Fourfields Community Primary School

Forest School Policy

Date policy last reviewed: 4th November 2022

Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of governors Date: _____

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Statement of intent

At Fourfields School, we aim to use the natural woodland environment to offer the children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take supported risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover many areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity.

Forest School has 6 Key principles which it is based around:

- Run by a trained practitioner who continually maintains and develops their practice.
- Takes place in a natural/wooded environment to support the relationship between the learner and the natural world
- Holistic approach
- Children take supported risks
- Child-Led Learning
- Long-term regular sessions

This policy is designed to ensure that the Forest School is a beneficial experience for pupils by making staff aware of their duties and expectations, and ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is considered at all times and appropriate safeguarding measures are in place for all Forest School activities.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2022) 'Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools'
- DfE (2020) 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Educational Visits and School Trips Policy
- Forest School Activities Risk Assessment
- Equality Information and Objectives Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

2. Equality and Inclusion

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc. Fourfields Community Primary School has an Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy and an Equal Opportunities and Objectives Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff adhere to the relevant policies and that pupils are aware of their responsibilities.
- Contacting a play inspector to certify that the chosen location is safe to use, where necessary.
- Ensuring that a separate Forest School Activities Risk Assessment is conducted to identify, evaluate, and manage the specific risks associated with the Forest School, its location and the activities planned.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements in place for monitoring and reporting incidents associated with the Forest School.
- Ensuring that parents are informed with sufficient notice about planned Forest School activities and any requirements, e.g. clothing and equipment needs.

- Liaising with the SENCO, where necessary, to ensure the Forest School is inclusive for pupils with SEND and reasonable adjustments are made to ensure additional needs are accommodated.
- Appointing a Forest School leader with the relevant experience and qualifications, e.g. a Level 3 Certificate from the Forest School Association.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy on an annual basis and communicating any changes to staff, parents, and pupils.

The SBM is responsible for:

- Arranging the procurement of any equipment or clothing required for the Forest School.
- Ensuring value for money when arranging the procurement of equipment or clothing for the Forest School.
- Ensuring that the school's insurance covers the Forest School and all planned activities.

The Forest School leader is responsible for:

- Conducting a detailed health and safety check before Forest School activities.
- Adhering at all times to the Forest School Activities Risk Assessment.
- Carrying a fully stocked first-aid kit during all Forest School sessions.
- Holding an up-to-date Outdoors First Aid certificate and leading first aid arrangements.
- Inspecting equipment and tools before use to ensure they are safe for use, and that damaged or defective items are not used.
- Keeping and maintaining an incident log to record any incidents that occur during Forest School activities.
- Planning and delivering Forest School sessions, in collaboration with the headteacher, that are engaging, informative and develop pupils' skills and appreciation of the environment.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Assessing additional individual needs of pupils with SEND prior to Forest School activities and promoting measures to ensure pupils with SEND can participate safely.
- Ensuring the SEND Policy is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Liaising with the headteacher to ensure additional provision is available for pupils with SEND as required.
- Ensuring that the provision put in place for pupils with SEND is monitored for effectiveness throughout the duration of the Forest School activities.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Consulting the headteacher and Forest School leader on measures necessary to ensure pupils are safeguarded adequately during activities.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy at all times during Forest School activities.
- Ensuring that pupils are always accounted for and supervised.
- Reporting any concerns and incidents to the Forest School leader and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting any safeguarding incidents to the DSL and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting concerns regarding the provision for pupils with SEND to the SENCO.
- Ensuring that pupils are always respectful to each other, staff and the natural environment.
- Managing pupils in line with the Behaviour Policy when necessary.

4. Safeguarding

Volunteers for the Forest School will only be allowed to supervise pupils alone if they have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

Volunteers without an enhanced DBS check will be supervised by a member of staff at all times.

Measures will be implemented to ensure that pupils' exposure to members of the public during Forest School activities is minimised as much as possible.

Pupils will be instructed and reminded frequently to remain close to the group, and to avoid leaving the sight of staff and interacting with members of the public if we are off site.

All members of staff will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL immediately.

The DSL will deal with safeguarding concerns in a timely and appropriate manner in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5. Cameras and Mobile Phones

Only members of the teaching staff are to have their mobile phones on them during a session, this is for emergency purposes only and will not be used for any other reason.

