



Vernon Park Primary School Forest School Handbook

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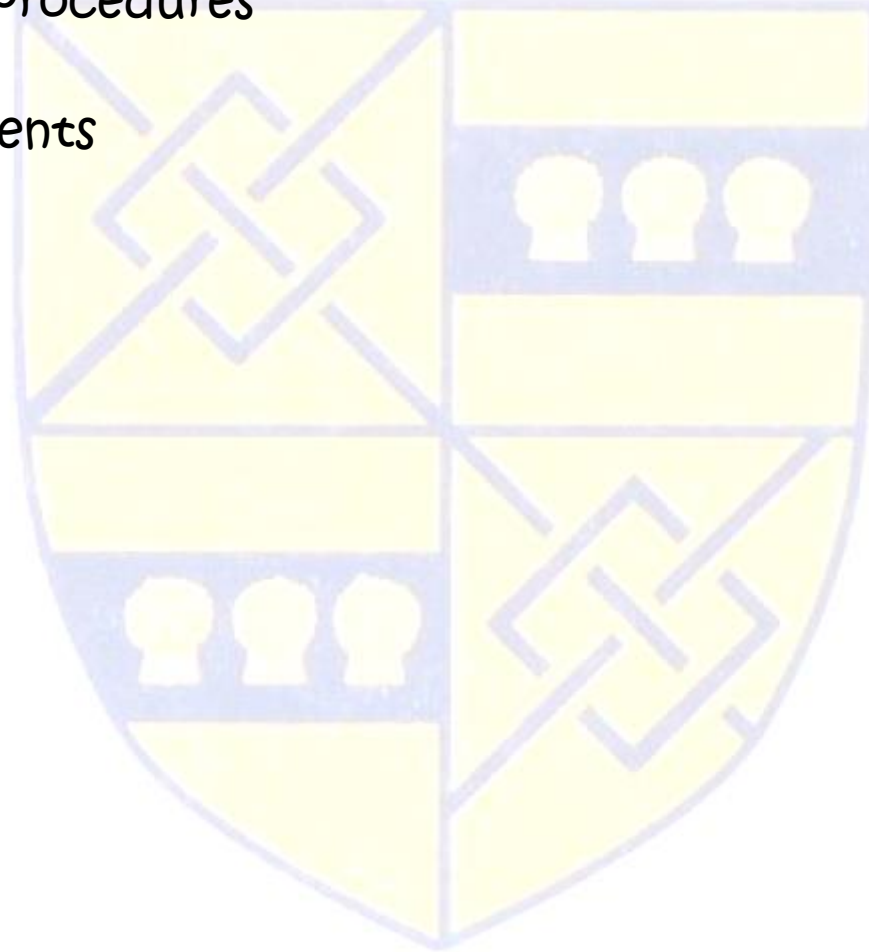
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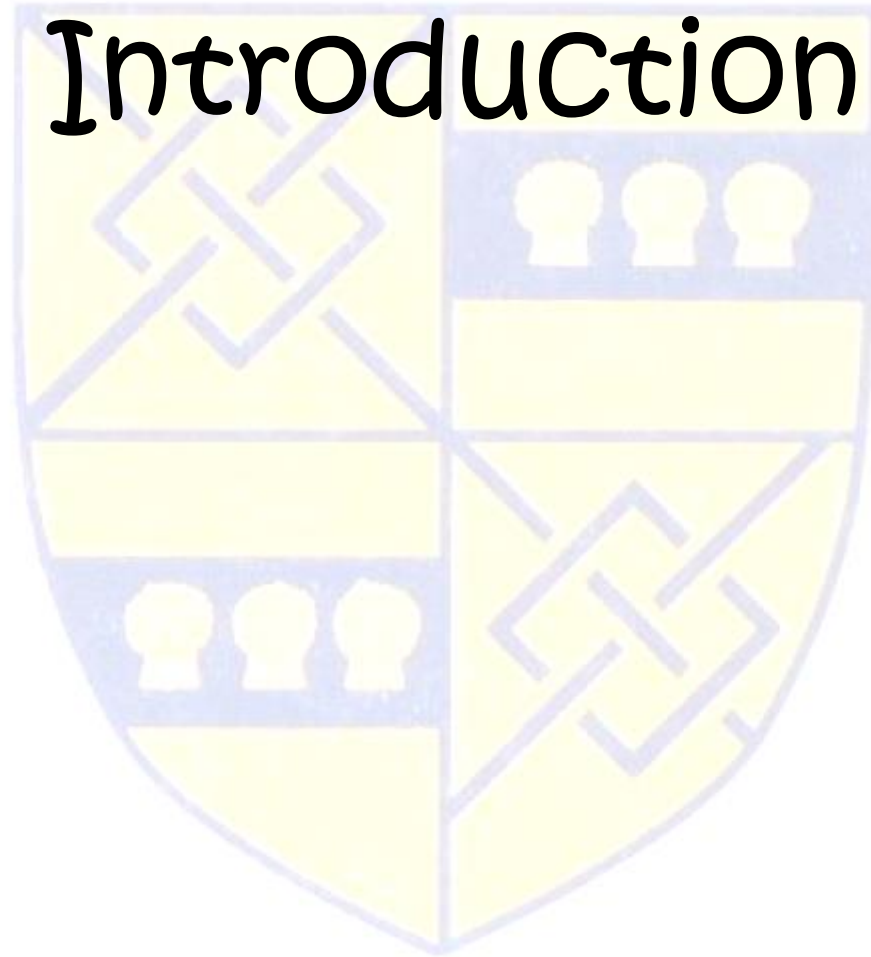
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Section 1:

Introduction



Introduction to Vernon Park Primary School Forest School

In 2013, Vernon Park Primary School began its journey to establish itself as a Forest School. The idea to become a Forest School stemmed mainly from two aspirations. Firstly, the introduction of 'Growth Mindset' (Carol Dweck) to our school curriculum increased staff's desire to teach our children how to learn by equipping them with the ability to: embrace challenge, persevere when difficulties occur, see more effort as the path to success, learn from mistakes and be inspired by others. Secondly, learning outside the classroom has been a focus of Vernon Park Primary School for many years. Children already make half termly visits to the environmental area but in the pursuit of providing our children with an increasingly engaging and enriching curriculum, staff want to take full advantage of the school's woodland and the richness of learning experiences it has to offer.

Since then, Vernon Park has established itself as a 'Restorative' school. Much work has been done to provide the foundation to build, maintain and repair relationships positively with the whole school community. Restorative approaches help build respect, responsibility, resolution, and reintegration. Proactive approaches build respect, empathy, social responsibility, emotional intelligence and resilience.

The introduction of the Forest School approach makes both of these aspirations possible for our children by giving them opportunities to develop confidence, social skills and self-esteem as well as improve wellbeing, through regular practical experiences in a woodland environment.

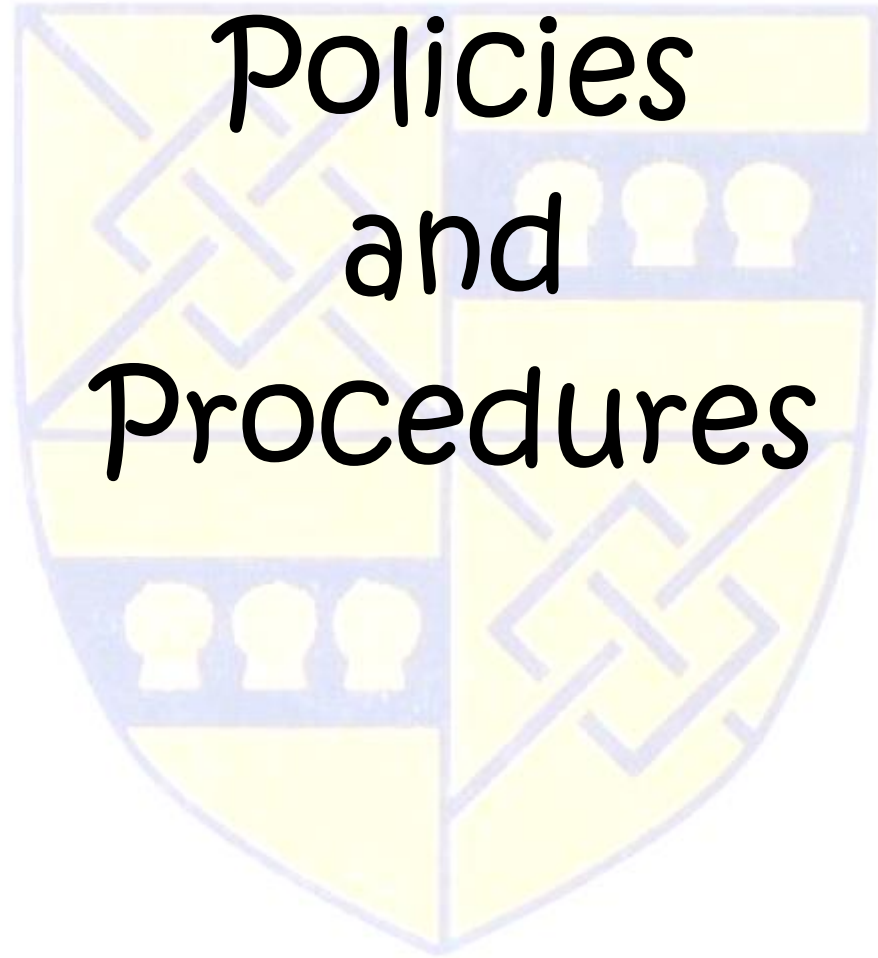
Research shows outdoor learning can improve higher order learning skills such as reasoning, problem solving, team work, communication, negotiation and leading. The Forest School ethos goes beyond this by nurturing, supporting and developing self-worth. With careful planning, Forest School aims to encourage and inspire individuals from the age of 3 and up, through the mastery of small but challenging tasks, leading to growth in self-confidence, independence and motivation to learn. This holistic, child-centred approach enables children to excel in all areas of their development, including their social, emotional, physical, spiritual, language and intellectual development, therefore laying the foundations for other learning. Furthermore, Forest School develops children's love and understanding of the natural world, and desire to use it responsibly, protecting it for future generations.

Vernon Park Primary Forest School runs predominantly at base camp in the Environmental area (fenced woodland on slope at back of school). Activities may extend to in front of the fenced area when appropriate or may be off the school site when a field trip has been planned. Forest School allows children the freedom to practise their skills and explore and understand a woodland environment within established boundaries. Children will acquire new skills as they are ready for them so that experiences remain challenging and exciting, whilst being safe and controlled.

This Handbook contains policies; procedures; risk assessments; roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders; and methods of communication and information exchange.

Section 2:

Policies and Procedures



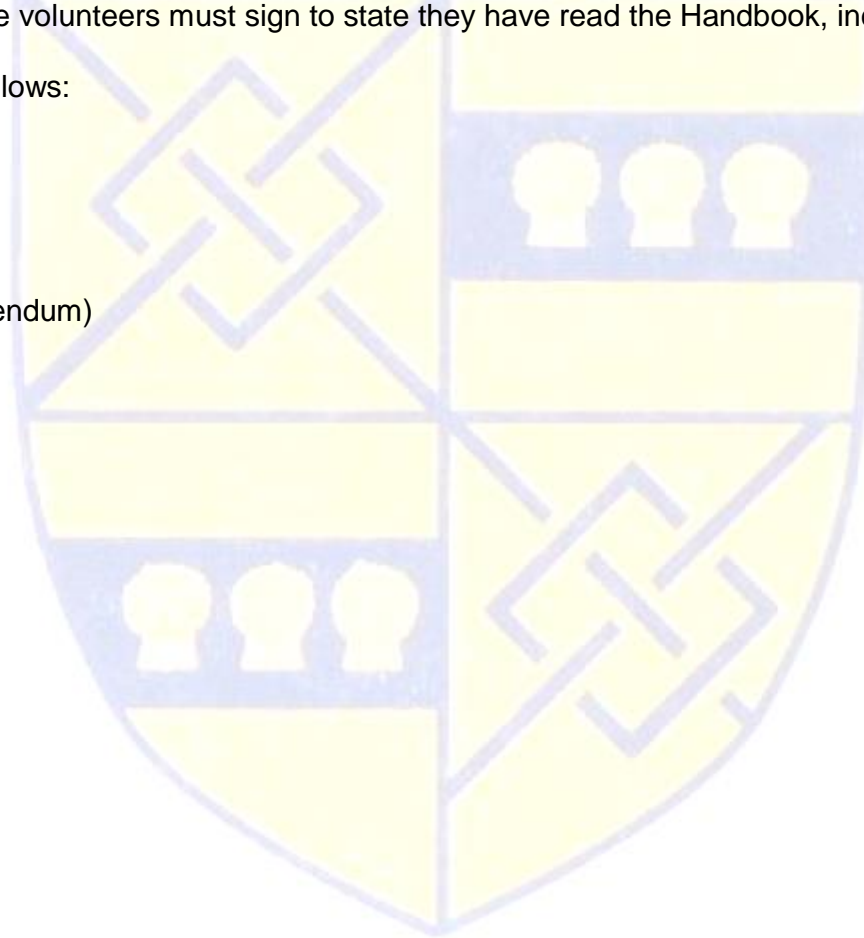
Policies

The following policies are the minimum requirements for the safe running of Forest School activities. They are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them.

All members of staff and volunteer helpers have a duty to follow these policies and should be familiar with their contents. A sheet is provided in Appendix A of the Master Handbook where volunteers must sign to state they have read the Handbook, including all policies and risk assessments.

Policies located in the handbook are as follows:

- Behaviour and Relationships
- Eating
- Emergency Procedures
- Fire Safety
- Hand Tool Safety
- Health and Safety (Forest School Addendum)
- Lockdown Procedures
- Risk Assessment
- Toileting
- Volunteers (Forest School Addendum)



Behaviour and Relationships Policy

Vernon Park Primary School Forest School aims to:

- Build self-esteem, independence, motivation to learn whilst always maintaining a safe environment
- Promote awareness, respect and care for other individuals and for the natural environment
- Reinforce collaborative behaviour
- Develop continuity of expectations and of approach to behaviour and relationships both inside and outside Vernon Park Primary School
- Develop awareness of acceptable and responsible behaviour in an outdoor environment
- Develop in both children and adults a pride in their achievements.

In order that these aims are achieved, certain standards of behaviour must be sustained and reinforced as a continuum of expectations within conventional school time.

The Role of the Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader will:

- Create a positive environment which encourages and reinforces caring, nurturing and acceptable behaviour towards one another, the environment and equipment
- Promote positive relationships in which all are accepted, valued and treated equally, reflecting our key themes of respect, responsibility and restore
- Be mindful of the need to maintain safety at all times
- Support and model the high standards of behaviour expected by pupils, staff and volunteers
- Involve school staff, parents, children and outside agencies in the establishment of acceptable standards of behaviour
- Give verbal praise to children demonstrating good work, good behaviour, co-operation and good group work
- Use the Restorative Approach to resolve incidents
- Ensure that the policy is consistently and fairly applied to all groups and communities

The Role of the Children

The children, to the best of their abilities and with or without support will:

- Listen carefully and respond to instructions and requests, especially those concerning safety
- Develop and maintain a positive attitude towards one another, the environment and all equipment
- Try to resolve minor incidents using strategies and initiatives they have been taught through 'Circle Work'
- Have a responsibility to report incidents of bullying and other unacceptable behaviour.

Rewards

Conventional rewards are not given in forest school. Behaviour and experiences are focussed on process and not the outcome. Therefore, we encourage the children to reflect on what they feel most proud of and which school values they have demonstrated, both throughout sessions and during the reflection time at the end of each session.

Procedures for challenges

Where challenging behaviour occurs, the Forest School Leader will ensure the following steps are adhered to:

1. The Forest School Leader or Volunteer will try to re-engage the child in the first instance.
2. A verbal warning will be given by the Forest School Leader or Volunteer by taking the child to one side and reminding them of the importance of acceptable behaviour, with the intention to help them understand how the behaviour choice has affected others in a negative way.
3. If the behaviour persists, the child will be given reflection time away from the activity. They will be moved away from the activity to the edge of the base camp for five minutes, children are given an opportunity to repair damage, restore the relationships and may then continue playing.
4. If after reflection time the behaviour persists or becomes dangerous, the child will be escorted back to the school building to work in their classroom; the behaviour will be logged, a restorative conversation will be undertaken by the adult dealing with the behaviour and the parent informed. The child will be asked to see a member of SLT and if appropriate a restorative meeting will take place.

However, if the child's actions are placing the group or an individual at risk, the Forest School leader may use their discretion to move straight to step 4.

