The Wilderness Grove

Forest School

Twig Handbook

**Welcome!**

Thank you for your interest in The Wilderness Grove Forest School.

This handbook outlines what we do and why we do it. Whether you are a parent or student, referrer or teacher, carer or visitor, staff member or volunteer, this handbook is for you. It will give you an insight into the TWiG vision and values and it will help you play a meaningful role in the Forest School.

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**Welcome to the TWiG Community!**

The handbook summarises our most significant policies. All staff and volunteers must also read the full policies, which are all available on our website, you can read them as an appendix to this Handbook, or you can ask to read paper copies.

Please consider whether printing this is necessary - we always encourage people to save paper.

If you are unsure of anything that you read here or come across while at the Forest School, please speak to an experienced member of staff who will be happy to support you and answer any questions.

**Contact Details & Essential Information:**

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thewildernessgrove/>

Liability Insurance: Policy Number SALSACC/J236415/0332/22

****Professional Indemnity Insurance supplied by Birnbeck Insurance Services/QBE

**1. The Wilderness Grove Ethos**

At The Wilderness Grove we value a holistic approach to education. At Forest School we know that it is important to address the fundamental links between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, positive behaviour, and motivated learning. Forest School supports the well-being of individuals that become inspired to fulfil their potential and be better placed to realise the difference their skills and knowledge can have. We nurture a sense of belonging, self-worth, and a love for learning which students take forward into all areas of their lives.

**Values**

At The Wilderness Grove Forest School, we strive to put kindness and respect for others first by conducting every aspect of our business with honesty, integrity, and openness, respecting human rights and the interests of our employees, volunteers, customers and third parties.

We nurture a team in which there is mutual trust and respect. We foster good relationships with local communities and build partnerships that deliver positive change.

**TWiG Agreements**

Children are active in determining the values that govern behaviour and activities at Forest School.

The TWiG values have been written by the TWiG Community, led by the children. The values, displayed next to the fire circle, can be added to at any time by child or adult and are returned to if the community feels the values are not being met.

Those attending TWiG Forest School agree to:

* Show kindness, care, and respect for others, including other children, Forest School facilitators and any visitors.
* Show kindness care and respect to ourselves.
* Show kindness, care, and respect to the community as a whole,
* Show kindness, care, and respect to the natural environment.
* Show care and respect for each other’s property or belongings and property or facilities shared by the whole group.

In any first session, TWiG staff introduce the agreements. They ensure our safety. We have guidelines and boundaries that all participants are made aware of in addition to the TWiG Agreements.

**Boundaries:** All participants to stay within the Forest School boundary - marked by fencing.

**Fire:** All participants can approach the fire when invited by a member of staff. Kneel near the fire, walk when moving within the fire circle.

**Tools:** All participants ask a FSL before using a tool. All staff must be trained in the use of tools before assisting a child/young person. Once trained, the staff members must remind child/ren to re-cap on the correct use of the tools before taking them to the tool area.

**Washing:** All participants to wash hands before eating or drinking and before leaving

**Questions:** When in doubt, ask

**2. What is Forest School?**

Forest School is a long term, ongoing educational process that supports holistic development of children through a mix of child-initiated play, exploration, and learning.

Through careful observation and positive encouragement, Forest School builds on the skills shown by the children. The Forest School leader matches activities with preferred styles of learning which sets children up to succeed. This accelerates learning, developing confidence and promotes self-esteem.

**Child-led Facilitation**

In a child-led learning environment, the child chooses the activity, location, and length of time he or she spends it. Left to their own devices, children are wonderfully imaginative and resourceful when it comes to play. To limit their imagination or to divert their attention towards something you think could be more ‘educational’ may be counterproductive. There are several advantages to child-led education. As the children choose the activity, they are more likely to perceive the activity as play rather than as school. They are likely to be open to learning, and skills learnt may be retained for longer. Being more relaxed, they may retain more information after the event, improving their memory skills. In a Forest School, the wood provides a wonderfully stimulating environment, rich with learning possibilities through observing their natural systems. Forest School facilitators may set up in advance activities in the woods that will entice children with different interests. The role of the facilitator is to observe, engaging but not interfering with the children’s learning. The challenge for the facilitator is to know when to intervene and how, and this is where Forest School training, experience and reflective practice becomes central. Safety is paramount, but managed risks are an essential part of a child’s learning.