Photos from the sessions will be taken on a school IPad and the photos will only be used with consent from the parents/guardians.

6. Location

Pupils are reminded of the hazards of the site prior to entering and are reminded to remain vigilant throughout.

The location will be surveyed daily by the Forest School leader or the responsible site manager to ensure it is safe for pupils to use.

The Forest School leader remove or control any minor hazards. Any areas that are deemed to pose a substantial risk and cannot be adequately controlled or removed are clearly marked and staff and pupils will not enter them for any reason.

Pupils will be taught to show respect for the environment, e.g. they do not litter and leave the area clean and tidy.

7. Supervision/Parental Involvement

Staff and volunteers will supervise pupils at a ratio of **1:4** at all times.

Head counts will be conducted regularly to prevent the risk of pupils going missing or leaving the sight of staff and volunteers.

Supervising staff and volunteers will be adequately trained to ensure they can safely assist pupils during Forest School activities and have read the Staff Handbook prior to any involvement.

Supervising staff will be informed of any hazards present by the Forest School leader and ensure mitigating measures are in place and adhered to by pupils.

8. Visitor protocol

Any visitors or extra children from other year groups attending Forest School must be pre-planned and organised with the Forest School leader prior to turning up.

All visitors volunteering with Forest School must read the Handbook prior to attending to ensure they understand all the policies, rules and expectations upon them before, during and after the session.

If visitors are being shown around the school site and coming into the Forest School area they must check that fire and tools are not being used by looking for the signs stating whether it is safe/unsafe to walk through the Forest School site.

9. Tools

Pupils will be taught how to use tools and equipment independently and safely during activities.

Appropriate PPE will be worn when using tools e.g. cur proof glove in non-working hand, sturdy footwear, appropriate clothing of long trousers and long sleeves, no loose clothes and hair tied back.

Staff will demonstrate the safe use of all tools before pupils are allowed to use them.

The Forest School leader assesses the risks posed by particular tools and consequently implements suitable staff: pupil ratios to supervise pupils using these tools.

All activities planned, including those using tools, will be risk assessed by the Forest School leader (see individual risk assessments for each tool family).

All tools will be kept clean and fit for use; tools which are damaged or defective will not be used. All tools to be kept inside the tool bag and all knives are to be kept locked in a box and stored in the office when not in use.

An inventory of all tools is kept to ensure they can be accounted for and any lost or misplaced items identified.

If a member of staff, volunteer or pupil suffers an injury during the use of a tool, the activity will be suspended, and the injury will be handled in line with the First Aid Policy.

10. Materials

Pupils will be encouraged to interact with the environment, which includes touching and moving materials, e.g. rocks and sticks safely and are warned about not ingesting poisonous plants and berries.

Pupils will be allowed to carry sticks ensuring they maintain a suitable distance from others when carrying the stick to avoid injury. If the stick is longer than their arm then they drag it.

Staff will supervise and encourage pupils to work together to move larger materials, e.g. branches (these will then be dragged).

Pupils will be asked to return any materials to the environment before leaving the Forest School.

Staff will supervise all interactions with the natural world, e.g. climbing, and intervene where there is a substantial risk posed by the pupil to themselves or others.

Pupils will be taught about the importance of not damaging or defacing living nature, e.g. trees and plants, when interacting with the environment and its materials.

The Forest School leader will provide materials during sessions, e.g. rope, and encourage pupils to use them to interact with their environment.

11. Wildlife

The Forest School leader will plan sessions in order to allow pupils to engage with wildlife as much as possible while considering safety at all times.

Pupils will be encouraged to discover and learn about the variety of wildlife that lives within the Forest School.

Pupils will be taught the importance of not disturbing natural habitats and respecting wildlife.

Staff, volunteers and pupils will be instructed by the Forest School leader about potential risks from local wildlife and the necessary precautions to take, e.g. how to spot and avoid stinging nettles and poisonous plants.

Pupils will only be allowed to get close to, touch, move or pick up plants or wildlife where it is safe to do so.

Instances of deliberate harm or damage to wildlife will be managed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Pupils will be instructed that they are not to consume any food they find, e.g. berries.