Versions:

Updated April 2017

Updated May 2019

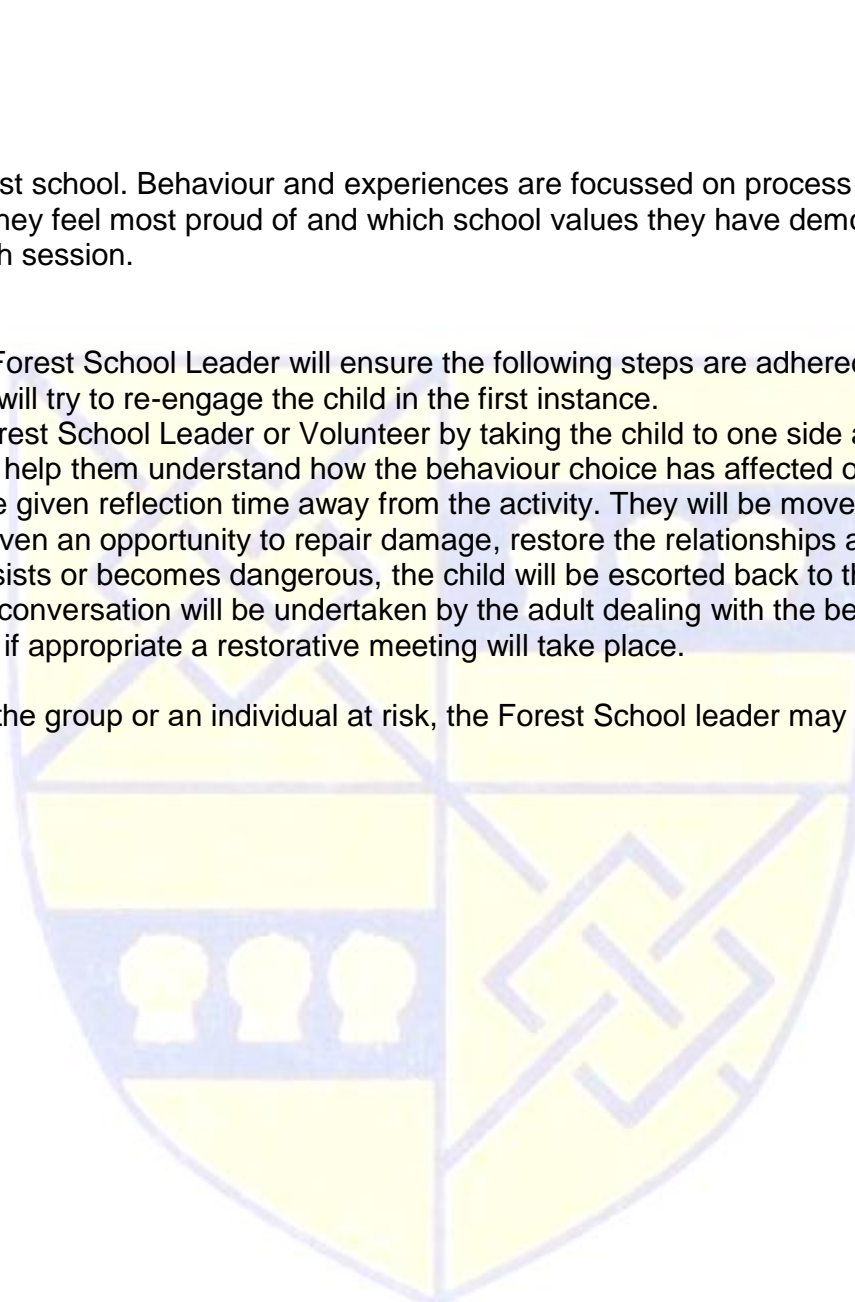
Reviewed November 2021

Updated January 2023

Reviewed February 2024

Review:

2025



Eating Policy

Vernon Park Primary Forest School recognises that raising awareness of the woodland environment increases children's interest in edible berries and fruits which may be found outside. However, there is no safe way of ensuring that children will always eat correct berries and/or fruit, or that appropriate berries and/or fruit will be clean. There is also the possibility that by promoting the correct ingestion of berries and/or fruit in Forest School sessions may lead to incorrect identification by children when out of school.

With these considerations in mind, Vernon Park Primary Forest School adopts the following Policy on the eating of food during Forest School sessions:

1. Children will be taught not to eat anything found in the woodland, such as berries, mushrooms or seeds during and outside of Forest School sessions. Children will be taught, at an age appropriate time, reasons why food from the woodland may not be eaten during Forest School sessions. They will be reassured that food from the woodland can be safe to eat, but can equally be dangerous and that adult (i.e. parent) supervision is very important in ensuring only the correct foods are eaten.
2. Children will be taught and regularly reminded not to put fingers and hands in mouths and noses.
3. Forest School sessions include a snack and drink (usually biscuits and warm cordial or hot chocolate). These will only be from commercially available products and the Forest School Leader will be responsible for checking that no member of the group has any listed allergy to any of the products; if they have, the Forest School Leader will use their discretion as to whether a substitute product or different activity will be most appropriate.
4. When campfire cooking is pursued as a topic of interest, food will mainly be from commercially available products and the Forest School Leader will be responsible for checking that no member of the group has any listed allergy to any of the products; if they have, the Forest School Leader will use their discretion as to whether a substitute product or different activity will be most appropriate. Found foods such as ramson leaves or elderflowers will only be used when collection is supervised by an adult, ensuring correct identification and cleaning of food before consumption.
5. If children consume food or drink in the woods, they will use wipes/soap and water and/or antibacterial hand gel to clean their hands beforehand.
6. Hot food and drinks will be given an appropriate amount of time to cool and children will be warned to care when eating warm food/drinks.

Versions:

Updated May 2019

Updated November 2021

Updated January 2023

Reviewed February 2024

Review: 2025

Emergency Procedures Policy

All participants will be briefed in what to do in case of emergency. Three long blasts on 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/incident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will attend to the casualty, giving first aid if necessary. A school incident report will be completed later (see Proformas section). The following is adapted from the school 'Contacting Emergency Services' policy. A laminated copy of the procedures will be kept in the first aid bag and the Forest School leader and assistant will carry a mobile phone on their person at all times.

In case of injury

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

- In serious cases, 999 should be dialled using a mobile phone carried by the Forest School Leader and then the school office will be notified. The school will be responsible for notifying the parent.
- The rest of the group will be gathered using the emergency whistle and supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- One member of the staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
- If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the child's parent will be updated about the situation by the staff remaining at school.
- In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange for the school office to contact the parent of the injured child so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor or home.

Contacting Emergency Services

Dial **999**, ask for an ambulance and be ready with the following information:

1. Your telephone number: **(Forest School leader/assistant's mobile) or 0161 480 4378 (school office)**

2. Give your location as follows:

Vernon Park Primary School, Peak Street, Stockport

3. State the postcode: **SK1 2NF**

4. Give exact location of the person needing help.

5. Give your name.

6. Give the name of the person needing help.

7. Give a brief description of the person's symptoms (and any known medical conditions).

8. Inform ambulance control of the best entrance and state that the crew will be met at this entrance and taken to the person.

9. Do not hang up until the information has been repeated back to you.

10. The person calling should be with the patient, as the emergency services may give first aid instructions.

11. Never cancel an ambulance once it has been called.

12. Head teacher to be notified.

Speak clearly and slowly and be ready to repeat the information if asked.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated April 2017

Updated May 2019

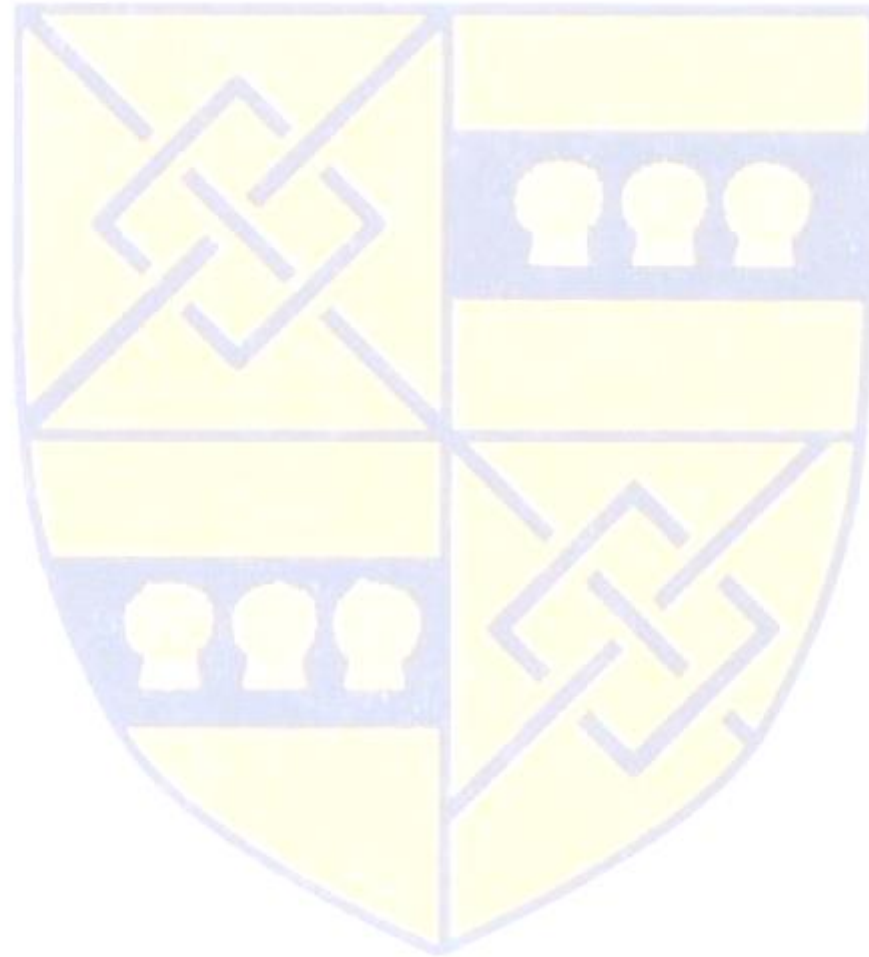
Reviewed November 2021

Updated January 2023

Reviewed February 2024

Review:

2025



Fire Safety Policy

All Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Vernon Park Primary School aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for campfires.
- Fire pit areas are enclosed by logs to prevent the spread of fire or raised, contained fire pits are used.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit preventing people from walking near or across the fire.
- Adults and children must always walk around the outside of the log circle and enter the log circle where they are going to sit.
- Children must always ask permission to enter the log circle and wait for permission to step over. Once permission has been given, they must sit, ensuring legs are drawn into the log and not outstretched.
- Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- Children will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
- To exit the log circle, children must ask permission and then step over the log they have been sitting on and out.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them).
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
- If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.

Type of Fire

Training is provided for leaders regarding the best fire lay to use for a session:

- **Waffle** fires are used to provide a large amount of heat and light and are fast burning.
- **Long Log** fires are good for cooking as they are slow burning and require little fuel.
- **Tipi** fires can be used for specific purposes such as cooking as the heat from them can be carefully controlled by regulating air flow.

Safety and Responsibility

- Fire burns first aid supplies will be in the forest school first aid kit and a bucket of water must always be to hand.
- Green/red fire proof gloves must be within easy reach.
- Only adults are permitted to light fires, unless children are under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader.
- Fires are lit using cotton wool and a strike stick. Small amounts of petroleum jelly may be used as an accelerant or fire starters made by the children.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- Adults and children must adopt the respect position (kneel on one knee) when working at the fire.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.
- Children are taught to never leave a fire unattended and how to safely extinguish a fire.

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- A bucket of water and fire blanket should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Forest School Leaders should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be spread and stirred into the soil with a stick and then doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated May 2019

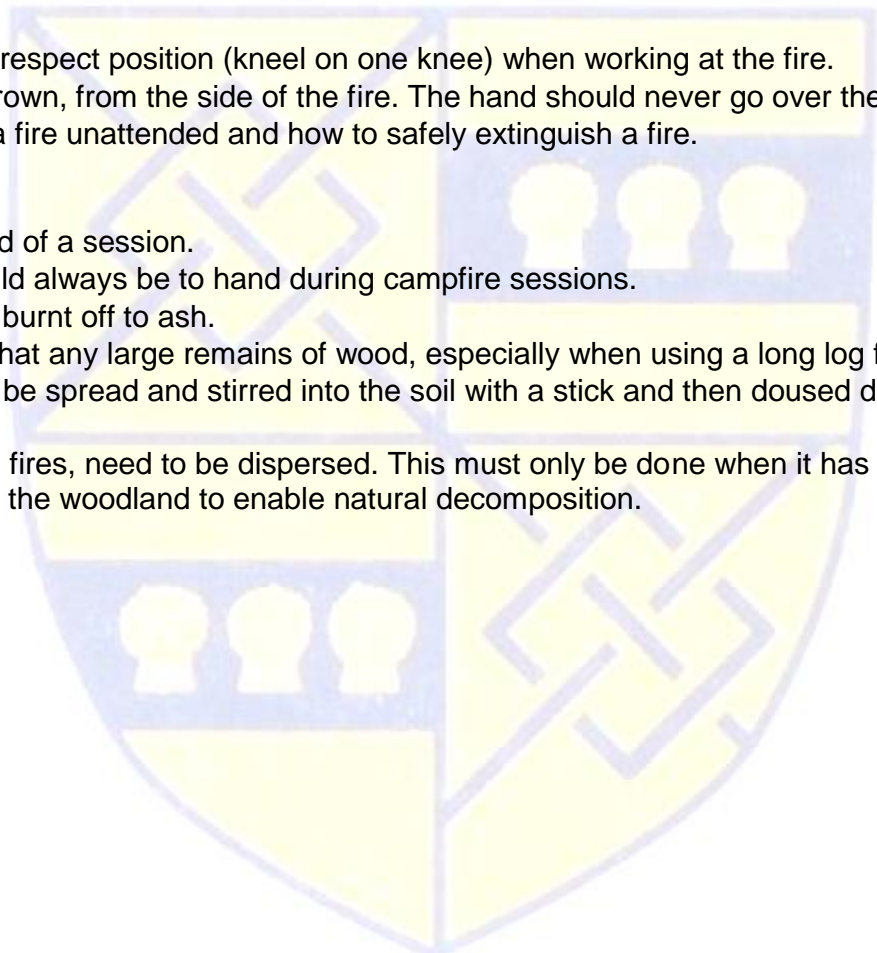
Updated November 2021

Updated January 2023

Updated February 2024

Review:

2025



Hand Tool Safety Policy

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader and will be inspected before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased. This will be achieved by following these guidelines:

- In each session, prior to tool use, children will be given a tool talk explaining parts, storage, transportation and uses. The Forest School leader will demonstrate how to use the tool.
- Staff to child ratio will be 1:2 for bow saws, bill hooks and loppers.
- Staff to child ratios will be 1:8 for sheath knives.
- Tools will be kept in the Forest School shed and only removed by the Forest School leader or volunteers.
- Running with tools is prohibited.
- Pointing with tools is prohibited.
- Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.
- Bill hooks should not be swung or used with gloved hands.
- Bow saws must have a blade guard on them when not in use. Blade guards to be removed and put back only by the Forest School leader, school staff or volunteers until children have been shown how to do this properly and safely.
- Wood being sawn must be supported on a natural sawing break or saw horse – a glove must be worn on the non-tool hand which must be crossed through the handle of the bow saw to avoid the blade.
- When using sheath knives to whittle, this must be done at the side of, and downwards of the body. A glove must be worn on the non-tool hand.
- All tools must be counted back into the tool shed at the end of the session.
- School staff and volunteer helpers must receive basic training on the use of individual hand tools before being allowed to use them with children.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated May 2019

Updated November 2021

Reviewed January 2023

Reviewed February 2024

Review:

2025

Health and Safety Policy Addendum

The Forest School Health and Safety Policy is an addendum to the School's Health and Safety Policy and does not change the school's position on health and safety matters set out in the original document.