**3. 6 Core Principles of Forest School**

* Forest School is a long-term process with regular sessions of 2 hours over a period ideally of 24 weeks spanning at least 2 seasons. This allows learners to build self-reflection skills and apply learnt knowledge to real life problems allowing new skills to become transferable.
* Forest School offers opportunities for learners to experience supported risks. We believe in the importance of balancing risk and benefit for each activity as overcoming risk through play builds confidence and resilience.
* Forest School is a holistic developmental process inspiring development on different levels including physical, emotional, spiritual, social and intellectual development.
* Forest School takes place in a natural environment with trees. This encourages exploration of the environment and develops connection between the external and internal emotional worlds for learners. Exploring feelings and thoughts in a nurturing environment.
* Forest School is a learner centred approach. Rather than a curriculum driven approach Forest School inspires the learner to learn at a pace and time that works for them, so it is in context for the individual.
* Forest School is led by qualified and reflective leaders that balances the needs of the learner through reflection of process and own their practice.

Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.

At Forest School all participants are viewed as:

* equal, unique, and valuable
* competent to explore and discover.
* entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge.
* entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development.
* entitled to experience regular success.
* entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people,
* entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world This learner-centred approach interweaves with the ever-changing moods and marvels, potential and challenges of the natural world through the seasons.

**4. Aims of the Wilderness Grove Forest School**

* To support the social and emotional development of individuals through play in a natural outdoor environment.
* To support the physical and mental development of children through active games, tasks and problem-solving activities.
* To build self-confidence and self-esteem in children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
* To give people the skills and tools to succeed and be happy.
* To encourage children and families to connect with nature through play and exploration, so that they might be the ones to protect it in the future.
* To create a haven for wildlife within our local community.
* To create a safe and engaging therapeutic environment for all.

**5. Environmental Impact and Sustainability**

The Wilderness Grove adheres to the “no trace” ethos of Forest School, which means we try our best to leave the woodland as we find it.

Activities carried out in the outdoors can have an impact on the immediate environment. The Wilderness Grove aims to keep this impact to a minimum. This is done by regularly assessing the impact activities are having and then developing a three-year sustainable woodland management plan to help take the necessary steps to amend and regulate these activities.

The natural environment is key to the Forest School experience.

Most of our participants are local to our woodland, so they build a relationship with the site and learn about what lives there, and how to take care of it and how to use the natural materials from the site sustainably.

Participants are encouraged to undertake small conservation tasks, such as planting trees, protecting bluebells, and making bird boxes. In addition, activities such as carrying in water, using a compost toilet, removing rubbish, and searching for firewood encourage participants to think about these issues in the wider world.

Forest Schools foster deep respect for the environment in general and woodlands. We hope participants retain their connection to nature for years after leaving Forest School.

At The Wilderness Grove we use our woodland to supply the natural materials for making crafts, lighting fires and building structures e.g., treehouse. This is done sensitively only using materials that are in season and will not impact biodiversity or habitat.

It is important to only take what is sustainable, so that the woodland can continue without too much impact from our forest school activities.  It is important to re-use what we have and limit the harvesting of resources to a sustainable level.

**6. Examples of Types of Activities**

(Under close adult supervision\*)

* **A collage of a child playing with a frisbee

  Description automatically generated with low confidence**Den and shelter building
* Campfire building and lighting\*
* Making hot food and drinks on the campfire\*
* Bush craft – Working with tools\*
* Bush craft without tool use
* Nature and wildlife discovery, observation, and appreciation
* Nature and wildlife identification
* Learning the code of conduct and respect for the countryside
* Problem solving activities.
* Physical challenges (i.e., obstacle courses)
* Teambuilding activities
* Child initiated play.
* Nature Art and crafts
* Music making
* Campfire singing
* Story telling

All activities aim to support the children’s social and emotional development which in turn can help raise confidence and self-esteem.

**7. The Team**

The Wilderness Grove Forest School consists of 2 managing partners, facilitators, and volunteers. TWiG partners meet monthly, and we all meet at an AGM to review and evaluate development and to determine future objectives. At the end of every session, facilitators debrief and plan the following session, putting children at the centre of Forest School planning. The Wilderness Grove Forest School Managing Partners handle administration and admissions, referrals, the Forest School website, Instagram, and Facebook page.

We have several volunteers. Some of our volunteers are children including Issy Regi. Our child volunteers promote play and allow children who may otherwise feel anxious and out of place in the woodland a way to engage in activities.

We also have 3 Forest School dogs. Millie, Odin, and Fenrir. Our dogs are working Forest School dogs and are part of the experience we offer. They are in the woodland to interact with the children, to provide therapeutic support and encourage play. Only one dog is on site at a time.