12. Fire

Fires will only be lit in designated areas surrounded by a safe zone and under the direction of the Forest School leader. A suitably trained member of staff who is equipped to manage fire safety is on site at all times when fire is being taught about or is present.

Lighting fires

The fire will only be lit once it is confirmed that all safety equipment, e.g. fire blanket, a water bucket (for large fire pit 5l) is in place with towel over the top, first aid kit and burns kit, fire gauntlets. The fire will be supervised by an adult at all times. At least 2 adults present at all times.

The fire will be created using safe fire-lighting equipment with no accelerants used. Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a bucket of water and fire blanket will be located nearby in the event of an emergency.

If lighting fires with small groups of children then this is done with the ratio of 1:4 with two adults present.

Cooking at a campfire

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows/waffles and making s'mores.

There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and prepared.

Food Preparation, transport and storage;

- Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner (blue plaster or ideally gloves) before handling and preparing food.
- Any food needing preparation will be prepared in the school kitchen e.g. bread dough
- Food will be stored in clean containers and transported in a cool bag to and from the site, with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.
- Raw meats will be stored separately to any other foods.
- All 'use by' dates will be checked on foods before eating.
- Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage container.

Handling, cooking and eating Food;

- The portable hand wash station will be filled with warm water at the beginning of each session to enable hand washing and washing of the utensils to take place.
- Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire procedure. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.
- Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

Clearing away and cleaning up;

- ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults.
- The area is checked to ensure there is no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.
- ALL utensils and pans will be washed at the station in hot soapy water and stored away correctly.

Extinguishing fires

Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a water bucket, will be located nearby in the event of an emergency with a towel over the top. A fire blanket will be available at all times.

The Forest School leader will ensure the fire is extinguished safely and that no burning embers remain before the session ends. The fire will be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased. Whenever possible, all fuels will be burnt off to ash and either dispersed around the site or put into a metal bucket and removed.

Fire safety

Fire areas will be surrounded by logs at least **1.5 metres** from the fire pit. The logs represent the campfire boundary. Seating on logs will be organised around the outside of the fire boundary. Once seated around the campfire, staff will ensure that pupils remain seated until directed to move. Children taught and regularly reminded of the fire circle rules and taught the fire safety position when sat next to the fire (one knee up and in a stable position).

When the campfire is in use, pupils will not be permitted to access the area without permission. Activities taking place near to the fire involving pupils, e.g. cooking, are supervised at a ratio of **1:2**.

If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke will be avoided. If wind direction is variable, staff will rearrange seating where possible. Pupils will be advised on how to handle fire smoke in an appropriate way, e.g. by turning their head to one side, covering their face and closing their eyes. Asthma sufferers will be seated in positions well away from the line of smoke.

The Forest School leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.

Participants working with the fire will ensure that long hair is tied back and loose clothing is fastened and secured. Anyone sat by the fire needs to be seated in the fire safety position with one knee up and sat back on the other leg, a good stable position).

Appropriate arrangements will be made for pupils with SEND within their Personal Education Plan on how to approach and deal with campfires.

13. Weather

Weather conditions will be checked prior to each session and parents will then be informed of any extra clothing/equipment that might be needed.

Clothing will be worn to suit the weather; in cases of severe weather, the Forest School leader will decide if it is safe for the session to begin or continue. Parents will be asked to provide sun lotion for pupils where necessary, and the school will keep a spare supply of sun lotion to be provided when required.

Extreme Weather

In cases of extreme weather the safety of the children will be assessed and then the session time will be reviewed. In cases of extreme heat or wind sessions may need to be made shorter, the area evacuated or the session possibly cancelled. This decision will be made by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the head teacher.

14. Welfare

The headteacher will communicate to parents at least **one week** in advance of Forest School sessions the pupils' clothing requirements.

Clothing requirements are subject to change and weather dependent but will include the following:

- Long sleeved t-shirt
- Trousers
- Waterproof trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Wellington boots
- Trainers
- Sunhat
- Winter gear, e.g. fleece jacket, leggings, gloves

Pupils will bring their clothes in a named bag to minimise the risk of misplacing or losing items. In order to make Forest School accessible to all pupils, the school will ensure spare clothing in multiple sizes is available to be lent to disadvantaged pupils where necessary.