In order that Forest School sessions may run safely, the Forest School Leader will:

- Have regard to the Local Authority Publication Outdoor Education, Visits and Off-site Activities
- Ensure that at least one appropriately qualified first aider is on-site
- Establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment by:
 - Establishing, maintaining and evaluating appropriate procedures, policies and risk assessments, as set out in the Handbook
 - Ensure the provision of sufficient information and instruction for all adults so that they can contribute to their own health and safety and that of the children they are working with
 - Establish and be utterly familiar with, all emergency procedures including the reporting and recording of incidents
 - Ensure that risk assessments and pre-site visits take place before children are permitted on to the site. Risk assessments will be held in the master Forest School Handbook, located in the school office
 - Ensure alternative plans are in place should a planned activity be compromised by health and safety concerns
 - Ensure that Forest School Volunteers are aware of their responsibilities towards the children
 - Investigate any accidents and use information gathered to inform future risk assessment and policy making
 - Teach all members of the party to maintain their own and others health and safety by involving them in the risk assessment process at appropriate opportunities
 - Maintain the legal adult-child ratio
 - Ensure that safety equipment is in good working order and is used appropriately
- The Forest School Leader assumes responsibility for the maintenance of the First Aid Kits and any tools brought into the Forest School camp

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Forest School Leader:

- To plan and lead all Forest School activities.
- To ensure that planned activities are within the capabilities of the children taking part, amending plans to provide an inclusive curriculum in its broadest sense.
- To take responsibility for behaviour management during Forest School sessions (see Behaviour and Relationships Policy).
- To have an up to date First Aid qualification.
- To ensure that all participants are appropriately clothed and equipped.
- To ensure that inhalers, epi-pens and any other required medication are taken along during forest school sessions and stored with the main first aid kit.
- To carry a small first aid kit on their person.
- To carry out risk assessments as described in the Risk Assessment Policy for each session to be delivered.

- To ensure all Forest School policies are regularly reviewed and that review is informed by observations and developing knowledge of the Forest School setting.

Responsibilities of Accompanying Staff and Volunteers:

- To take an active role in Forest School activities and assist with any behaviour issues within the group (see Behaviour and Relationships Policy).
- To assist with the Forest School Leader in ensuring equipment meets safety standards and to report any concerns about the state of equipment immediately.
- To assist the Forest School Leader in teaching children to maintain their own and others' health and safety.
- To report accidents or hazards to the Forest School Leader immediately.
- To take responsibility for making themselves aware of safety issues, such as the whereabouts of the first aid kit.
- To provide their own suitable outdoor clothing and footwear.

Responsibilities of the Children:

- To take personal responsibility for their own safety as well as the safety of others.
- To listen to and follow safety information given to them.
- To bring appropriate clothing and footwear to Forest School sessions.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated 2019

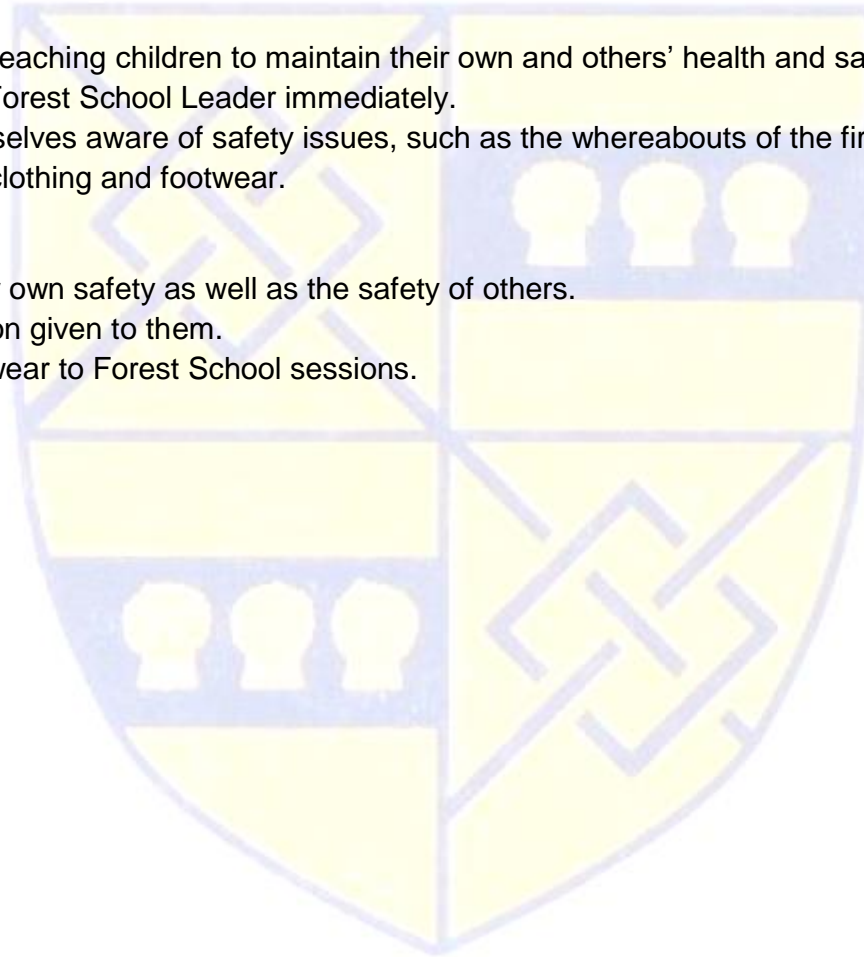
Updated November 2021

Updated January 2023

Updated February 2024

Review:

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Lockdown Procedures Policy

Lockdown means locking doors and windows to keep people safe inside a building. However, in the woods, this is not possible.

If the threat is down at the school building, the school office will call the forest school leader to inform them, children and adults will run, hide in the woods and tell:

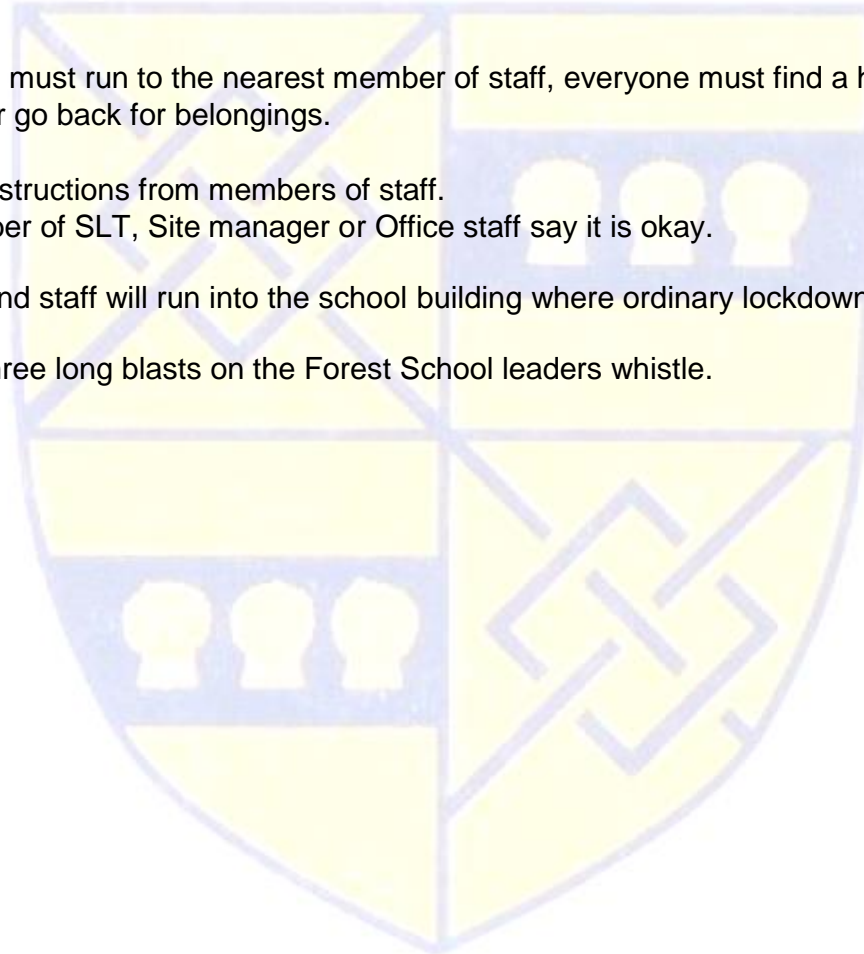
- When a lockdown is signalled, children must run to the nearest member of staff, everyone must find a hiding place and stay there.
- They must remain calm and not stop or go back for belongings.
- They must remain silent.
- They must listen carefully and follow instructions from members of staff.
- They must remain hidden until a member of SLT, Site manager or Office staff say it is okay.

If the threat is within the woods, children and staff will run into the school building where ordinary lockdown procedures will take place.

The lockdown signal will be signalled by three long blasts on the Forest School leaders whistle.

Drafted:
May 2019
Reviewed November 2021
Updated January 2023
Reviewed February 2024

Review:
2025



Risk Assessment Policy

Forest School at Vernon Park Primary School aims to develop children's self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. In order that these aims can be met, the Forest School Leader will:

- Consistently apply the five-step approach to risk assessment for the Forest School site and all activities:
 1. Look for hazards.
 2. Decide who may be harmed and how.
 3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done. Forest School activities may only proceed if the remaining risk is deemed to be low.
 4. Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits or observations.
 5. Review assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change which may affect the rigour of the assessment) and revise if necessary.
- Carry out full risk assessments for the site where Forest School activities will take place. These will be filed in the Master Forest School Handbook located in the Head teacher's office. An on-the-day pre-visit check will be carried out by the Forest School Leader prior to the day's activity, as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical.
- Cancel sessions if, in the opinion of the Forest School Leader, weather conditions such as high winds or the threat/occurrence of electrical storms make work outdoors unsafe.
- Inform staff, volunteers and children of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further.
- Involve staff, volunteers and children in risk assessment, as appropriate, as part of learning.
- Ensure legal guidelines regarding off-site activities, such as adequate insurance and parental permission are met.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and children are aware of the emergency procedures and lockdown procedures.
- Be responsible for teaching children adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.
- Ensure children and adults will have access to drinking water during sessions.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated May 2019

Reviewed November 2021

Updated January 2023

Reviewed February 2024

Review:

2025

Toileting Policy

Before a Forest School session, children will be given the opportunity to go to the toilet.

Whilst working outside, children will be allowed back into school if the toilet is needed.

Children will only access the KS2 toilets, or the disabled access toilet if appropriate.

Children in KS2 will go to the toilet with a 'buddy' who will wait for them until they have finished.

Children in the EYFS and KS1 or with special needs, including behavioural needs, will be escorted to and from the toilet by a member of school staff.

Where sessions are longer than 2 hours, a planned toilet break must be included half way through the session.

Children who are not yet fully toilet trained or have a medical condition which affects their toileting will be given frequent reminders and more regular opportunities to go the toilet.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated May 2019

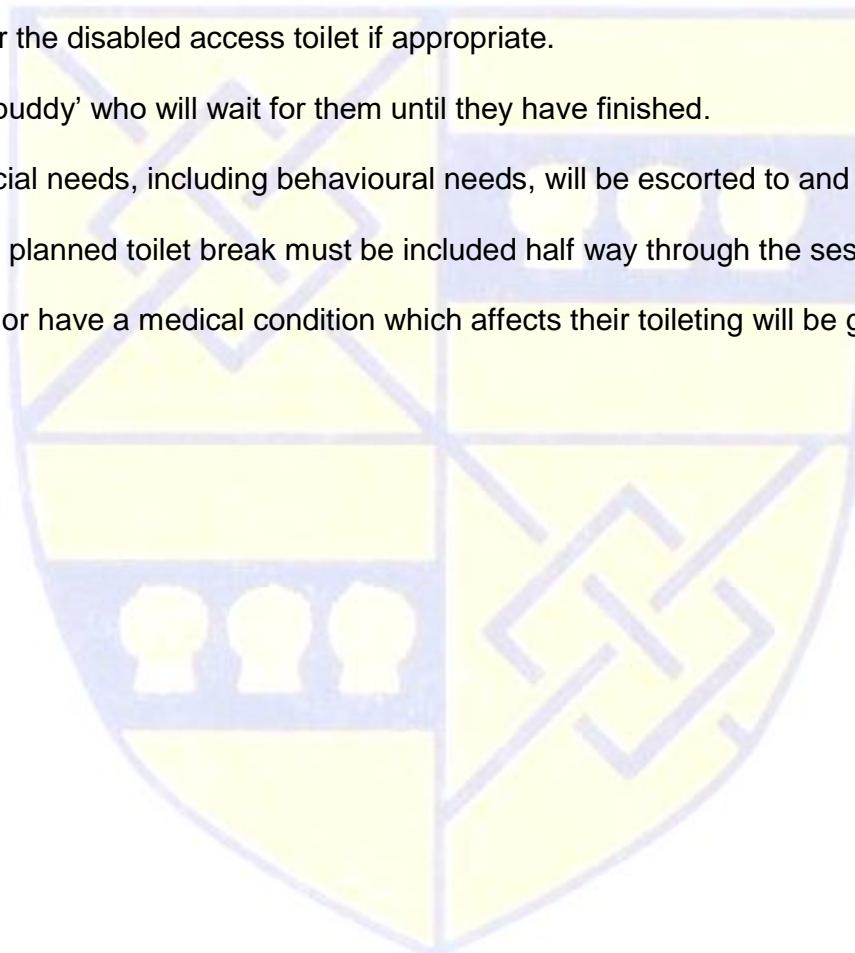
Reviewed November 2021

Reviewed January 2023

Reviewed February 2024

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Forest School Volunteers Policy

Vernon Park recognises the importance of parental support and appreciates that their time is given freely and with good will. In order to keep them, children and staff safe at school, an induction meeting is required before parents may come into school as volunteers. This gives parents an opportunity to ask any questions or express any concerns that they may have. It also allows the school to share their expectations with the parents. This induction is completed by Claire Lee, head teacher. Once parents have completed the general school induction, they must complete a Forest School induction before they may volunteer at Forest School.

Forest School Volunteer Guidelines

Policy

When parents offer to help in forest school, forest school staff may wish to consult this policy document for guidance.

Induction

The Forest School Leader will arrange to meet with the parent at a mutually convenient time to discuss what they may be expected to do in the Forest School. Generally, duties will include the following activities;

- Becoming familiar with the Forest School Handbook and all procedures contained within it
- Taking part in pre-session briefings from the Forest School Leader, including reminders about relevant risk assessments
- Assisting groups with tasks such as using saws, knives or bill hooks, under supervision of Forest School Leader
- Promoting the ethos of forest school to raise self-esteem and confidence as an overarching aim
- Assisting in monitoring children when walking to and from Forest School activities
- Assisting children with their kit, including waterproofs

Parents will only be considered Forest School Volunteers (FSVs) when they have read and signed that they agree to policies and procedures contained within the Forest School Handbook (see Forest School Volunteer record in Appendices section).

Review and dialogue

It is important that the FSV is comfortable in what they are doing, so they are encouraged to seek further advice or assistance from the Forest School Leader whenever instructions are unclear to them.

Safeguarding

FSVs should be supervised appropriately and visible to the Forest School Leader or members of school staff at all times.

When supporting in Forest School, all FSVs must wear appropriate identification. The Forest School Leader will introduce them to the group at the start of session briefing.

General guidelines for Forest School Volunteers

All FSVs should sign in at the school office upon arrival before going into class. They must get a School Visitor ID tag and wear it visibly over outdoor clothing.

FSVs must be told by the Forest School Leader never to allow themselves to be in a one to one situation with a child.

FSVs should be told that dealing with challenging behaviour must take place within the ethos of Forest School. This will be discussed at the initial briefing session. If children make poor choices, they should seek either the Forest School Leader or a member of school staff for immediate intervention.

FSVs should be told not to accompany children to the toilet or assist with toileting at any time, this must only be done by a member of staff. If they feel there is a child who needs the toilet, they must seek a member of staff to deal with the situation.

FSVs should be told not to administer any medication to children including creams. This is the role of the first aid staff.