**Leaders & Assistants**

A Level-3 qualified Forest School leader has ultimate responsibility for running the sessions and overall charge for decisions covering risk assessments, emergency procedures and meeting the needs of the children. The leader and assistants ensure that there is suitable equipment for the planned activities before each session and that everything is in working order. The leader is supported by a Level-2 Forest School qualified assistant and where possible a volunteer. The Forest School Leader takes responsibility for ensuring the correct ratios of adults to participants.

**Role of the Forest School Leader**

It is the role of the Forest School leader to promote and provide Forest School experience adhering to the ethos outlined above.

They develop the role of the “significant other” over a period of time with learners to encourage development of self-esteem by matching tasks and activities to individuals. This process develops through observation and evaluations and development of the relationship founded in trust.

Our focus is on building positive, trusting relationships with learners promoting a connection of mutual respect.

All our leaders have a DBS certificate to work with children and vulnerable adults. They also hold an appropriate first aid certificate with an outdoor element to the training. Our level 3 FSL (Forest School Leaders) hold Food hygiene certificates.

**8. Role of Adults**

**Volunteers, Carers, Visitors**

At any time, there may be volunteers, carers, and visitors on site. Carers may also include parent/carers and family members of children at the Forest School. All shall be familiar with TWiG’s policies and procedures as articulated in this handbook. All volunteers have an induction at the start of their voluntary placement and ongoing supervision by a member of staff.

**We ask that all adults supporting children onsite act appropriately, respectfully and work towards supporting the Forest School community.**

It is important adults alert the Forest School Leader immediately if a child is missing, seriously hurt, or behaving in a way that could lead to others getting hurt.

We ask all adults to promote appropriate behaviour and allow children the freedom to explore and play without adult interruption whenever safely possible.

Before arriving at Forest School, we ask that adults help check that children are wearing clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather and time of year.

To assist keeping children healthy and safe by helping them to recognise and avoid hazards such as harmful plants and trip hazards.

To support children’s learning and development as modelled by the Forest School Leader.

To support the children’s learning development through answering and asking questions and responding to activity cues without “over influencing” the activity.

Please familiarise yourselves with the full policy documents on the website or in paper copy.

Parents who remain on site throughout the sessions hold responsibility for the safety and welfare of their children. Forest School Leaders aim to support parents and facilitate exploration of the environment through play.

**Lone Working**

No one should work alone without informing another adult who will agree to be available to assist in case of an emergency.

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**9. Policies and Procedures**

At The Wilderness Grove we have a set of policies and procedures in line with statutory requirements and good practice appropriate to our site and client group.

All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended regularly to ensure the safe and responsible running of our sessions.

A policy is a statement of intent designed to guide decisions to achieve particular outcomes.

Full policy documents can be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

A procedure is a specific series of actions taken to obtain a desired result. These procedures are linked to the policies and included in the same documents. Additional procedures can also be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

**10. Health and Safety**

The Wilderness Grove Forest School takes the maintenance of health and safety extremely seriously as a matter of both legal and moral importance. All staff will be familiarised with the provisions contained within the Health and Safety policy as part of their induction and be expected to act in accordance with them at all times.

The Forest School leader and staff will always strive to go beyond the minimum statutory standards to ensure that health and safety remains the priority.

The steps below will be actioned as a matter of course:

* Create an environment that is safe and without mitigated risk to health.
* Prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health.
* Use, maintain, and store equipment safely.
* Ensure that all staff are competent in the work in which they are engaged.
* The Wilderness Grove will ensure that adequate arrangements exist for the following:
* Monitoring the effectiveness of the Health and Safety policy and authorising any necessary revisions to its provisions.
* Providing adequate resources
* Providing adequate health and safety training for all staff.
* Ensuring that all accidents, incidents, and dangerous occurrences are adequately reported and recorded (including informing the Health and Safety Executive, and Ofsted, where appropriate).
* Reviewing all reported accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences, and the Forest Schools response, to enable corrective measures to be implemented.
* The Forest School leader is responsible for the day-to-day implementation, management and monitoring of the Health and Safety policy.
* The Forest School leader will ensure that:
* Regular safety inspections are carried out and the reports accurately logged.
* Any action required as a result of a health and safety inspection is taken as rapidly as possible.
* Information received on health and safety matters is distributed to all members of staff.
* An investigation is carried out on all reported accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences.
* Staff are adequately trained to fulfil their role within the Health and Safety policy. Staff are responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the Health and Safety policy are always adhered to.

