

**11. Forest School Policy**

Forest School offers children regular opportunities to undertake learning and play in local woodland. It is complementary, not separate to learning in a traditional classroom or playschool environment. Sessions in Forest School are driven by the learners themselves, drawing on their interests and imagination. Through Forest School children are able to develop a lifelong love and understanding of the natural environment, whilst developing the core purposes of the Forest School ethos, namely, development of self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

**Philosophy**

The philosophy which underpins the Forest School movement is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age from 2½ years upwards, through mastery of small, achievable tasks in a woodland environment, to grow in confidence and independence so that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth. Children will acquire new skills as they are ready for them so that activities can maintain a degree of challenge and excitement, whilst remaining safe and controlled. Children see natural outdoor settings as free from adult agendas and influences. This encourages unrestricted play and the right balance between challenge and discovery will help develop many different skills for life. Playing outdoors, in natural places, supports and develops a child's sense of awareness. They recognise their independence and connection with nature and the outside world.

**Location**

Our Forest school sessions take place in the woods, beside the Trout fishing lakes in Barlow. Every activity carried out in the outdoors will have an impact on the immediate environment. We plan to keep this impact to a minimum. Activities will include: den building, insect safaris, mud sculpting, natural art, whittling, fire lighting etc. Clothing It is important that all children have appropriate clothing suitable for all weather conditions.

Your child will need: a waterproof puddle suit or jacket and trousers. Thin for the Summer months, thick fleece lined for the Winter months. Wellies, hat, gloves, scarf, thick socks appropriate for the weather. A small back pack with front chest clips, with spare clothes a drink and snack.

**Health and Safety Considerations**

The Forest School programme will support young children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will even encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

**Considerations for Equality and Inclusion**

In Forest School sessions all persons should be treated equally. We aim to and are committed to: • providing a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued; • including and value the contribution of all children and adults to our understanding of equality and diversity; • make inclusion a thread which runs through all of the activities of Forest School Adult: Child Ratio & Supervision • The adult to child ratio is 1:5 subject to the nature of the activity and the risk assessment. • Children will remain under close supervision at all times. • A register will be taken at the beginning and head counts throughout. • A list of all members of staff and children participating in the visit or outing, along with relevant phone numbers, will be left with the member of the management at preschool office. • The Forest School Leader will ensure that a full First Aid kit is on hand, in compliance with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 • Staff will have access to a mobile phone at all times. These numbers are recorded on the staff telephone list at the preschool office. • Staff take a nominated mobile phone on Forest School sessions for emergency use and an emergency contact list of telephone numbers and supplies of tissues, wipes, pants etc as well as a mini first aid pack, a snack and water. The amount of equipment will vary and be consistent with the session and the number of children as well as how long they will be out for.

**Procedure in the event of a lost child**:

• In the event a child becoming lost while at Forest School, procedures will be followed which ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child. • In the event that a child is lost, we will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents will be notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care will be maintained to other children while procedures are followed. • A quick search of surrounding areas will take place. While the initial search is made, the Forest School leader will make enquiries of all adults to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.) Procedure in the event of a lost child: • In the event a child becoming lost while at Forest School, procedures will be followed which ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child. • In the event that a child is lost, we will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents will be notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care will be maintained to other children while procedures are followed. • A quick search of surrounding areas will take place. While the initial search is made, the Forest School leader will make enquiries of all adults to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.)

**Medical & Allergy Needs**

• Staff will ensure individual children’s medication is taken for each outing. • Designated Children’s medicine in Forest School rucksack. • Parents are required to keep the Preschool fully informed of any changes to children’s health.

In the unlikely event of a medical emergency the children will be gathered together, the register completed and head count of children and adults taken. The injured party will be looked after until the ambulance arrives and the other children and staff will return to the Preschool. The Forest School Leader will ring the preschool telephone number to advise of the situation.

**Emergency contacts**:

• Ring 999 is case of an Emergency. The Pre-school has emergency contacts for all the children and staff. • Ring the pre-school to inform them of situation. The Pre-school will ring the parent/carers if there is an accident. First Aid: • First Aid kit will always remain in the main Forest School rucksack which is carried by the Forest School Leader. • 1x Outdoor First Aider at each session • All the other staff are Paediatric First Aid qualified. Our First Aid kit: • Complies with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 • Is checked regularly by a designated member of staff (Health & Safety Officer) and re-stocked as necessary. • Is easily accessible to adults. • Is kept out of reach of children.

**Cancellation Procedure**

There may be times when Forest School sessions have to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

These may be:

♣ Staff illness – which prevents staff / child ratios being met.

♣ Severe weather conditions.

♣ Any situation that poses a health and safety risk.

In the event of this situation arising we inform all parties involved:

• Cancellation decisions are made as soon as possible and that the school, staff and volunteers are contacted via telephone. • We will endeavour to run Forest School sessions whenever possible, however reserve the right to cancel on the day, but will aim to inform everyone as soon as possible. An alternate venue will be used where possible. (Barlow village hall)