Versions:

Draft February 2014

Updated 2019

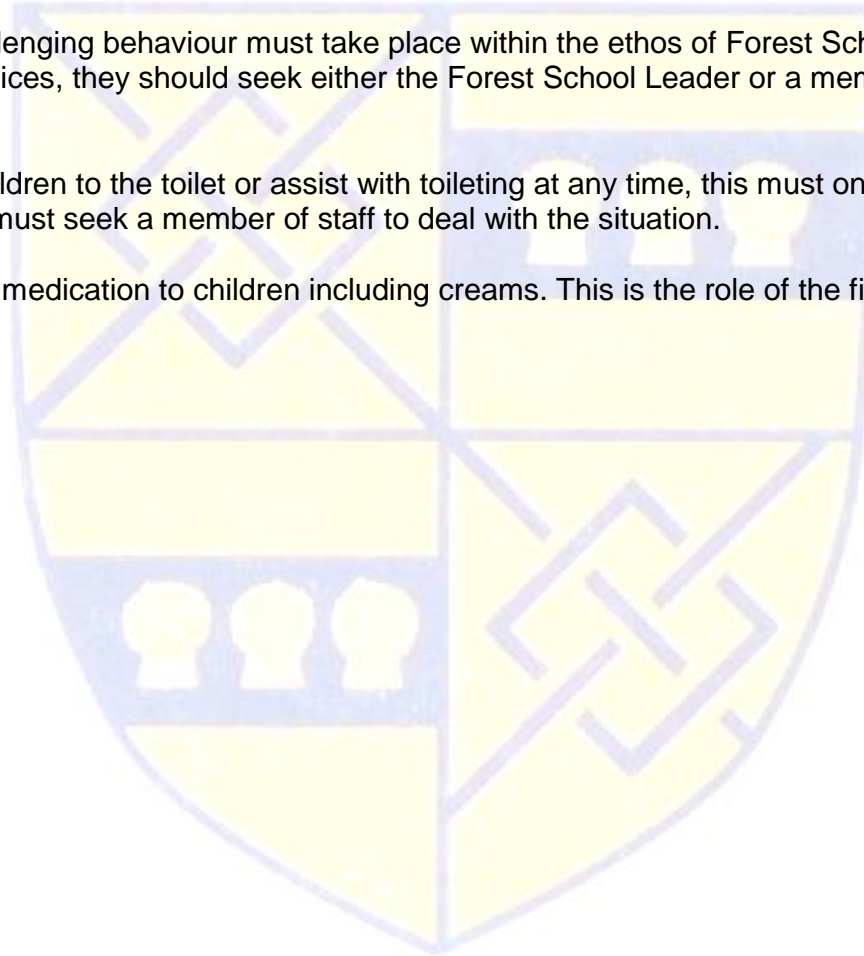
Reviewed 2021

Updated January 2023

Updated February 2024

Review:

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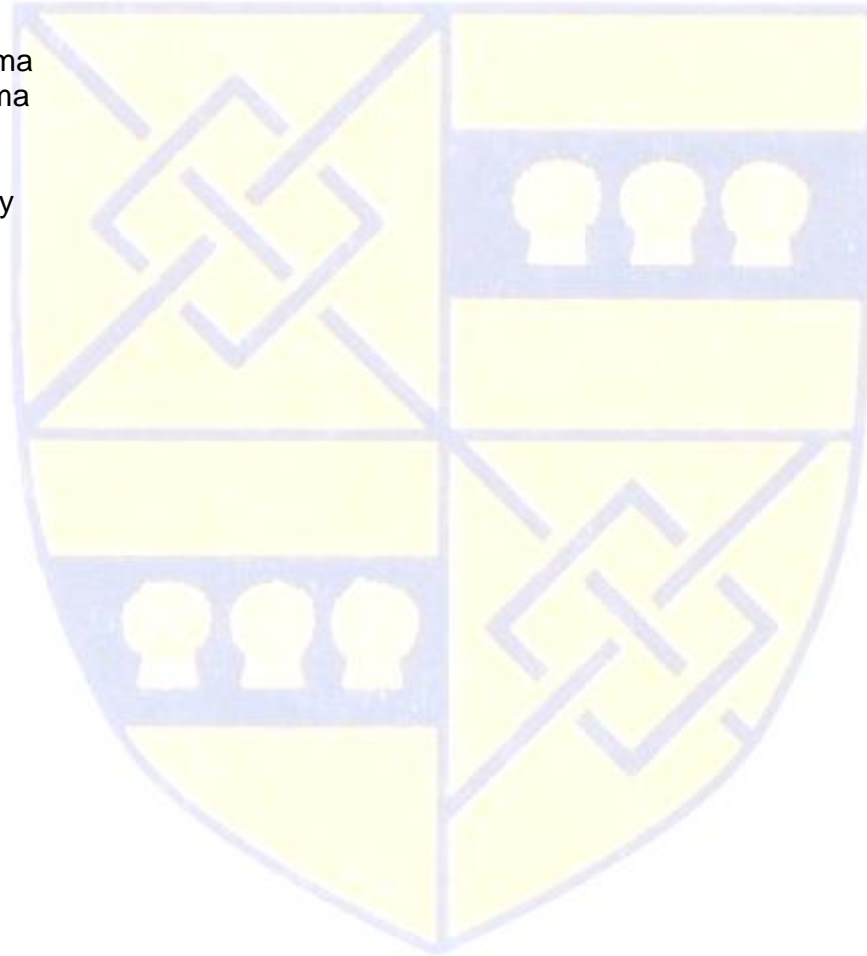


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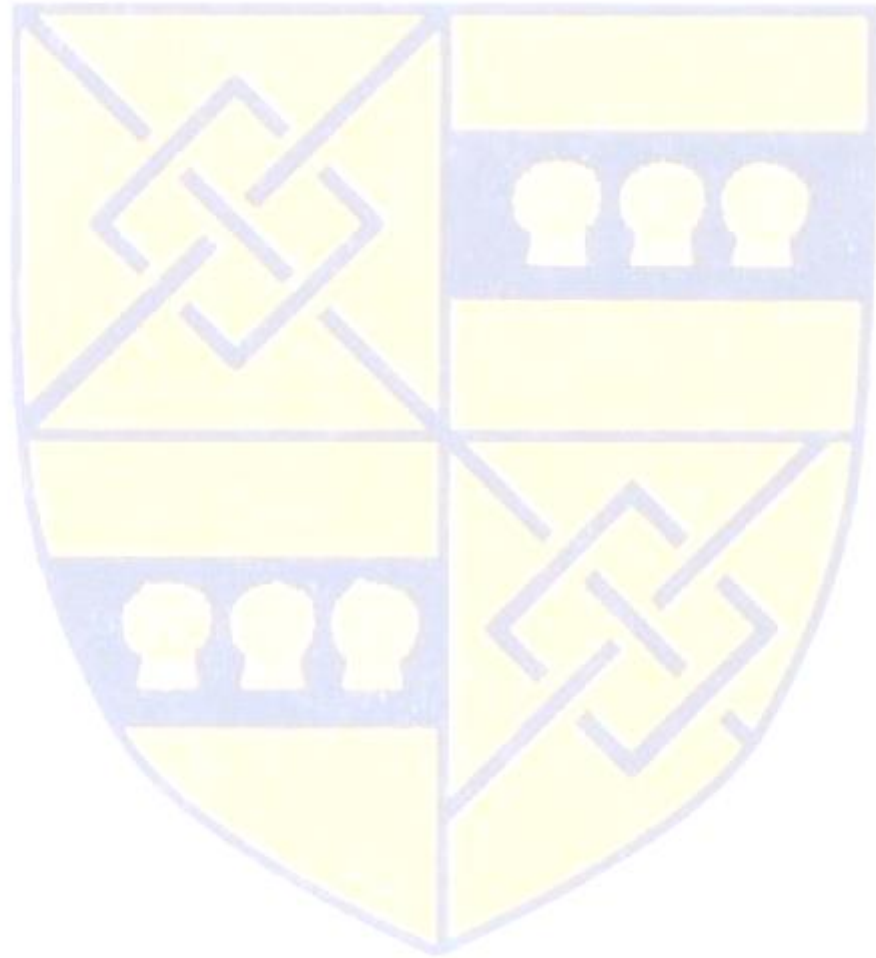


Proformas

- Forest School letter to parents
- Accident form
- Emergency procedures checklist
- Forest School Sessional Reflection proforma
- Forest School Individual Reflection proforma
- First aid kit checklist
- Happy kit checklist
- Resources and equipment condition survey



Letter



Accident form

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES CHECKLIST

In case of injury

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

- In serious cases, 999 should be dialled using a mobile phone carried by the Forest School Leader and then the school office will be notified. The school will be responsible for notifying the parent.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- One member of the staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
- If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the child's parent will be updated about the situation by the staff remaining at school.
- In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange for the school office to contact the parent of the injured child so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor or home.

Contacting Emergency Services

Dial **999**, ask for an ambulance and be ready with the following information:

1. Your telephone number: **(Forest School Leader/assistant's mobile) or 0161 480 4378 (school office)**
2. Give your location as follows:
Vernon Park Primary School, Peak Street, Stockport
3. State the postcode: **SK1 2NF**
4. Give exact location of the person needing help.
5. Give your name.
6. Give the name of the person needing help.
7. Give a brief description of the person's symptoms (and any known medical conditions).
8. Inform ambulance control of the best entrance and state that the crew will be met at this entrance and taken to the person.
9. Do not hang up until the information has been repeated back to you.
10. The person calling should be with the patient, as the emergency services may give first aid instructions.
11. Never cancel an ambulance once it has been called.
12. Head teacher to be notified.

Speak clearly and slowly and be ready to repeat the information if asked.

Forest School Sessional Reflection Sheet

CONTEXT:


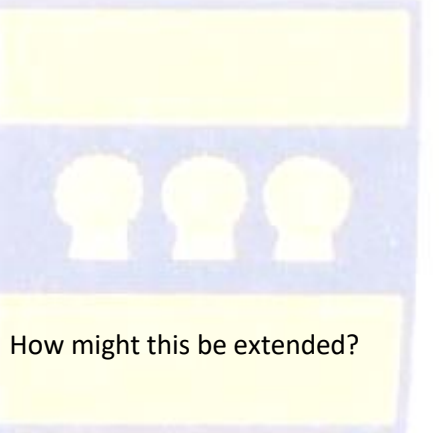


Forest school leader:		School staff:	
Date and time:	Session context (i.e., 3/10):	Resources:	
Weather:		Site conditions:	
Year group/age/number of children:		Aims of session:	

REFLECTIONS:

Observations and reflections from the session focussing on understanding rules and enthusiasm

Activities/Experiences	Strengths/Observations	Any issues	Implications for next session
Walk in – Check in – Wellbeing - Games – Suggested experiences - Free play – Reflection/snack – Check out – Walk out -			

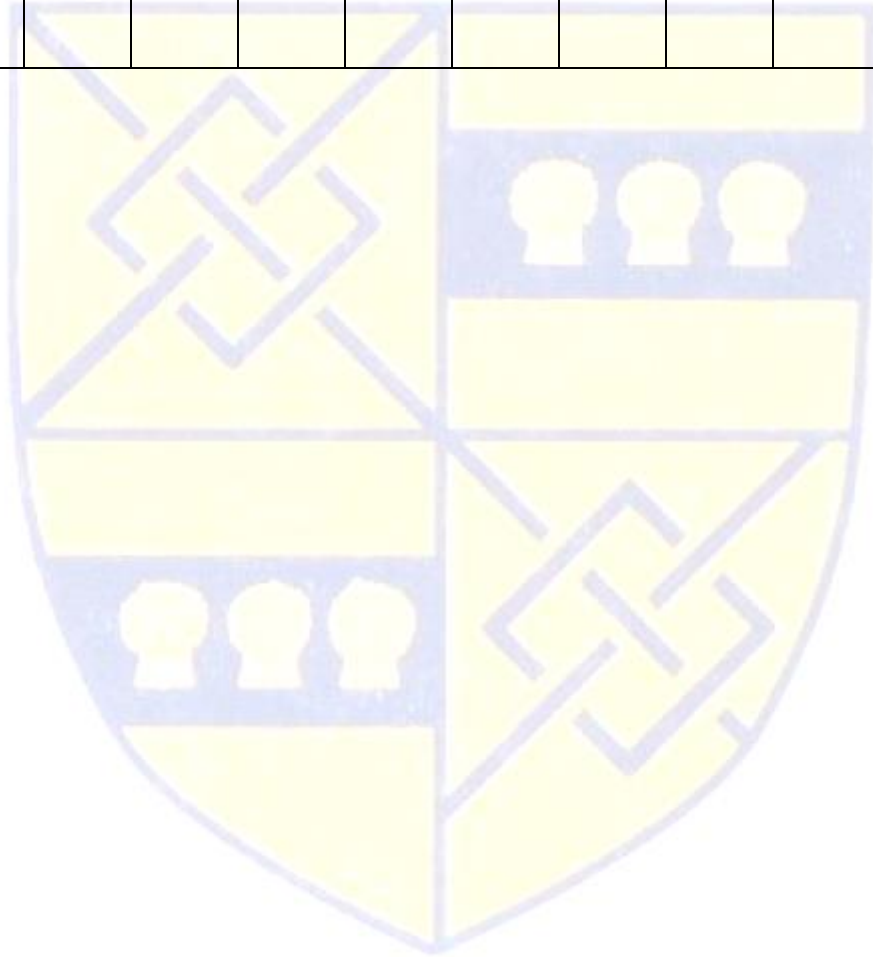
Free play:

<p>How might this be extended?</p>	 <p>How might this be extended?</p>	 <p>How might this be extended?</p>	<p>How might this be extended?</p>
<p>How might this be extended?</p>	 <p>How might this be extended?</p>	 <p>How might this be extended?</p>	<p>How might this be extended?</p>

Gross motor skills (e.g. movement around site, game play, tree climbing, rope swings etc.):												
Fine motor skills												
Check out score (emotional wellbeing/self-awareness/empathy):												

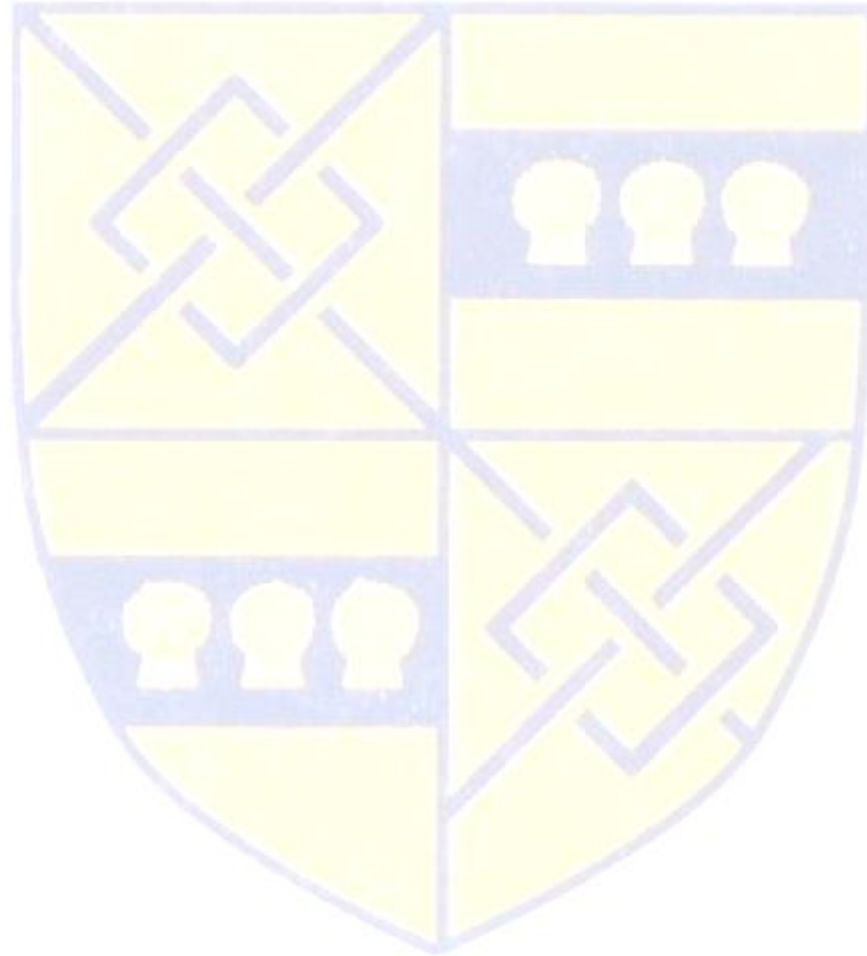
Comments/Notes:

Date:



First Aid Kit Checklist

2x instant ice packs
10x antiseptic wipes
1x bottle of eye and wound cleansing spray
Assorted plasters
3x triangular bandages
Assorted wound dressings
Gauze
1x crepe bandages
10x pairs of protective gloves
2x eye pads
2x roll micropore tape
1x roll of clingfilm
10x sachets of burns gel
1x tic remover
Tissues
Survival blanket
Survival bag
Tough cuts
Paediatric first aid book
First aid forms
Pen
Emergency procedures checklist



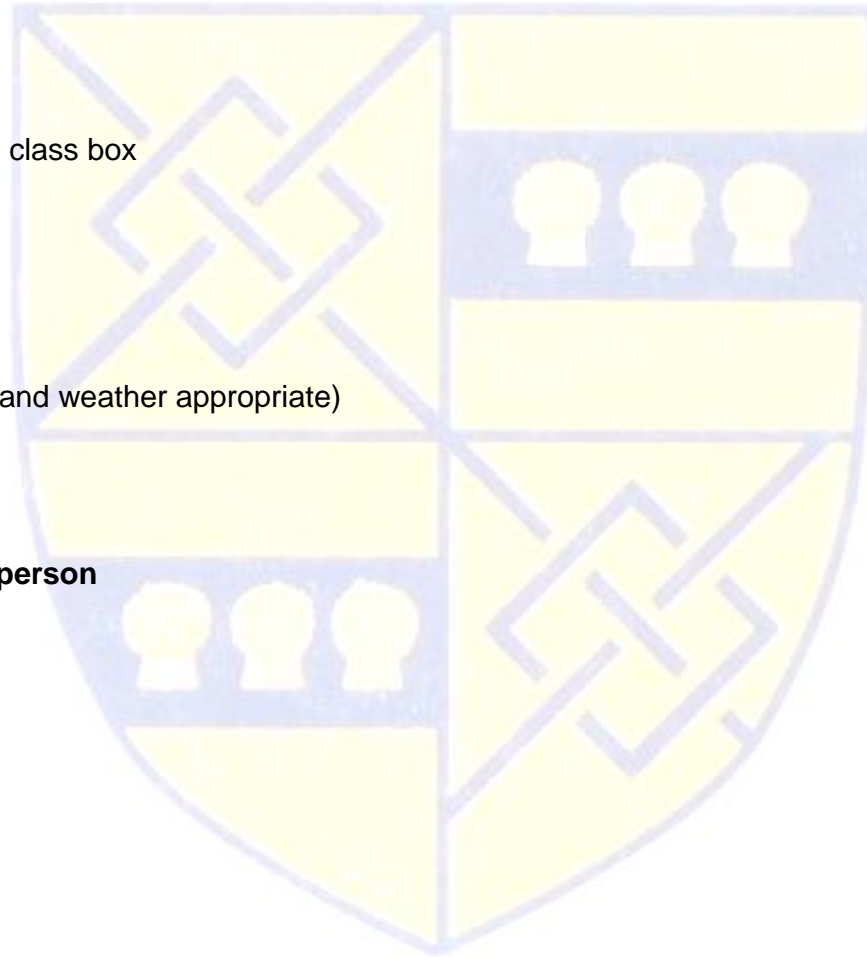
Happy Kit Checklist*

First Aid Kit Bag
Mobile phone with school phone number saved in memory
Emergency whistle
Large tarpaulin and cord
Small foam mats
Toilet roll in plastic bag
Antibacterial hand gel
Fresh water in container
Medication for individuals - to be carried in class box
Small fire kit
Games bag
Gloves
Fire blanket

Other Possible Items

Spare clothing (size appropriate for group and weather appropriate)
Thermos of hot water
Chocolate/sugary food

***to be kept in shed at base camp or on person**



Equipment Condition Survey

For information - ONLY copy in master file to be completed.