Full policy documents can be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

**A group of mushrooms growing on moss

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**11. Managing Risk**

Forest School aims to develop children’s self-esteem, independence, and motivation to learn in a safe environment. The Forest School Leader will therefore be responsible for conducting appropriate site and activity risk assessments prior to each session. A five-step approach is adopted whereby the following steps are taken:

* Identify hazards and risks.
* Decide who may be harmed and how.
* Evaluate the risks and decide if existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done.
* Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits and observations.
* Review assessments on a regular basis.

Participants, including staff and volunteers, will be informed of potential hazards and methods of working to minimise their risk further. When possible, all participants will be involved in the risk assessment process as part of their learning.

Particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and management of fire, participants will be taught appropriate and adequate skills to keep themselves safe.

Our aim is not to eliminate risk but to weigh up risks and benefits. All customers/participants are given a tour of the site and informed of the associated risks. The importance of allowing participants to risk assess for themselves based on knowledge of the site is discussed.

Allowing and promoting individual risk and benefit assessments for activities and the use of the woodland develops self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, self-motivation, and empathy.

**Daily Site Risk Assessment**

Before TWiG Forest School begins a Daily Risk Assessment is carried out, either by leader or another facilitator. This includes a sweep of all areas used, to ensure that there are no changes to the site which could cause harm.

**Activity Risk Assessment**

When planning activities for Forest Schools, any hazards associated with that activity, that are at risk of causing harm, should be considered. These should be recorded on an Activity Risk Assessment with suitable control measures taken to control and minimise the risk. Due to the nature of Forest Schools the children may come up with a new activity during a session and therefore reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the activity is safe. An Activity Risk Assessment form will be completed asap following that session.

**12. Dynamic Risk Assessments**

Dynamic risk assessments are made throughout sessions on various things including weather conditions, behaviour of participants and a participant’s ability to carry out an activity. Theses assessments are based on the knowledge and experience of the Forest School leader and often discussed with the individual it concerns.

Any unanticipated activity or changes to activities or approach are recorded in observations and inform subsequent planning. Changes including unforeseen benefits are added to activity risk/benefit assessments which are working documents.

**13. Behaviour**

It is our responsibility to ensure all children, young people and adults visiting The Wilderness Grove feel safe, respected, and valued.

Community Agreements and expectations will be made clear at the beginning of the first Forest School session and main points recapped thereafter. As a preventative measure and as a core value of Forest School, all adults shall be made aware of any specific social and emotional needs of the children in the group. Parent helpers should refer any challenging behaviour to the Forest School Leader.

If a child’s behaviour puts themselves or others at risk, we will ask them to stop, if the behaviour does not stop, we will intervene. If the behaviour continues, we may have to end our Forest School session. We expect the children to follow the Forest School Agreements and behave accordingly.

A sense of community is very important to us at The Wilderness Grove.

We take an approach of restorative justice when there is discord or conflict. Restorative conversations will be had with all parties (when appropriate) involved in conflict to establish common ground, understanding and resolution.

We encourage parents to have conversations with children when an incident occurs.

**Restorative Questions**

**To respond to challenging behaviour....**

* What happened?
* What were you thinking at the time?
* What have you thought about since?
* Who has been affected by what you have done?
* In what way?
* What do you think you need to do to make things right?

**To help those harmed by others actions....**

* What did you think when you realised what had happened?
* What impact has this incident had on you and others?
* What has been the hardest thing for you?
* What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Restorative Practices:

* Address and discuss the needs of the community.
* Build healthy relationships.
* Reduce, prevent, and improve harmful behaviour.
* Repair harm and restore positive relationships.
* Resolves conflict, hold individuals and groups accountable.

**14. Bullying**

The Wilderness Grove Forest school is committed to providing a supportive, caring, and safe environment in which all children are free from fear of being bullied. We take bullying and its impact seriously. Bullying of any form is not tolerated, whether carried out by a child or an adult. Anyone who knows bullying is happening is expected to tell a TWiG facilitator. All TWiG facilitators are aware of our position on bullying.

Any child who is a victim of bullying will be dealt with in a sympathetic manner. A clear account of the incident will be recorded, and the behaviour policy implemented.

Facilitators will be informed so monitoring of the victim and the bully can begin. Parents of both parties will be informed.

The Wilderness Grove Anti-bullying policy outlines what we will do to prevent and tackle bullying.

* All incidents of bullying will be fully investigated with an approach on “No Blame”.
* All problems will be discussed and recognition of how this makes those involved feel.
* Meeting will be recorded. Everyone must take responsibility for changing their behaviour.
* Follow up meeting with target will follow to check bullying has stopped.
* Involvement of parents/carers so that there is support from home.
* Should bullying continue consequences of no longer attending the provision.
* Priority is to change behaviour, but the safety of individuals must be considered.

