation help staff make daily common-sense decisions when minor accidents happen. First aid kits will be provided to help staff deal with minor incidents.
3. All incidents or 'near miss' events will be recorded and reported in the Forest School Accident book and transferred to the School Accident book on return to building, (RIDDOR 1995). Information will also be passed onto other members of staff and information given to parents/guardians. *Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981*
4. During Forest School activities the forest school leader will be responsible for checking the first aid pack and administering first aid. The leader will have an up to date emergency first aid certificate for outdoors; an accident book will be kept to log all accidents and action taken.

9.5 First Aid in Action

- Wear disposable gloves where possible
- Put on a disposable apron if required
- Wash wound immediately using copious amounts of water.
- Apply suitable dressing (normally water proof plaster) or pressure pad (Normally cold
- compress)
- Use disposable cloth to wipe up copious spilled blood.
- **Double Bag** all used paper towels, tissues, cloths, disposable gloves and aprons.
- **Dispose** in Daily Medical Waste Bag and inform SSO
- **Disinfect** where appropriate, using very hot soapy water or a very hot solution of 'Quest'

Body Spillages:

• Cover in sawdust provided and inform SSO immediately

• If SSO is not on the premises, staff clean, bag, dispose and disinfect as above.

• Treat excreta as body spillage.

Everyone attending will be aware of special requirements, whether medical or dietary, as food will be eaten during the sessions, and due care and attention given.

Children may have medical conditions which require medication to be taken and this will be taken out to the forest School site and, if needed, administered by the forest leader. If medication is administered during a session it will be noted in the accident book which is kept with the First Aid kit.

The forest school leader is first aid qualified, to the appropriate level and will carry a first aid kit and mobile phone. Other members of staff attending the sessions will have relevant first aid training.

9.6 Food Safety/Hygiene Procedures

During sessions, children will be having a picnic time together and enjoying a variety of different foods, either cold or hot, cooked on the fire. All food will be prepared (on hygienic surfaces) by staff with washed hands.

All staff attending the sessions will be aware of allergies or the dietary requirements of the children, whether medical or due to faith/belief. These requirements will be respected and adhered to when making choices about the food served. Alternatives will be offered. When the children have picnic they should use the anti-bacterial hand gel provided, which is kept in the provisions' trolley. The forest leader should also ensure they have clean hands before handling food.

Snacks will be eaten at the log circle under close supervision and any food dropped will be disposed of and not eaten. Before heating any food on a stick, the outer layer of bark should be removed. When cooking dough or other food, adults should ensure that food is cooked thoroughly. Implements used for food should be washed thoroughly in the kitchen at the end of the session.

10 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

As with our school policy, equal opportunities in Forest school means curriculum entitlement and access to a high standard of education for all pupils. Equal opportunities works to prevent pupils having less favourable treatment or lower expectations on grounds of gender, disability, race, language, sexual orientation, age, faith or no faith and ability. It does not just mean removing obvious prejudices from one of these groups, but also to examine all aspects of school life to see if anyone is being unintentionally disadvantaged.

We will look for ways to help everyone to get the most out of Forest school, where everyone is valued and respected as individuals. Equal Opportunities is an entitlement in law.

11 OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. The forest leader will be responsible for checking the emergency rucksack.
   Checklist:
   - First Aid Kit
   - Emergency medication
   - Information Pack containing:
     a. Risk assessments
     b. Children's personal details and medical information
     c. Directions to forest school for emergency services
     d. Accident book
2. The forest leader will check the kit bag for resources.
   Checklist:
   - Tarpaulin
   - Tools
   - Materials for planned activities
   - Rope
   - Twine
   - Bin bag
3. The forest leader will check the snack bag if appropriate.
   Checklist:
   - Cups
   - Plates
   - Antibacterial hand gel
   - Wipes
   - Food
   - Drink
4. The forest leader will check the weather and the forest team will make sure the children have adequate clothing.
5. The forest leader will assign responsibility for groups of children to each adult.
6. The forest leader will conduct a daily risk assessment before the children enter the wood.
7. If the risk assessment is acceptable then the group will enter the site
8. The boundaries and rules will be reviewed and the session will usually comprise of a circle activity, a game/skill, an exploration activity, free time and a review session. The children will return to the log circle at the end of each activity for a head count.
9. During free time it may be appropriate for adults to hand responsibility for specific children to another adult. They must make sure that this is made clear and that the forest school leader is also aware of the new arrangement.
10. At the end of each session the group will clear everything up and check for litter, then escort the children back to school.
11. Children will go to the toilet prior to leaving the school. As we are only in Forest School for 2 hours most children should manage without a toilet break. If a child needs to go to the toilet they will be accompanied back to school by an adult – the school is only a few minutes' walk from the site. One adult should not be on their own with one child so either more than one child or more than one adult to walk back to school.
12. On return to school the forest leader will check tools and resources are properly stored away.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Governors:	Will review the policy as and when required and should have an understanding of the policy when conducting their link governor role.
Head Teacher:	Will ensure the policy is adhered to and monitor and review.
Forest School Leader:	Will ensure the policy is adhered to and reviewed.
Pupils:	Should be made aware of the policy so they can follow its practices.
Parents:	This policy will be made available to parents via the school website.

Equal opportunities

Forest Schools is accessible to all children, whatever their ability.