Item	Location	Termly checks			Comment
		Autumn	Spring	Summer	
3x bow saw	Shed				
1x bill hook	Shed				
2x loppers	Shed				
1x secateurs	Shed				
2x knife sharpener	Shed				
17x sheath knives	Shed				
1x large tarpaulin	Shed				
2x medium tarpaulin	Shed				
2x small tarpaulin	Shed				
8x small fire strikes	Shed				
6x large fire strikes	Shed				
11x scallop shells	Shed				
2x pair of fire gloves	Shed				
1x fire pit	Shed				
1x Dutch skillet	Shed				
1x Dutch oven	Shed				

1x trivet	Shed				
2x Kelly kettle	Shed				
1x hand drill	Shed				
1x large auger	Shed				
1x hammer	Shed				
1x mallet	Shed				
2x hammock	Shed				
1x basket swing	Shed				
2x hugglepods	Shed				
1x strap line	Shed				
1x slackline	Shed				
1x froe	Shed				
1x bradawl	Shed				
6x palm drills	Shed				
2x ratchet clamps	Shed				

Section 4: Risk Assessments



Site Risk Assessment

Location: Vernon Park Primary School, Peak Street, Stockport SK12NF. Grid reference SJ9027090441	Assessors name: Victoria Stone Signed: 	Date conducted: 8.5.19 Date written: 15.5.19 Reviewed 3.11.21 Reviewed 10.1.23 Reviewed 5.2.24 Review date: 5.2.25
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Description of site/activity/tool (owner, debris, dogs, flora & fauna, access, vehicles, water, interesting features, other comments):

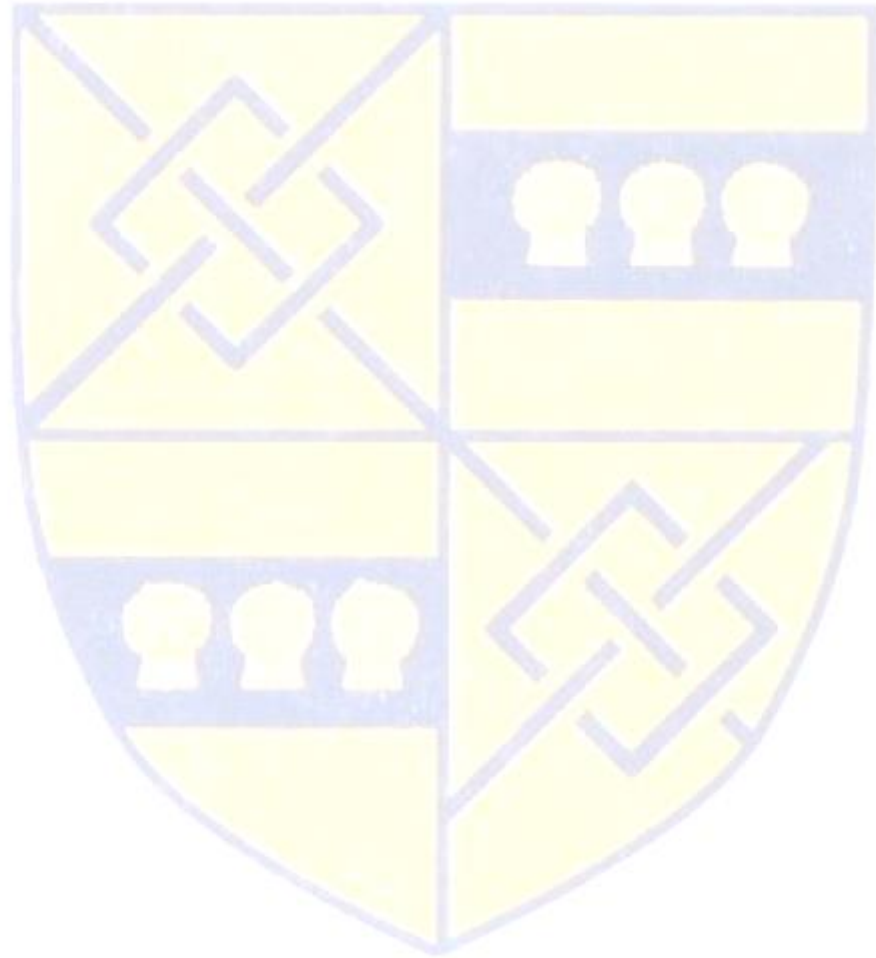
The School is fortunate to own a separate wooded area to the south of the main School buildings. This woodland consists predominantly of mixed broadleaf native species including ash, birch, rowan, holly, hazel and poplars. It is a young, naturally regenerated woodland of approximately 40-60 years of age, with some planted species throughout including Rhododendron and conifers, consisting of approximately 0.97 acres / 0.392 hectares in size and triangular in shape. It is a clough woodland on a consistent steep slope with marked pathways and steps throughout, some of which have handrails. Due to the steep terrain and natural regeneration of the site, many of the trees are very tall and competing for space within the woodland. The site is bordered by School buildings to the North, St Mary's Way to the eastern and southern boundary and an extension of the woodland to the western edge (see maps below). There is a public footpath running from the neighbouring houses at Rectory Fields on the south-western boundary to Peak Street, which runs the length of the Forest School western boundary. The public footpath also runs along the southern eastern boundary linking up to Alpine road, running almost parallel to St Mary's Way. As a consequence of the neighbouring sites, public footpaths and St Mary's Way (a busy dual carriageway) surrounding the southern edge of the site, there is a tendency for litter to accumulate on site. The site is completely fenced off however, with the only official access via the School playground steps through a metal, padlocked gate. The fencing is substantial throughout the site and approximately 2 meters in height, with a substantial hawthorn hedge planted within the woodland along the majority of the boundary. In-between the woodland and the School playground is an area accessible from the playground (Area A on map) containing spoil from historical tree felling and grounds maintenance work. This area also contains a small pond and inlet and a climbing frame. It has been recommended that the spoil, consisting of logs, branches, old Christmas trees, off-cuts and disused play equipment, be disposed of and dispersed (natural materials could be scattered within the woodland area, whilst old play equipment needs removing from the site) to prevent further damage to the nearby trees and pathway within this area. There is pressure upon the trees here due to the amount of spoil that has accumulated and the tree roots have become exposed. Within the entirety of the woodland, there is also another area, which is not fenced off (Area B), so only accessible from Area A. This consists of more mature Sycamores and a plateaued section of woodland which may be a suitable log circle area in future. The fence line would need to be removed to accommodate this, or an opening within the fence line installed. This area leads down to School, so this boundary would need to be considered in terms of whether it needs to be fenced off for not. Once in the woodland, there is a network of gravelled, edged paths and steps and some handrails negotiating the slopes, with two main areas which plateau out at the entrance to the woodland and at the southern edge, where there is a large log circle (enough to accommodate a whole class). This area at the top of the steps also has a line of benches which have recently been replaced. There is evidence of badger activity within the woodland which has been cordoned off with paracord.

	Hazard	Harm	People at risk	Existing preventative measures or new measures that need to be implemented	Who will do it? When?
1	Steep slope in woodland	Slipping / tripping / falling. Injury to self and others when falling.	Pupils, School staff, volunteers and Forest School staff. Parents attending Celebratory sessions.	Forest School staff to deliver safety talks concerning the need to beware of the steep bank and discuss possible ways to navigate such banking, i.e. using the rope. Forest School staff to check the integrity of the rope prior to each session, looking for signs of fraying on the rope and or damage to the tree and excessive elasticity within the rope. Forest School staff to assess the banking in terms of erosion and consider re-siting the rope to another banking within the woodland if deemed	Forest School staff and School staff to conduct site sweep prior to each block of daily sessions. Forest School staff and School staff to monitor banking and equipment used. Forest School staff to discuss with pupils at the beginning of a block of termly sessions ways in which they navigate steep terrain during a group site exploration.

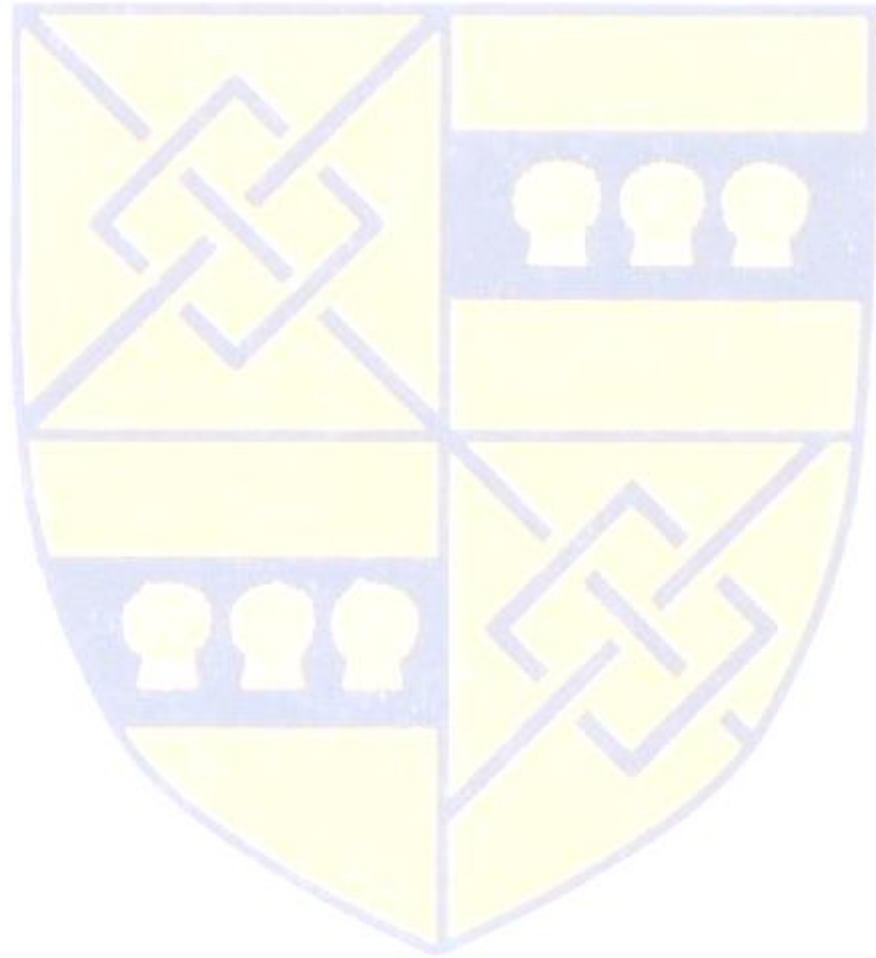
				necessary (i.e. if the banking has become severely eroded and is unstable). Suitable, outdoor footwear such as walking boots or wellingtons to be worn at all times	
2	Exposed roots / logs on woodland floor	Slipping / tripping	Pupils, School staff, volunteers and Forest School staff. Parents attending Celebratory sessions.	Forest School staff to deliver safety talks concerning the need to beware of trip hazards, to be mindful of environment. Forest School staff to draw attention to the changing site conditions during sessions. Suitable, outdoor footwear such as walking boots or wellingtons to be worn at all times.	Forest School staff and School staff to conduct site sweep prior to each block of daily sessions. Forest School staff to talk to the pupils at the beginning of each session regarding their responsibility for their own body and awareness of the changing site conditions.
3	Prickly, sharp, stinging plants, including bramble, holly, hawthorn, blackthorn and nettles	Prickles, stings, scratches	Pupils, School staff, volunteers and Forest School staff. Parents attending Celebratory sessions.	Forest School staff to communicate with the children the need to look before touching and to consider the safety of the plants around them. Forest School staff to draw pupils' attention to the changing seasons and the presence of new plants within growing season that may not have been present previously. Forest school leader to be aware of which plant has caused injury to be extra vigilant regarding the blackthorn.	Forest School staff to talk to the pupils at the beginning of each Forest School session to encourage awareness of their ever changing environment.
4	Low level branches	Impaling. Eye injury.	Pupils, School staff, volunteers and Forest School staff. Parents attending Celebratory sessions.	Forest School staff to deliver safety talks concerning the need to be aware of the environment. Forest School staff to check any branches which have been cut and left in trees. Forest School staff to move/make safe any branches they can reach. Forest School staff to site activities away from branches deemed unsafe and to inform School staff to ensure site management can move, make safe.	Forest School staff to conduct site sweep prior to each block of daily sessions. Forest School staff to talk to the pupils at the beginning of each session regarding their responsibility for their own body and awareness of the changing site conditions. School book an annual tree survey conducted by a private company and necessary work is commissioned as a consequence.
5	Cut branches hung up in trees	Injury to head or body from falling branches.			
6	Pond and puddled / boggy areas	Drowning in shallow water.	Pupils	Forest School staff to be vigilant when working near these areas, and if working directly with water ensure an adult is always present at the water's edge.	Forest school leader to be vigilant when working next to the pond and talk to pupils with regards to an appropriate distance and movements around the pond area.
7	Pond and puddled / boggy areas	Slipping / falling in, becoming wet and cold	Pupils	The pond is not within the wooded and gated area used for Forest School, so any access to the pond would be during transition to/from the site or if we actively chose to investigate this area as a group specifically. Therefore, the pupils would be under direct adult supervision near the pond itself. The woodland itself is sloped, so water, in the main, runs off the site. Other areas within the woodland,	School staff to ensure children are appropriately kitted out before attending Forest School sessions, with warm layers and waterproof pants and coat. Appropriate kit list to be sent home prior to the sessions commencing. Forest School staff to communicate with the children the need to be aware of the