**Aims of the Anti-Bullying Policy**

* To minimise incidents of bullying
* To improve children’s safety and well-being
* To change the behaviour of the person/people using bullying behaviours
* To change the behaviour of bystanders and witnesses

**Proactive approaches**

* Improving the environmental quality
* Ensuring opportunities for children to be listened to and to listen to each other, through cooperative play and reflection.
* Curricular approaches to bullying using different activities that provide experiential and participative learning e.g., working as a team.
* Work to develop positive relationships between adults and children and the role models offered by all adults.
* Cooperative group work

**A group of people standing around a tree

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**15. Emergency Procedure**

Prior to Forest School sessions participants are briefed on what they will be expected to do in the event of an emergency.

The emergency assembly point is clearly pointed out and the use of the emergency bell discussed.

The site is fully fenced and enclosed but there is direct access to through the main gate to the road.

The gates to the site are closed 15 minutes into a session and will remain closed until the end of the session when a Forest School leader will open them.

Emergency access is always maintained.

Anyone arriving late or leaving early will be asked to shut the gate behind them.

All visitors to site will prearrange with the Forest School leader and be expected. In the event of an unexpected visitor a member of staff will be sent to greet them and assess their reason for being on site. There is a clear line of site to the gate from group gathering points. Customers are asked to make the Forest School leader aware if there is anyone on site they do not recognise.

There is a minimum ratio of 1:8, adults: children at all times at the Wilderness Grove.

Supervising parent/carers are included in this ratio.

Parent/carers who remain on site throughout the sessions hold responsibility for the safety and welfare of their children. Forest School Leaders aim to support parents and facilitate exploration of the environment through play.

The number of Forest School leaders onsite and in sessions is dependent on the needs of the group. A minimum of 2 trained leaders will be onsite at all times and asked to carry mobile phones to use in case of emergency.

An additional emergency contact is always available in person on the adjoining property.

**Emergency Contact Numbers**

Ambulance/Fire Brigade = 111 / 999

Requesting attendance by emergency services: Dial 111 / 999 and ask for an ambulance or fire brigade.

**In an Emergency**

**The Pole barn is the Emergency Assembly Point**

The Emergency bell can be heard throughout the woodland and is placed so everyone can access it. Emergency procedures are tested and practiced deliberately with all groups. Any member of the group or Forest School leader may ring the bell to signal an emergency.

In the event of that the emergency bell in the pole barn has been rung

Forest School leaders will:

* Extinguish fires.
* Safely pack away any tools
* Direct all customers to the pole barn.
* Assess the situation and follow the Emergency Action Plan

In the event that the Forest School leader becomes incapacitated and requires first aid.

* The emergency bell will be rung signalling all participants to gather at the Assembly point and the capable Forest School leader to implement the steps above.
* The capable Forest School leader will take charge of implementing the emergency procedure ensuring the safety of the group. This may involve delegating tasks to other adults on site.
* A dynamic risk assessment will be made by the Forest School leader considering the immediate safety of the casualty and/or group members. As in all first aid situations the greatest need will be dealt with first.
* Parents and additional adults supervising children may be asked to carry out specific tasks to support the Forest School leader i.e. contacting off site assistance, taking a register or helping customers to safely and promptly exit the site.
* The Forest School Leader will follow the Emergency Action Plan process (see below)
* The emergency contact (Jan Philips/neighbour at the adjoining land who is first aid trained) will be called to assist the Forest School leader who is incapacitated.

Graphical user interface, diagram

Description automatically generated**Recording and reviewing**

All accidents must be recorded in the incident report form and filed in the accident log. A RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) record will be created. Following an accident, the TWiG Forest School safety officer will review all relevant risk assessments and take action as necessary.

We always have 2 first aiders on site. On our training matrix, we track who has current first aid training and make sure people keep up to date. If, in a rare case, an adult / facilitator is injured, another adult with first aid training will tend to them, while the other adults care for the children. We always have high ratios of staff to children, so there are always plenty of adults.

**16. First Aid**

The Forest School Leader is an ITC trained outdoor First Aider and will have the first aid kit close by. They will be primarily responsible for administering first aid. The Forest School Leader also carries a mobile phone to contact emergency services should they be required. In the event of a serious accident an ambulance will be called, the Forest School Leader will remain with the casualty and the volunteer helpers will escort the remainder of the group off site.