Clothing and footwear appropriate to the Forest School environment, activity and weather will be worn at all times. Pupils will not take part in Forest School activities if they do not have the appropriate clothing and the school is unable to provide its own; alternative arrangements will be put in place for the pupil.

15. Risk Assessments

Individual Risk Assessments will be created for each area/activity and will be shared with and signed at the start of each session by all adults involved. This ensures they are all aware of the risks involved in every session and can be prepared.

16. Toilet and hygiene facilities

Pupils will be encouraged to use the toilet at school before the Forest School session begins. Any accidents will be managed in line with the school's Intimate Care Policy.

The Forest School leader will make staff aware of the toilet facilities available for use during sessions. Pupils using the toilet will only be supervised by a member of staff where necessary and not by volunteers. Anti-bacterial wipes/ hand sanitiser and the hand cleaning station with soap and hot water will be available to allow pupils to clean their hands when necessary. Clean drinking water will be supplied.

17. Behaviour/Code of Conduct

Pupils will be informed of their behaviour expectations and that poor behaviour may result in them being unable to participate in the Forest School. The Forest School leader will establish set rules which are repeated during each session in order to promote pupils' ability to explore independently while keeping safe and behaving appropriately.

Positive behaviour, e.g. teamwork and consideration for others, will be promoted through planned activities. All staff will model good behaviour, e.g. co-operation and caring for the environment, during Forest School activities. Pupils will be made aware that positive behaviour, e.g. displaying respect for the environment, means they will be trusted to explore and lead sessions with greater independence.

Challenging behaviour is managed in line with the Behaviour Policy. Challenging behaviour will initially be dealt with by one-to-one adult support, where possible, to identify its cause. Pupils persistently displaying challenging behaviour, or acting in a manner that places themselves or others at risk of harm, will not be allowed to participate in the rest of the Forest School session; they will be escorted away and supervised away from other pupils.

The headteacher will decide if it is necessary to exclude a pupil indefinitely from Forest School activities due to persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy.

18. Inclusivity

Forest School activities will be planned in line with the school's SEND Policy to ensure that pupils with SEND can participate as much as possible.

The Forest School Leader will liaise with the SENCO and the parents of pupils with SEND to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.

The Forest School Leader will liaise with the school nurse and the parents of pupils with medical conditions or allergies to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.

The Forest School Leader will identify if the location poses accessibility issues to any pupils and whether any accessibility means will be required, e.g. accessibility ramps.

Pupils with SEND will be provided with supervision during Forest School activities where required; this supervision will not count towards other relevant staffing ratios.

A variety of materials will be used that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping.

Sensitivity to the religious and cultural beliefs of pupils will be displayed at all times, e.g. in regard to their clothing or foods they may not wish to eat.

All pupils will be encouraged to participate and will be made to feel that their experiences and contributions are valued in order to build their confidence and self-esteem.

19. First Aid

At least **one** trained first-aider will be present during all Forest School activities.

The Forest School leader will create and explain to staff and pupils the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident, e.g. the area where all pupils are to gather in order to be easily supervised.

The Forest School leader will carry a fully stocked first-aid kit at all times during Forest School sessions. All incidents, injuries and illnesses will be managed in line with the First Aid Policy.

Staff will be aware of any allergies pupils may have and carry suitable medication, e.g. an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) as part of the first aid kit.

Staff will carry mobile phones to be able to contact each other, the landowner or the emergency services in the event of an incident.

In the event of an injury, staff will provide immediate assistance and a trained first aider will remain with the injured person until the situation is resolved.

The Forest School leader will assess injuries and decide if further medical attention is needed; the emergency services will be contacted immediately where necessary.

20. Manual Handling

All Fourfields staff will have had the appropriate Manual Handling training so will be aware of how to keep themselves and others safe when lifting heavier equipment.

21. Pre-session Checklist

Prior to each Forest School session the Forest School Leader will undertake a pre-session check using the checklist provided. This will identify any hazards in the area, any areas that are unsafe may need to be sectioned off or made safe. These checklists will then be stored and kept as evidence of keeping children safe during each session.

22. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Forest School Leader.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant members of staff, volunteers and other stakeholders.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **June 2023**.