				<p>such as near the gate or near the log circle may puddle in persistent wet weather. During each session, there will be opportunity to explore the woodland and engage in free play, such as exploring muddy puddles and boggy areas. Forest School staff will discuss with pupils during wet weather sessions an awareness of who is around them when jumping in muddy puddles (so as not to splash others) and the slippery nature of wet puddles which can cause us to fall over. Forest School staff to communicate with the children the need to be aware of the presence of water and ways in which we can explore water (i.e. Jumping in muddy puddles, splashing, damming) whilst minimising how wet and cold we become (i.e. Not going over the top of our wellies, keeping waterproof pants on the outside, jumping/splashing when there is sufficient space to do so without accidentally splashing someone else). Forest School staff to discuss with the children keeping dirty water out of eyes, ears, mouth and nose.</p>	<p>presence of water in wet weather sessions and the need to keep it out of ear, eyes, noses and mouths at the beginning of wet weather sessions. Forest School staff to communicate with the children the need to be aware of the presence of water in wet weather sessions and what to do if they get wet and/or cold. Forest School staff to talk to the pupils during each Forest School session with regards to awareness of their environment</p>
8	Litter from neighbouring housing estate and roads	Cuts, infection and bacteria from litter	Pupils	Dynamic risk assessment to take place prior to each session and site to be litter picked regularly.	Forest School staff to perform regular site litter pick prior to commencing the session. Forest School staff to potentially engage pupils and School staff in litter picking site as part of session, providing appropriate protective gloves, litter picks and bin liners.
<p>Your comments: Main concerns: Discarded and unseen litter may cause injury. Monitoring the trees for signs of dead wood, storm damage may trigger the need for a tree survey. Main positive features: This is a unique site and provides a unique opportunity for children at Vernon Park Primary to access a wild, wooded area exclusively. The area is large enough to accommodate groups of children and offer a real sense of wilderness and opportunities for exploration and discovery.</p>				<p>Your recommendations: The site will need to be litter picked on a regular basis, prior to commencing the sessions. The banking where children like to climb on ropes needs to be monitored and other areas identified for future potential use. The spoil in Area A on the maps below needs to be removed and dispersed and the annual tree survey needs to encompass this area, looking at the trees with exposed roots.</p>	

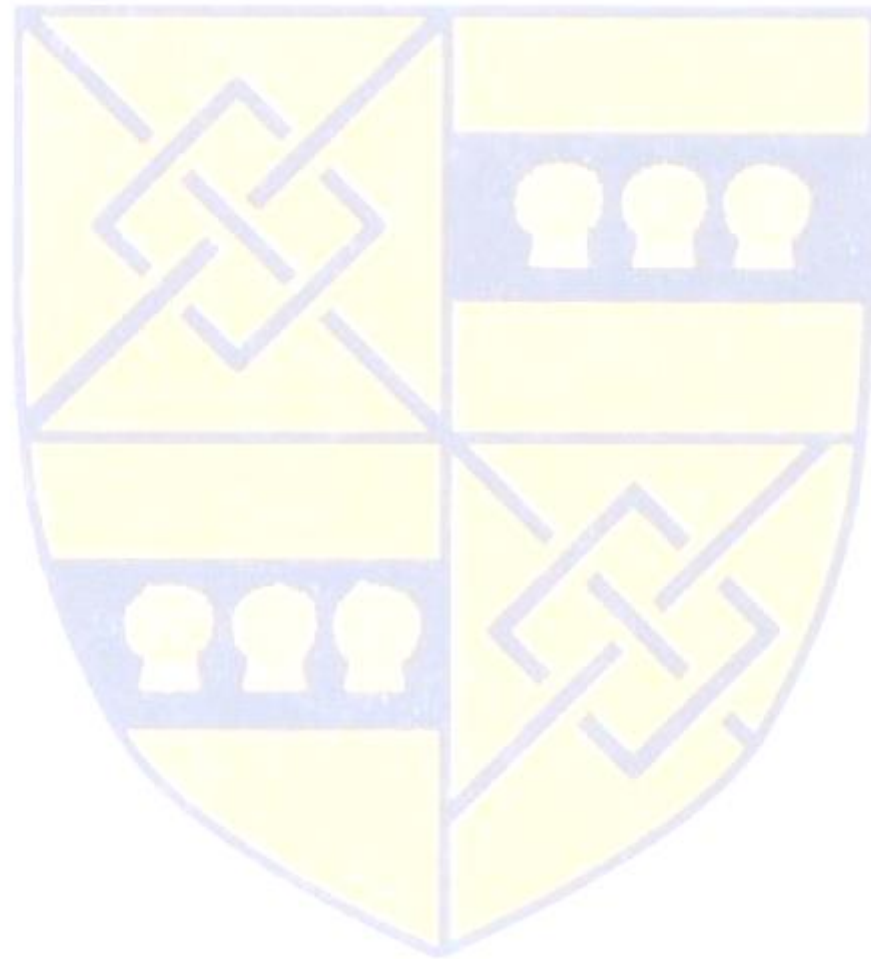
Map1.



Map 2



Map3



Activity Risk Assessments

Forest School inherently involves risk and risk taking. We support the Forest School Association principles that consider the benefits to undertaking these risks are significant, namely:

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that are tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Our risk assessments consequently reflect this principle. This risk assessment is based on the Behaviour Support Service's Forest school risk assessments which were produced in partnership with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. It will be annually reviewed and updated accordingly. Where a risk is present, appropriate actions to reduce that risk and by whom they are to be undertaken will be advised. The nature of Forest School sessions also dictates that dynamic risk assessment must be undertaken by staff and students involved in each project on a regular basis (i.e. before commencing and during each session). Risk and risk assessment must therefore evolve within Forest School sessions and is a continual process undertaken by staff and pupils alike.

A comprehensive risk assessment database has been created which considers the environment, the site, activities, tools, groups and individuals. Many of the risk assessments need to be used in conjunction with other relevant risk assessments, as well as having an understanding of policies and procedures. Risk assessments relevant to individual forest school sessions may be adapted specifically for that session (electronic copies can be found in the Forest Schools folder in the staff shared area). Risk assessment is an ongoing process which takes place before, during and after an activity. Formal assessments are carried out beforehand. It is the responsibility of the forest school leader and forest school volunteers to continually assess risk during an activity and use this information to adapt the activity as it is taking place and inform risk assessments for future activities.

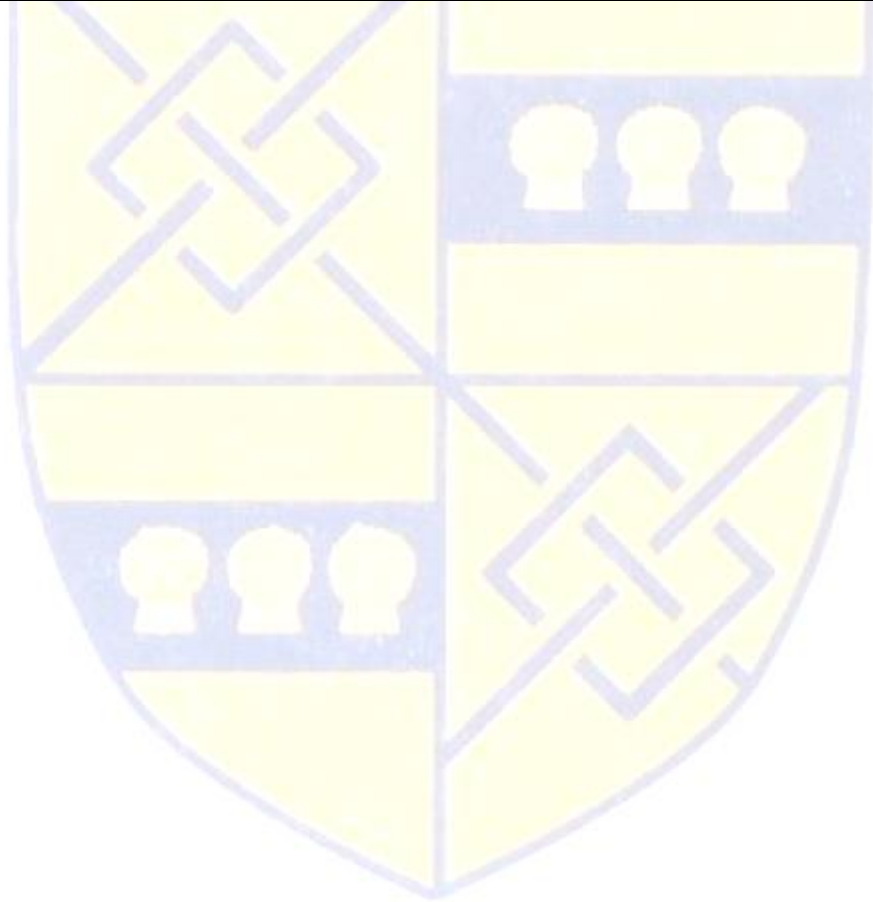
WEATHER

Hazard	Harm	Existing preventative measures	Proposed action	Risk benefits
<p>Weather</p> <p>Gale Force winds</p> <p>Extreme Temperatures</p>	<p>Injury from falling branches and trees</p> <p>Hypothermia Heat Stroke De-hydration</p>	<p>Forest School is meant to take place in all weathers with the exception of very high winds, classified by Beaufort Scale 8 'Gale' (39-46mph 'Some twigs broken from trees. Cars veer on road. Progress on foot is seriously impeded') and electrical storms.</p> <p>All participants at Forest School are advised to wear weather appropriate clothing as outlined in the Forest School kit list sent home prior to sessions starting.</p> <p>At temperatures considered cold by the Forest School Leader and School Staff (e.g., less than 5oC) extra layers of clothing, hats and gloves are recommended for all participants.</p> <p>At temperatures considered hot by the Forest School Leader and School Staff (between 20oC to 30oC) the following steps will be taken by the Forest School Leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping children in the shade • Adapting planning to reduce physical exertion • Regular drinks of water for participants • As per school policy, children will be advise to wear sun hats and apply sun cream before coming to school <p>In extremely hot temperatures (30oC or above) the government heat wave advice should be followed and Forest School leaders should know what the alert level is and what steps to take.</p> <p>Forest School Leader is ITC Outdoor First Aid trained and qualified, which covers heat stroke and hyperthermia. This qualification is updated every 3 years. Forest school first aid kit will include foil blankets.</p>	<p>Forest School Leader to monitor the weather forecast each week. On arrival at site the Forest School Leader must assess the wind level using the Beaufort Scale descriptors. If the Forest School Leader considers the wind and the site to be a hazard to participants the session will not go ahead. Where the dynamic risk assessment scales the wind level at Beaufort Scale 8 or above the session must not proceed.</p> <p>Forest School Leader to ensure that the Forest School Handbook is followed and that children receive a copy of the kit list. Throughout the Forest School sessions the Forest School Leader will discuss with participants the need to take responsibility for their own well-being whilst at Forest School, including appropriate clothing. Participants will be actively encouraged to make informed decisions and choices based on what the temperature is and how it affects them in particular.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders must monitor the safety and wellbeing of participants throughout the session in relation to temperature, specifically concerning overheating and hyperthermia.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders will provide water and hot drinks in order to reduce the risks associated with extremes of temperature. In cold temperatures the FS Leader will maintain a fire (in accordance with the fire safety policy) to mitigate the effects of cold temperatures as well as carry limited additional layers.</p>	<p>Forest Schools should be experienced in a range of weather conditions as this reflects the great diversity in nature.</p> <p>We allow children to start to become more independent thinkers and improve their planning skills. For example, we want young people to understand what it means to feel cold or hot. It is only through experiencing these conditions will they understand that they need to plan for the weather. For example, if they find that they are getting cold feet, they need to ensure that they bring extra socks during the next sessions.</p> <p>Putting on their own personal and protective equipment is also an important part of the process of Forest School. For example, with younger children getting dressed for Forest School may take significant amounts of time initially, but this is important learning. The Forest School leader doesn't get them ready but allows them to get ready themselves.</p> <p>Through the processes of regularly 'checking in' with pupils the Forest School leader is aided in understanding how they are feeling and what particular challenges they are experiencing in relation to the weather.</p> <p>Only in extreme temperatures as outlined in this part of the risk assessment would the Forest School leader need to intervene. The philosophy of 'safe enough' is an important part of the learning.</p>

HEALTH

Hazard	Harm	Existing preventative measures	Proposed action	Risk benefits
<p>Medical problems</p>	<p>Injury and illness to participants</p>	<p>Forest School Leader is ITC Outdoor First Aid trained and qualified. This qualification is updated every 3 years. A forest school first aid kit is with FS leader at all times.</p> <p>School holds medical information for all pupils. Forest School Leader to establish any medical needs for pupils participating in Forest School prior to first session. Relevant medical information is carried during sessions. Inhalers and epi-pens are carried during sessions.</p> <p>The FS leader will have the overarching responsibility for First Aid in sessions unless the school staff member is a qualified first aider and is designated that responsibility prior to sessions beginning.</p> <p>School has relevant insurances for outdoor activities to be carried out on site.</p>	<p>Forest School Leader to termly review and restock first aid kit.</p> <p>Participants on Forest School sessions to carry their own medical devices/equipment, such as inhalers with them at all times. If the participant(s) wish to store their device in a designated place, this can be agreed with the Forest School Leader.</p> <p>When an injury occurs, if serious enough, the emergency procedures policy must be followed and Stockport's accident/incident reporting form completed. More minor injuries need to be treated and a first aid form filled in. Class teachers must be informed to pass information onto parents.</p> <p>The Forest School Leader must always carry their First Aid kit at all times. This must be well stocked and checked on a termly basis.</p>	<p>It is important to reiterate here the philosophy of Forest School in making the environment 'safe enough'. Rather than being completely safe there is inherent risk involved in being in the outdoors.</p> <p>The procedures outlined here are detailed in terms of our ability to risk assess the likelihood of injury, but this does not remove the risks.</p> <p>Whilst there is never the intention within a session for a young person to injure themselves at Forest School, we acknowledge that some very minor injuries can be beneficial if the young person is able to learn from it. The longer-term benefits of this may mean that they will not repeat the same mistakes again in the future.</p> <p>For example, a young person touching a nettle will not result in serious injury, but a child will not know what a nettle sting feels like until it is experienced. This same principle can be applied across many of the activities we might carry out at Forest School. A minor burn when touching a metal Kelly kettle for the first time can be framed as a learning experience.</p> <p>We also agree with evidence that suggests that increased opportunities for risk taking in the outdoors at Forest School, will mean that children will be less likely to be involved in risk taking behaviours when they are in adolescence.</p>

				<p>The rigorous training of the forest school leader means that we are able to think about health and safety practices with relation to Forest School. This document is part of a learning process rather than a fixed product. The continuous development and updating of this risk assessment is part of good practice that we carry out.</p>
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ACTIVITIES

Hazard	Harm	Existing preventative measures	Proposed action	Risk benefits
Rope and Sisal	Strangulation Entanglement Friction burns Trips	<p>Rope and sisal are predominantly used at Forest School to put up shelters. These are sometimes placed in the way of paths and at a height where they may be in the way for participants.</p> <p>Participants in Forest School sessions are encouraged to carry out their own risk assessments in order to keep themselves safe. They can also work with their fellow participants to discuss and raise issues around incorrect siting of ropes and sisal. This is part of their learning process.</p> <p>Sisal is purchased regularly so that old and rotting sisal can be replaced on tarps.</p> <p>Where rope is used to make swings the Forest School Leader should check the ropes condition for fraying and signs of deterioration, prior to its use as a rope swing.</p>	<p>Participants are taught how to erect shelters and the appropriate knots that can be used. They are encouraged to think about the siting of shelters and considering how other participants move around the site.</p> <p>The Forest School Leader has responsibility for keeping the site in a usable state and encouraging the discussion when and if issues arise concerning mobility.</p> <p>Old sisal to be removed from tarps on a termly basis.</p> <p>Forest School Leader to encourage the testing of swings and prompt consideration of siting of the swing in relation to branch strength/suitability and the size of drop.</p> <p>All rope and sisal is removed from the site at the end of each Forest School session.</p>	<p>Twine, Sisal and Rope can be considered a critical piece of kit in a survival situation. At Forest School we teach a range of knots that can be used to build shelters as well as a range of objects. This is a very low risk of injury and the benefits of developing this skill are high. Some children struggle to learn knots and the perseverance and determination are developed through this activity. When the activity has not gone well and the knot is proving difficult it allows children to develop their resilience, and with support to experience the feelings associated with success (and failure!).</p> <p>Rope swings have a great benefit around laughter and the thrill of swinging. As the Forest School Leader would be in charge of siting the swing this reduces the risk of an inappropriate positioning of a swing. Some children face their fears through going on a rope swing. They also develop trust amongst the group as they allow themselves to be pushed. There is evidence that children benefit physically and emotionally from using swings.</p>
Den building	Cuts, bruises, head injury, foot injury	<p>Consideration of siting of natural dens is encouraged prior to a den building session. Discussion of types of wood to be used is had with participants, to avoid damage to growing trees and the use of foraged wood within the wider site.</p> <p>Participants should test the integrity of the den as they build it (i.e. wiggling branches, partial weight bearing). They should check for stability and make necessary adjustments to avoid the den collapsing whilst they are in it (i.e. use</p>	<p>Where dens are left in place these should be checked by participants every session to make any necessary adjustments.</p> <p>At the end of a Forest School project all dens should be dismantled and cleared away – i.e. scattered within the wider wood or appropriately stacked to create a habitat pile.</p>	<p>Natural and man-made shelters are another important survival skill to develop.</p> <p>Often young people carry out this activity in a group setting. At Forest School we allow young people to make their own decisions about groupings and/or working alone. This is an important choice and allows them to feel trusted by the leader.</p>