In the case of a serious accident involving the Forest School Leader, other adult leaders are informed of the whereabouts of a mobile phone and all emergency procedure and phone numbers.

**17. Safeguarding children**

The Wilderness Grove Forest School takes safeguarding of children and vulnerable people very seriously. Leaders are first aid trained and qualified to lead.

The Wilderness Grove operates a safer recruitment policy, and all staff and volunteers are aware of the child protection policy including procedures in place to respond to disclosures or allegations. Any incidents are recorded in writing by Forest School Leaders and discussed with the designated child protection officer as soon as possible.

Cate Regi, Thomas Wild and Jodie Pettifer are the Designated child protection officers for the Wilderness Grove.

Any disclosures made to the Forest School leader during a session will be treated with sensitivity. A safe space will be made available and a 1:1 conversation will be had. All information will be recorded, and it will be explained that notes will need to be taken. Children, young people, and adults making disclosures will be made aware that confidentiality cannot be held to protect vulnerabilities and where a crime may have taken place. Information may need to be share with relevant authorities.

**A picture containing text, different, grass, various

Description automatically generated**Permission to take photographs of children at Forest School (for learning and development purposes or publication) is required from parents on the consent form.

All adult volunteers at Forest School will have an enhanced DBS check.

The Forest School Leader has a duty of care to promote the well-being and security of the whole group.

**Disclosure**

If a child/young person approaches you with a disclosure (uncovering or revealing private and sensitive information) it is important that you follow these guidelines:

* Tell a member of staff that you have been approached by a child/young person who would like to talk to you and the staff member will advise or support you from there.
* Make sure that you sit where you can be seen by that member of staff at all times.

All staff are trained in how to respond to a child that discloses sensitive information.

The basic principles are.

* Reassure the young person that they were right to tell you and that you take them seriously.
* Let the young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what might happen.
* Immediately report the matter to a member of staff or the designated safeguarding leaders.

**Verbal reporting**

If you suspect child abuse, tell your designated safeguard leader and Forest School leader. Your concerns could be significant and must be addressed by the appropriate person.

**Written Reporting**

You will be asked to write a description of the conversation. You will need to be as specific as possible, preferably quoting what was said.

**Allegations against staff**

If an allegation is against a member of the TWiG Forest School team (directors, paid staff, volunteers or consultants) the allegation must be reported immediately to one of the TWiG Education safeguarding leaders If the allegation is against the safeguarding leader then the allegation must be reported to the TWiG Education safeguarding leader/or external leader will then report the allegation to the local area designated officer on the same day. If you prefer to contact the local area designated officer directly the number is 0300 123 2044

Full policy documents can be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

**Responses to Disclosure**

**Appropriate responses**

Do not examine or interrogate the child.

Do not ask leading questions - allow the child to tell their own story.

Take seriously what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)

Keep calm Look at the child directly.

Be honest.

Let them know you may need to tell someone – don’t promise confidentiality.

Never make false promises

Reassure them they are not to blame for the abuse.

Be aware that the child may have been threatened.

Never push for information – listen and reflect back to them what they have said so they know you have heard

Ask questions for clarification only; avoid asking leading questions that suggest a particular answer.

Show that you accept what the child says.

A picture containing different, various

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“I am glad you have told me”.

“It’s not your fault”.

“I will help you”.

**Inappropriate responses**

“Why didn’t you tell anyone before?”

“I can’t believe it”.

“Are you sure this is true?”

“I am shocked!”

“Don’t tell anyone else”.

**18. Lost/Missing child**

Staff are constantly monitoring the children in the wood that day. Anyone that notices that a child is missing must immediately inform the Forest School leader.

Boundaries and expectations are made clear to the children and all Leaders and volunteers are responsible for maintaining regular head counts. If a child is discovered missing, the group will retrace steps whilst calling out the child’s name for 10 minutes. If the child is still missing the Forest School Leader will call parents/carers or teachers to inform them. The other volunteer helpers will escort the remainder of the group back to the Forest School base (pole barn) whilst the Forest School Leader and other adults continue the search.

In the event of a lost/missing child incident happening on the Forest School site the emergency action procedure flow chart will be followed to assess the safety and wellbeing of the whole group.

Full policy documents can be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

**19. Food Hygiene**

When handling food, hands must be washed and/or cleaned using antibacterial wipes or hand gel. Food should be stored at the appropriate temperature before the session and transported to the Forest School in a hygienic cooled container.

