



Woodland Pathways

Fire Safety & Emergency Evacuation Policy

**Date created or revised: 0925
Date of next review: 0926**

1. Policy Statement

Woodland Pathways recognises that fire safety is a critical element of delivering safe outdoor alternative provision. Fire may be used as part of planned learning experiences, and the woodland environment presents additional considerations for safety and emergency evacuation.

Woodland Pathways is committed to:

- Minimising risk while enabling meaningful outdoor learning
- Ensuring the safety and welfare of all children, staff, and visitors
- Meeting Norfolk and Suffolk Local Authority expectations, safeguarding requirements, and health & safety legislation
- Maintaining clear and effective emergency procedures

This policy should be read alongside Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Risk Assessments, and Emergency Procedures .

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All children and young people attending Woodland Pathways
- All staff, practitioners, and volunteers
- Parents/carers and visitors on site

3. Principles

Woodland Pathways aims to:

- Ensure a safe and well-managed environment
- Promote understanding of risk and safe behaviour
- Maintain clear leadership and communication in emergencies
- Support children to develop independence through supported risk-taking

4. Fire Safety Procedures

Location of Fires

- Fires will only be lit in designated, pre-agreed areas
- Fire areas are contained (e.g. logs or natural barriers) to prevent spread

- Locations are risk assessed prior to use

Positioning of Children and Adults

- Seating logs are positioned at least 1.2 metres from the fire pit
- Children are not permitted to enter the fire area without adult permission

When accessing the fire:

- Children walk around the outside of the seating area
- Wait for permission before entering
- Use the respect position (kneeling safely)

While at the fire:

- Children must remain seated unless directed otherwise
- Movement is always around the outside—never across the fire area

Safety expectations:

- Nothing is to be thrown onto the fire
- Children are taught how to manage smoke safely
- Seating is adjusted based on wind direction where possible

5. Fire Lighting and Management

- Fires are lit using appropriate methods (e.g. fire steels)
- No flammable liquids are used
- Only suitable natural materials are burned (no plastics)

Supervision:

- Fires are supervised at all times by trained Woodland Pathways staff
- Children adding fuel must be directly supervised 1:1
- Wood is placed carefully from the side—never thrown
- Hands must never pass over flames

6. Extinguishing Fires

- Water is always available during fire use
- Fires must be **fully extinguished at the end of each session**

Procedure:

- Burn fuel down to ash where possible
- Separate remaining materials
- Douse thoroughly with water
- Stir until all heat, smoke, and steam has ceased

Ash management:

- Only when fully cooled
- Dispersed safely within the woodland to support decomposition

7. Risk Management

Woodland Pathways adopts a **5-step risk assessment approach**:

1. Identify hazards
 2. Identify who may be harmed
 3. Evaluate risks and controls
 4. Record findings and adapt daily
 5. Review regularly
- Dynamic risk assessments are ongoing throughout sessions
 - Children are supported to understand and assess risk appropriately
 - The aim is to balance risk and benefit, not eliminate risk entirely

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Woodland Pathways Responsibilities

- Maintain clear fire safety procedures
- Ensure emergency access routes remain clear
- Provide appropriate safety and fire equipment
- Identify and communicate assembly points
- Review and monitor procedures regularly

Staff Responsibilities

- Follow all fire safety procedures and risk assessments
- Supervise fire use at all times
- Model calm and safe behaviour
- Carry mobile phones for emergency communication

- Maintain safe ratios (minimum **1:8 adult to children**)

Visitors and Parents/Carers

- Must follow all safety instructions
- Remain responsible for their children where applicable
- Support staff if directed during emergencies

9. Emergency Procedures

General Site Arrangements

- Site access is controlled, with gates managed during sessions
- Emergency access is maintained at all times
- Visitors must be pre-arranged, signed in, and ID checked
- Minimum of two trained staff members on site at all times
- Staff carry mobile phones for emergency use
- Additional emergency support available where applicable

Emergency Signal

- A clear emergency signal (e.g. bell, whistle, or verbal alert) is used
- All participants are briefed on its meaning
- Any adult may activate the signal in an emergency

Assembly Point

- The designated Emergency Assembly Point is the Car Park (at the front gate)
- This is communicated at the start of every session
- Registers are taken immediately to account for all individuals

10. In the Event of a Fire or Emergency

When the emergency signal is activated:

Staff will:

- Act immediately to ensure safety

- Direct all individuals to the assembly point
- Take a register
- Carry out a dynamic risk assessment
- Implement the Emergency Action Plan
- Contact emergency services if required

Additional adults may be directed to:

- Assist with evacuation
- Support children
- Take registers
- Contact emergency services

11. Evacuation Off Site (if required)

If evacuation from the woodland site is necessary:

- The lead staff member will determine the safest route
- Typically via the main access track

Evacuation procedure:

- A walking bus system is used
 - One adult at the front
 - One at the rear
- Participants are escorted to the agreed safe location (*e.g. entrance area such as Meadow Harvest*)
- Highway Code guidance is followed where relevant
- A register is taken again at the evacuation point

12. Communication

- Staff carry mobile phones at all times
- Emergency contacts are accessible
- Emergency services contacted where required
- Parents/carers informed following significant incidents

13. Training and Practice

- Staff receive fire safety and emergency procedure training
- Procedures are practised regularly

- Children are briefed in an age-appropriate way at each session

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following any incident or near miss
- In response to changes in local authority guidance