		<p>more string to further secure branches/re-model with structural integrity in mind).</p> <p>Building dens quite often requires the carrying and moving of large and heavy logs. In instances where participants intend on moving large items explain and demonstrate lifting techniques and lowering techniques how to work as a group by distributing loads. When carrying make the participants aware of other people moving around the site to prevent possible side swiping when turning.</p>		<p>When working with others the benefits of building dens includes the development of; leadership skills, problem solving (siting the den), resilience (when it goes wrong), language and communication.</p> <p>Natural dens can break down and contribute to dead wood that is beneficial to the natural environment. This increases diversity and enhances the ecosystems.</p>
Fire	Burns and scalds	<p>The fire safety policy includes the following procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of a raised, contained fire pit or logs around the fire pit to create barrier. • Rules around safely moving around the fire and wider log circle. • Safe practice when approaching and using the fire – i.e. kneeling close to the fire. Inviting individuals to the fire. • Heat resistant gloves especially when handling metal items such as kettles and grills to be worn when tending the fire. • In many instances the use of a glove to tend the fire is not reasonably practical to enforce. In large groups where multiple fires are lit in one session participants change roles frequently and those tending fire move onto other themes gloves are discarded participants forget to put gloves on. In view of this, alternative methods for building and adding fuel to the fire will be as follows... • Place logs and sticks onto the fire by holding the fuel as close to the end as possible and placing carefully from the edge of the fire, don't drop fuel onto the fire. • Rather than use a gloved hand reaching into the centre of the fire use a long stick to move and reposition fuel within the fire to 	<p>When prevailing weather conditions and the site are deemed unsuitable the Forest School Leader may decide not to have a fire. This includes extremely dry periods where ground conditions may be susceptible to the spread of fire and where the wind causes the fire to not be contained within the fire pit.</p> <p>Any changes in conditions of the site (i.e. wind increases) or pupils' behaviour which renders the lit fire unsafe may lead to the Forest School Leader extinguishing the fire safely.</p> <p>At the end of the session the Forest School Leader must fully extinguish the fire and the ground (this may be done with the participants as part of the educational experience).</p>	<p>Fire is a critically important part of Forest School practice. There is a tribal and bonding symbolism in having a fire in your camp circle. Some children get benefits from sitting and staring into the fire, allowing them to connect with the fire and also give them opportunities to allow the mind to wander.</p> <p>At a basic level the fire is a source of warmth. This is particularly important during the colder months at Forest School.</p> <p>The fire also provides an opportunity to contribute to wellbeing through providing hot water (for hot drinks) and the ability to cook over. Many children find this important at Forest School. A sharing of food contributes positively to the group dynamic and young people can learn new skills through this.</p> <p>The very clear safety guidance around the fire allows the children to be explicitly taught safety around fires. They begin to respect the fire and understand that these rules protect them from burning themselves. Children also learn that the fire is important, rather than something to be feared. They also understand how important it is to keep the environment</p>

		<p>prevent this stick from igniting place one end into a bucket of water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long hair, loose clothing to be tied back when tending the fire. • Sleeves rolled up when tending the fire. • Water bucket on site, within easy reach of fire. • First Aid Kit including Burn Gels. <p>As part of the Forest School session participants are encouraged to take part in fire lighting and maintenance. This occurs once safe practice and habits are in place. On occasions a minor burn or scald may occur at Forest School. However, this minor injury in the ethos of forest school could be considered one of life's lessons and may be beneficial, as a long term learning outcome. All adults must ensure that they follow these procedures and model how to behave safely with fire.</p> <p>When using Kelly Kettles the above measures are in place as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing leaf litter and debris • Marked/designated area using sticks • Water spout away from participants • Training in how to hold and transport the Kelly kettle safely 		<p>safe – hoping that in future years they would avoid starting fires in public green space without permission.</p> <p>Using the Kelly Kettle is a fantastically enriching part of Forest School. This is technically difficult to achieve success in, and children learn the skills of preparing well for building fire. They particularly develop perseverance and resilience, as they may need support or may not achieve success the first times they do this. However, when the Kelly Kettle is boiled for the first time there is a tremendous amount of satisfaction and joy in having done it. Being able to have a hot drink with water that you have boiled yourself is an uplifting experience and this supports emotional wellbeing.</p>
<p>Leaving the ground</p>	<p>Falls Breaks Head injury</p>	<p>Forest School sessions may involve activities where participants leave the ground, including tree climbing and the use of slack lines or tighropes.</p> <p>Tree climbing: Participants and the Forest School Leader will discuss safely climbing a tree and encouraged to consider having three points in contact with the tree at any one time (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand to facilitate climbing). They must also make decisions about the height that they climb the tree, which is age/ability specific. Children will be</p>	<p>Where incidents occur around injuries associated with falls from trees we will continue to review this policy.</p> <p>As part of reflection activities, participants will be encouraged to think about their feelings associated with tree climbing. Questions like: how high do you think the tree can support your weight? At what height do you have a sense of fear or satisfaction?</p>	<p>Tree climbing is an activity which brings many benefits. It is a fun activity that allows children to challenge themselves and to be physically active. Through climbing trees children learn about the risks associated with height. By climbing high, or stepping on a weaker branch they start to understand what 'feeling unsafe' might feel like. This is important in allowing children to understand their limits and learn to take appropriate risks. Having climbed and descended a tree safely, allows a strong sense of achievement and satisfaction to development.</p>

		<p>encouraged to work with a buddy who can support them verbally from the ground.</p> <p>The Forest School Leader will train participants in carrying out dynamic risk assessments of specific trees, considered along with recent weather conditions, i.e. wet/windy. The presence of decaying branches on a tree and/or hazards on the ground below should make this unsuitable as a climbing tree. Some trees will be more suitable for climbing than others.</p> <p>When climbing a tree, participants should also be aware of others around them and avoid several people climbing the same tree. Participants are encouraged to leave the tree safely and avoid rushing. We as FS leaders need to build up trust and a relationship with participants before allowing participants to climb higher than their own height.</p> <p>It is important that a suitable tree for climbing is selected i.e., the tree needs a good number of branches of suitable size, strength and distribution. The participants and FS leader will assess the tree one at a time.</p> <p>Slack lines: FS Leader to erect the slack line and test its integrity prior to the session beginning. Use of hand guiding rope to make the slack lines easier to complete. The slack line to be checked during the session and adjustments made to its tension as necessary.</p> <p>The following measures should be in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking the underfoot terrain and clearing any hazards • Positioning the slack line at a height and position appropriate for your group • Considering how weather conditions may affect the activity and appropriate action 	<p>Participants to be actively involved in decision making around the use of the slack line (e.g., how many people on it at any one time, where it is positioned, how hard it is made as a challenge).</p>	<p>This activity also helps participants to engage with nature. Children will learn which trees are most suitable for climbing. When spending time in the tree they will notice parts of the tree by being up close to it. Feeling the sway of the tree in the breeze helps children to make connections with nature.</p> <p>The slack lines (and ropes between trees) allow another way that children can leave the ground. These are physically challenging and this challenge can help to develop skills such as perseverance and resilience. The slack line can be used in pairs so improve communication skills between children. Problem solving can also become part of this activity. This is a fun social activity that often helps to create more cohesive groups.</p>
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Cooking	<p>Scalds and burns</p> <p>Food poisoning</p>	<p>Some Forest School projects may involve basic cooking with fire including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boiling water for drinks • Toasting marshmallows • Popcorn (KS2 only) • Baking bread and cakes • Occasional cooking and preparing of basic meals (e.g., bacon butty, casseroles, soups) <p>Forest School Leaders to encourage hand hygiene with soap and water available prior to cooking. Tools and utensils to be cleaned in school. Food preparation to be used with clean utensils and boards.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders to supervise any food based activities or delegate this to another responsible adult.</p> <p>Participants to learn about their safety in connection with food and drinks being hot and how they potentially could burn or scald themselves (e.g., letting marshmallows cool down before putting them in your mouth.) Specific instructions given regarding cooling of marshmallows.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders to ensure all food is properly cooked before allowing participants to eat them.</p>	<p>Support children who are new to toasting marshmallows to understand how long they will need to cool and how to test them before putting them near their mouth.</p>	<p>Cooking food and hot drinks are important at Forest School. These can allow children's basic needs to be met (Physiological needs from Maslow's Hierarchy). Some children benefit from some food at Forest School to change their behaviour. Hot drinks help to keep them warm. Marshmallows are a basic form of cooking with the fire and allow a social bonding experience. High levels of empathy, listening and communication can be developed when a group spends more time together around a fire.</p> <p>The skills associated with cooking on the fire give a purpose to using tools (peelers, knives) as well as a reason to have a fire. They can easily be linked to survival skills with the need to be fed.</p> <p>As a child-led ethos is an important principle of FS, some groups become particularly interested in cooking.</p>

TOOLS

Hazard	Harm	Existing preventative measures	Proposed action	Risk benefits
Bow saw	Injury Cuts	<p>Tool talks are given to participants prior to using the Bow Saw. The tool talk incorporates:</p> <p><i>Handling:</i> Holding, transporting and passing the tool</p> <p><i>Purpose/Use:</i> safe working zone/area, use of glove on non-tool hand, appropriate use of tool (cutting branches greater in diameter than a 2p piece)</p> <p><i>Storage:</i> blade cover on, in designated place</p> <p>This is repeated until the group is experienced at using this tool. Bow Saws are not freely available but stored in a designated space.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders are responsible for the maintenance of their kit. Bow Saws should be put away cleaned and dried, with the blade cover on.</p> <p>Blades should be sharp and where they are not, the FS leader should replace these.</p> <p>On a termly basis the FS Leader must check the condition of the Bow Saws to ensure that they are safe.</p>	<p>Forest School leaders will make a judgement as to whether the group or individual participants are ready to use the tool safely and follow the procedures outlined in the tool talk. When a participant is not using the tool in a safe way and is posing a risk to themselves and others, the tool will be taken away and support given to allow the participant to use it safely.</p> <p>Bow Saws cannot be used without a blade cover present and where missing they must be replaced by the Forest School Leader.</p>	<p>Bow saws are usually introduced to young people to use in pairs. This allows familiarity with the tool and also gives peer support. The bow saw allows the development of communication skills and co-operation with others.</p> <p>When cutting wood there is a sense of achievement when cutting through the wood.</p> <p>It is also a critical tool for using as part of Forest School general activities. It allows fire wood to be cut to appropriate lengths. When cutting down branches or small trees it allows the supply of green wood which can be used for whittling projects and for making furniture.</p>
Knives	Injury Cuts	<p>Tool talks are given to participants prior to using the Knife. The tool talk incorporates:</p> <p><i>Handling:</i> Holding, transporting and passing the tool.</p> <p><i>Purpose/Use:</i> safe working zone/area – away from the body, use of glove on non-tool hand, appropriate use of tool (whittling small slithers off cut branches)</p> <p><i>Storage:</i> blade cover/sheath on, in designated place</p> <p>This is repeated until the group is experienced at using this tool. Knives are not freely available but stored in a designated space.</p>	<p>Forest School Leaders will make a judgement as to whether the group or individual participants are ready to use the tool safely and follow the procedures outlined in the tool talk. When a participant is not using the tool in a safe way and is posing a risk to themselves and others, the tool will be taken away and support given to allow the participant to use it safely. The Forest School Leader must assess each group when determining how many knives may be in use at any one time during a FS session.</p>	<p>The knives are an important part of the Forest School equipment. We use large sheath knives. This is because these knives look serious and young people tend to treat them with respect, because they feel robust and look sharp.</p> <p>The knives are again a vital piece of survival equipment. It is important to teach young people that there is the correct tool for certain jobs. Many haven't used a knife before and so we are able to introduce the knife gradually</p>

		<p>Forest School Leaders are responsible for the maintenance of their kit. Knives should be put away cleaned and dried, with the blade cover/sheath on.</p> <p>Blades should be sharp and where they are not, the Forest School Leader should sharpen these.</p> <p>On a termly basis the FS Leader must check the condition of the Knives to ensure that they are safe.</p>	<p>Knives cannot be used without a blade cover/sheath present and where missing they must be replaced by the Forest School Leader.</p>	<p>(used for cooking, cutting sisal/string/wool).</p> <p>When using the knife for whittling projects it offers many benefits. Young people gain a sense of satisfaction when they are able to make something out of wood. They are able to craft something important and precious which contributes to a growing sense of 'self'. Being able to take wood crafts home reinforces this and helps to boost self-esteem. Whittling can become therapeutic and provide opportunities for participants to become absorbed in the activity – leading to a flow state or deep-level learning.</p> <p>As discussed elsewhere, minor cuts when using a knife help children to follow safety rules more carefully and learn to look after themselves carefully.</p>
Loppers	Injury Cuts	<p>Tool talks are given to participants prior to using the Loppers. The tool talk incorporates:</p> <p><i>Handling:</i> Holding, transporting and passing the tool</p> <p><i>Purpose/Use:</i> safe working zone/area, no gloves to be worn, appropriate use of tool (cutting branches of a diameter less than a 2p piece)</p> <p><i>Storage:</i> in designated place, tool closed</p> <p>This is repeated until the group is experienced at using this tool. Loppers are not freely available but stored in a designated space.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders are responsible for the maintenance of their kit. Loppers should be put away cleaned and dried.</p> <p>Blades should be sharp and where they are not, the Forest School leader should replace the loppers. The mechanism should also be lubricated.</p>	<p>Forest School leaders will make a judgement as to whether the group or individual participants are ready to use the tool safely and follow the procedures outlined in the tool talk. When a participant is not using the tool in a safe way and is posing a risk to themselves and others, the tool will be taken away and support given to allow the participant to use it safely.</p>	<p>The loppers are an important tool to use at Forest School as it allows smaller bits of wood to be cut up. It tends to be associated with much lower risk than some other tools as it tends to be used at arms-length and both hands are on the tool.</p> <p>Some children really love using the loppers, and seem to gain satisfaction from the repeated action of chopping at things. This therapeutic nature of the tool means we can direct them towards bramble clearing or other appropriate activities. This fits with theories of Schemas of learning.</p>

		On a termly basis the Forest School Leader must check the condition of the loppers to ensure that they are safe.		
Bill Hook	Injury Cuts	<p>Tool talks are given to participants prior to using the Bill Hook. The tool talk incorporates:</p> <p><i>Handling:</i> Holding, transporting and passing the tool</p> <p><i>Purpose/Use:</i> safe working zone/area, use of glove on non-tool hand, appropriate use of tool (splitting wood)</p> <p><i>Storage:</i> blade cover on, in designated place</p> <p>This is repeated until the group is experienced at using this tool. Bill Hooks are not freely available but stored in a designated space.</p> <p>Forest School Leaders are responsible for the maintenance of their kit. Bill Hooks should be put away cleaned and dried, with the blade cover on.</p> <p>Blades should be sharp and where they are not, the Forest School Leader should sharpen these. The condition of the blade cover and handle should also be inspected.</p> <p>On a termly basis the Forest School Leader must check the condition of the Bill Hook to ensure that they are safe.</p>	<p>Forest School leaders will make a judgement as to whether the group or individual participants are ready to use the tool safely and follow the procedures outlined in the tool talk. When a participant is not using the tool in a safe way and is posing a risk to themselves and others, the tool will be taken away and support given to allow the participant to use it safely.</p> <p>Bill Hooks cannot be used without a blade cover present and where missing they must be replaced by the Forest School Leader.</p>	<p>The bill hook operates with similar benefits to the knife, although we tend to use this with older children and less frequently than other tools. The billhook is used to cleave wood and we often use this to create mallets with young people. This tends to be a paired tool where young people learn to use a sharp tool together. One person positions the tool on the wood, whilst another uses their mallet or branch to hit the billhook, thus driving it into the wood. This develops high levels of trust and communication. Three questions are asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many times would you like me to hit it? 2. How hard would you like me to hit it? 3. Are you ready? (with associated eye contact and awareness) <p>The strikes to the billhook are counted out loud and then the three questions are repeated.</p> <p>As mentioned above, being able to produce their own artefact such as mallet, provides opportunities to boost confidence and pride in self.</p>
Small hand tools	Injury Cuts	<p>Other small hand tools may be used as part of the projects, and these do not require the same level of procedure than the above tools. These may include hand drills, augers, secateurs, scissors and hammers/mallets.</p> <p>These tools should be maintained to a high working standard and will be assessed on a termly basis.</p>	<p>The Forest School Leader about the safe use will give talks and practice of these tools and supervision will be adequate when first introducing the tool. This will include ensuring that the tool is used for its intended purpose.</p>	<p>Other tools here are used to supplement the main tools mentioned above. These tend to be lower risk and as such do not have a 'tool talk associated with them'. Instead the Forest School leader demonstrates the safe use of this tool and supervises initial use.</p> <p>These tools provide benefits by allowing the range of activities being offered at Forest School to be extended.</p>