Children’s hands should be cleaned with soap and water washed and/or cleaned using antibacterial wipes or hand gel. Food containers should be taken off site to be cleaned and disposed of appropriately and no litter should be left as we always aim to leave the site as we find it.

All staff that handle food will be adequately qualified in food hygiene practices.

**20. Equal Opportunities**

The Wilderness Grove strives to maintain equal opportunities for all children, young people, and adults. The Forest School Leader will aim to make sessions as inclusive as possible if given notice of any difficulties or disabilities prior to the start to the Forest School session.

Full policy documents can be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

**21. Tool Use**

The Forest School ethos is to build on skills in small steps, once the children and leaders have developed trust and the children have shown they are ready, the Leader will introduce more advanced skills such as tool use and fire with supervision.

**A person squatting down next to a tree stump

Description automatically generated with low confidence**Some Tools available for use

* Bow saw
* Silky saw
* Loppers
* secateurs
* Billhook
* Axe
* Sheath knife
* Spoon knife
* Draw knife

All tools are cleaned, maintained, and stored securely by the Forest School Leader prior to use, the Forest School Leader will check the tools for any damage or instability and check for sharpness.

Tools are transported to The Wilderness Grove in a secure locked container. Only Forest School Leaders tools can be use at the Forest School.

How to use all tools will be demonstrated on a group basis and then assessed on a 1:1 basis.

Only the Forest School Leader will decide if the age group/individual child is ready for a particular tool by assessing for competence on a 1:1 basis.

As a part of the process for assessing competence children must be able to learn “tool- talks” seen in the “Tool safety procedures”.

Full risk/benefit assessments are held by the Forest School leader in the master file.

**22. Fire Safety**

* We do not run around the fire circle.
* We walk around the outside of the fire circle to get to the other side.
* We only enter the inner fire circle when instructed by the Forest School Leader.
* No loose clothing or loose hair in the fire circle
* Follow our Fire Circle Agreement

During the Forest School process, a careful regard and respect of fire is reinforced with children through a step-by-step process. Strict fire circle rules are always enforced, and behaviour is controlled by the Forest School Leader and parents to ensure safety.

Only when trust has been developed between the leaders and children. A fire in the fire pit may be constructed for Forest School activities and campfire cooking.

Before fires are built, provision for putting out the fire is made with water buckets at hand.

The Forest School Leader will assess the site for overhanging vegetation and clear forest floor debris to avoid fire spread.

Fire is never left unattended by an adult or designated person of responsibility and the Forest School Leader will ensure it is cold using plenty of water before leaving the area.

In very hot “tinder dry” conditions careful consideration needs to be given to the possibility of wind blowing embers and igniting other areas of the woodland. This needs to be assessed as part of the daily operating procedure as fires may not be possible in these circumstances.

Full risk/benefit assessments are held by the Forest School leader in the master file.

**A picture containing text

Description automatically generated**

**23. Parental consent**

Parent/carers are required to fill our consent forms before the start of Forest School covering first aid/medication, emergency contact and use of photography.

**24. Confidentiality**

Information on consent forms are treated confidentially and kept securely between Forest School sessions. Any information on a child will be kept confidential unless the information conflicts with safeguarding procedures.

**Taking and Storing Photographs**

Photographs and videos of any participant at Forest School will only be taken with written permission and verbal consent when taking. Written permission/consent forms are distributed to customers when booking a place at Forest School along with personal details and other consent forms.

Photographs are securely held by the Forest School leader following data protection guidelines.

Once permission to take photographs/videos is obtained specific use of the images will be discussed with parents and children before publishing the image for marketing purposes.

Full policy documents can be found on our website [www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://www.thewildernessgrove.co.uk)

**25. Cancellation**

Forest School will continue in most types of weather with the exception of high winds, thunder or severe cold. If in any doubt, the Forest School Leader will visit the site directly before the visit to have up to date information of weather conditions at the time.

Participants will be contacted using the information provided on information and consent forms, informing them of any closure. Closures will also be publicised on Facebook and social media.

There is no charge for a session that has been cancelled by The Wilderness Grove. Any advance payments will be continued to the subsequent week.

If for any reason a customer needs to inform us, they will not be attending a session we will require a full 7 days’ notice to avoid charge.

**26. Complaints**

Concerns and complaints should be viewed positively as data gathered can be used to inform evaluation and future plans and strategy.

Skills that can be used to show understanding of and to resolve the concern or issue are:

* + Listening and probing for specifics
  + Clarifying ambiguities
  + Separating out multiple concerns
  + Repeating back to check understanding.
  + Discussing realistic solutions

The Wilderness Grove want their clients to be healthy, happy and safe, and to achieve.   It recognises that parents/carers play an important part in making this happen. Cooperation between parents, staff and The Wilderness Grove Manager leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in Forest School.