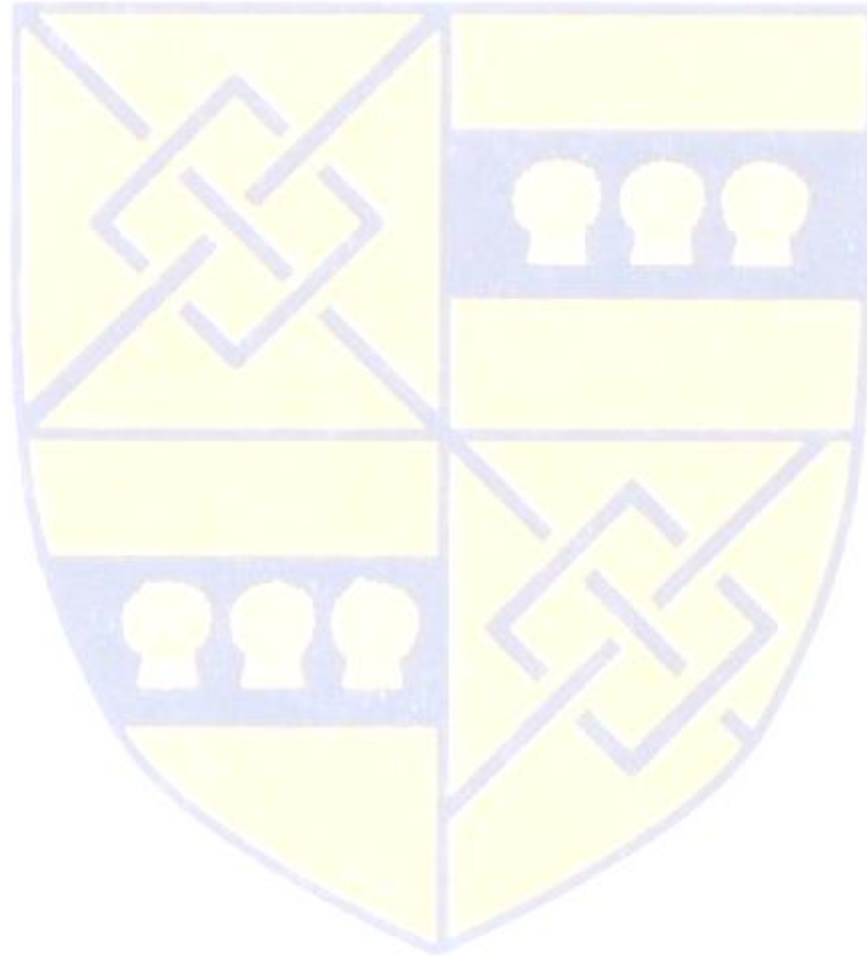
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Forest School Leader

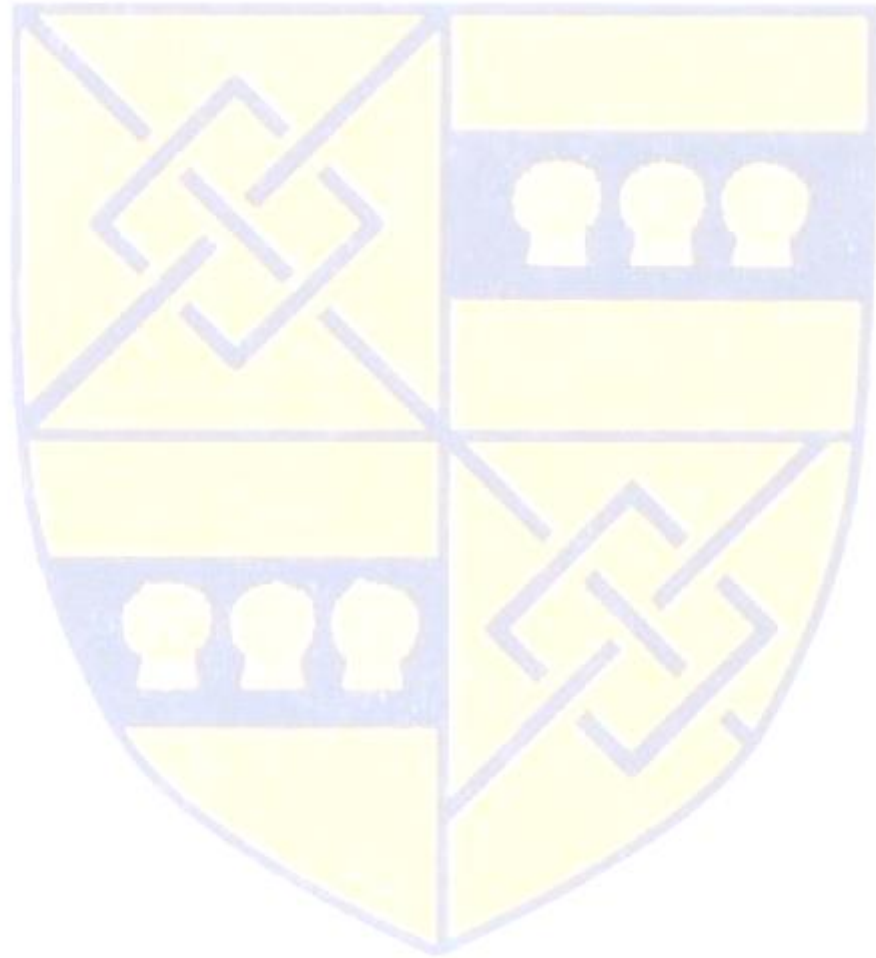
Drafted:
May 2019

Reviewed:
November 2021
January 2023
February 2024

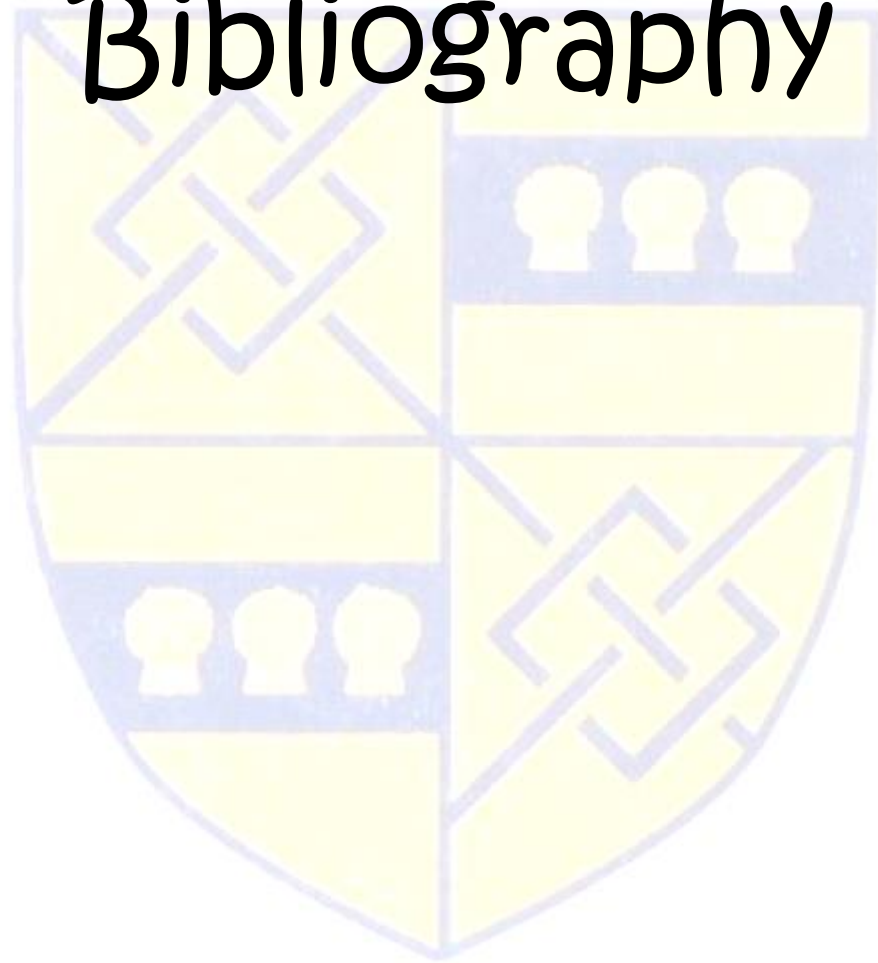
Review:
February 2025



Stockport risk assessment



Section 5: Bibliography



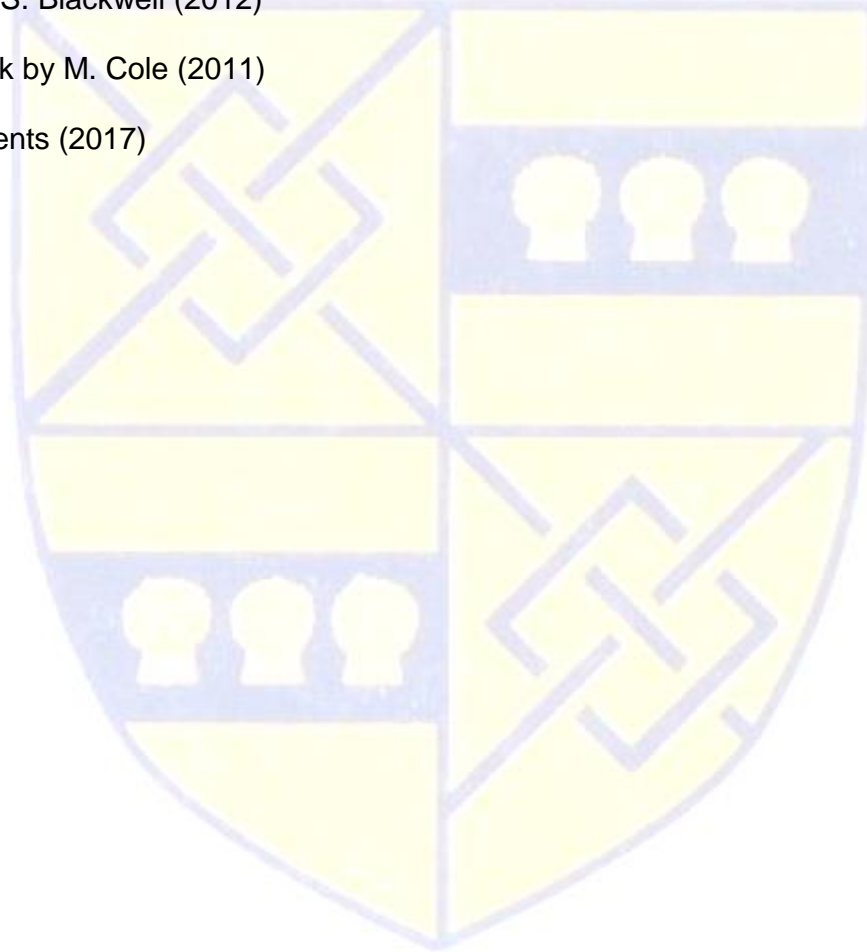
Bibliography

Information from the following publications was used to help develop the policies, procedures and risk assessments contained in this handbook:

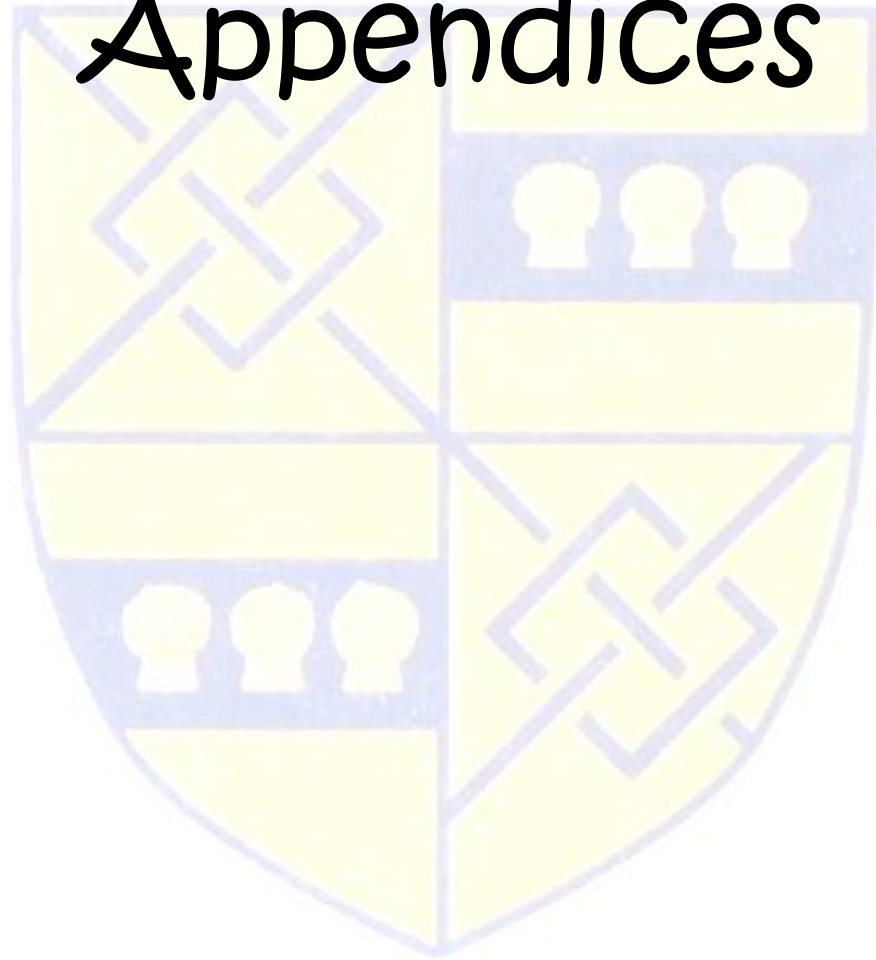
Archimedes Health and Safety Booklet by S. Blackwell (2012)

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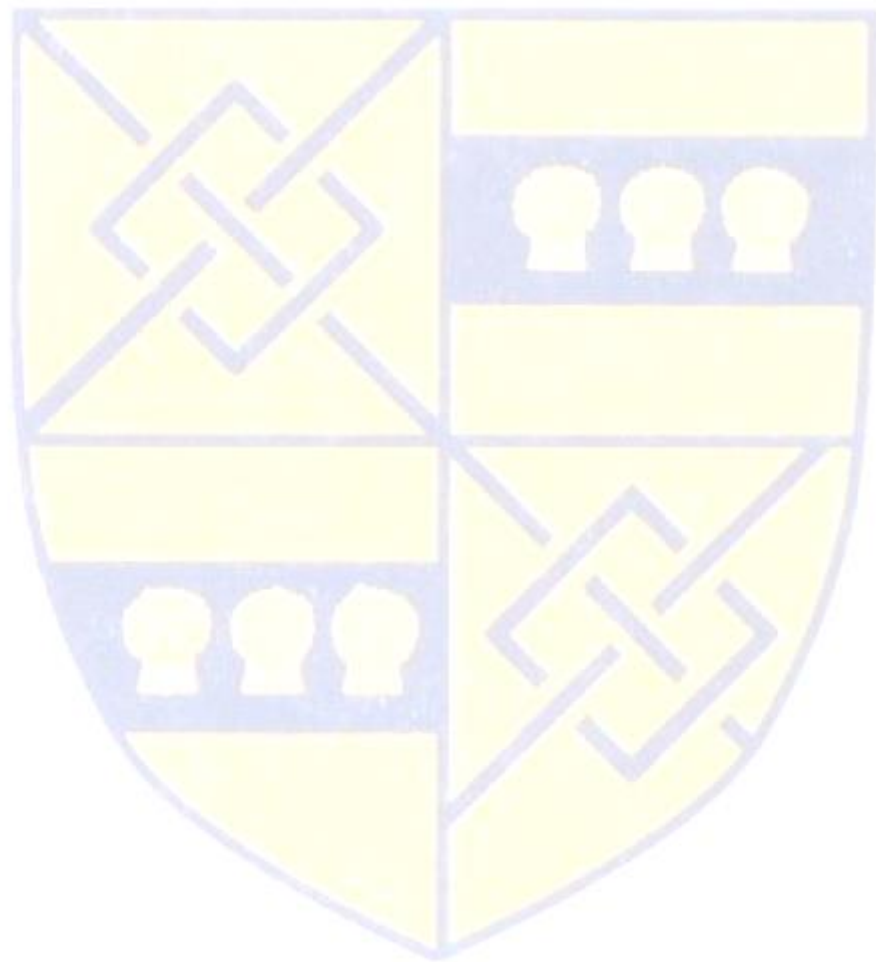


Section 6: Appendices



Appendices

Forest School Volunteer record



Volunteer record