The complaints process is as follows.

Level 1 – Informal

* Parents/carers should, in the first instance, make an appointment to speak to the Forest School leader about the concern.  It is best to resolve issues at this point.  This ideally should be within 4 working days.

Level 2 - Informal

* Parents/carers dissatisfied with the result of the discussions with the Forest School Leader should ask for an appointment to meet with the Manager. This should ideally be within 4 working days.

Level 3 – Formal complaint letter to Manager

* An issue that has not been resolved through the informal levels 1 and 2 can become an official complaint.
* Parents/carers wishing to move to level 3 must write a formal letter of complaint to the Manager.  The letter will need to set out clearly the issues which have previously been discussed and why the parent/carer considers the issue to be unresolved.
* The Manager should consider the complaint and discussa resolution with the complainant.  The Manager should offer a resolution to the complainant in writing within 10 academy days of receipt of the letter.

At any time, children may raise a complaint with any member of the staff team concerning their treatment by another pupil or member of staff.  If the child is not satisfied with the outcome of raising the complaint, she/he may ask to see a senior member of staff to consider the complaint.  If the child is not satisfied with the outcome of raising the complaint with a senior member of staff, she/he may ask to see the Manager.

**Feedback**

TWiG is committed to continuous improvement. To that end, we invite feedback and input from children at Forest School, from their parents, carers and relations, from referrers and from any other interested parties. We are committed to act on any feedback if it will improve any aspect of The Wilderness Grove Forest School.

**27. Essential Equipment**

Equipment is held in the Forest School base for all to access in case of emergency. A locked cupboard is available for storing medication.

A picture containing outdoor, tree, person, plant

Description automatically generated**First Aid kit containing**

* Disposable gloves
* Wound dressing.
* Disposable icepacks
* Triangular bandage
* Hypoallergenic plasters
* Hand gel
* Antibacterial wipes
* An eye pad.
* Scissors
* Adhesive medical tape
* Face shield
* Other essential equipment
* Any other individual medication (inhalers)
* Burns kit.
* Water
* A working mobile phone and available contacts to ring in case of an emergency.

All visitors are advised to wear clothing appropriate for the season and weather conditions. Sturdy footwear i.e., wellies or waterproof walking boots are recommended as parts of our woodland can become very wet under foot.

We recommend that you bring a change of clothes with you and any additional snacks and drinks you feel would need during the session.

**28. Daily Operating Procedure**

Before the session

* TWiG Forest School Leader or assistant leader records Daily Site Risk Assessment.
* TWiG Forest School leader briefs the team on the daily plan based on what the group determined the previous week.
* Team members prepare any equipment and materials.
* The leader or assistant prepares the risk assessments for each planned activity if they are not covered by the general risk assessments. If necessary, one of the team will light the fire and prepare breakfast ready for the group’s arrival.

During the session

* The leader or assistant will record attendance on the register at the beginning of each day.
* All adults will continually reassess risks and take action to reduce or remove risk.

After the session

* Team members collect equipment and store it away. Team members leave the woodland as they find it.
* The TWiG leader or assistant checks the tools to ensure that no items are missing.
* TWiG Forest School leader completes any observational records.

The Forest School Leader will complete a daily risk assessment before each Forest School session. Factors such as the weather conditions, and changes to the site such as fallen branches, litter etc. are considered and risk controls are put in place to minimise and mitigate risks.

If the session will involve tool use, the Forest School Leader will check tools for safety before the session. Safety checks include checking blades are sharp and sharpening or replacing if necessary, checking there is no damage to the tool handles, visually and manually by flexing the tool. The required tools are secured in a container for transporting to the Forest School site.

If there are any changes to any risks, the appropriate control is put in place and the risk assessments are reviewed and amended.

The Forest School leader will lead the session, ensure the group are safe and happy, and observe the children’s interests and learning styles.

The Forest School Leader will reflect and evaluate the session to aid planning for subsequent sessions.

**Declaration**

I have read and understand The Wilderness Grove Forest School handbook.

I have read and understand The Wilderness Grove Forest School full policies and procedures.

I agree to abide by the policies and procedures set out in the handbook and in The Wilderness Grove Forest School full policies and procedures.

Signature ……………………………………………………………….

Print name ………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………….

**On behalf of The Wilderness Grove Forest School**

Signature ……………………………………………………………….

Print name ………………………………………………………………

****Date …………………………………………………………………….