



Forest School Policy

Forest School Policy 2020/21

Date	Authorised Signature	Review Date
21/3/22	Forest School Leader: Niall O'Brien	21/3/23
21/3/22	Head: Chris Tolson	21/3/23

Statement of Intent

We aim to use the natural outdoor woodland area 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 appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves.

Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality

Pupils can develop skills for lifelong learning such as;

- *Emotional and Spiritual aspects of learning*
- *Self-esteem and Self confidence*
- *Positive relationships*

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.

The Academy has many additional policies which will be adhered to alongside this policy during Forest School sessions within our woodland.

Legislation considered for policy

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Race Relations Acts 1976 & 2000

Sex Discrimination Act 1986

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Children Act 2004

Implementation

Risk assessments, good practice, Forest School activities, rules for tools and fire etc. can all be found within the Forest School guidebook which contains everything you need to know about our Forest School sessions, for example, procedures, risk assessments, environmental impacts etc. A laminated Forest School Handbook is taken into the woodland on each visit, this contains vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Equality and Diversity: *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. The Academy has an Inclusion, Special Educational Needs Policy and an Equality and Diversity Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.*

The Academy at St James

Health and Safety: Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play if they are considered too dangerous. Ratios within the woodland area remain the same as indoors as we are still on the school premises (1 adult to 8 children or with an Early Years Professional 1 adult to 13 children). Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. Dynamic risk assessments will be in place to cover other eventualities. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School Leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice. The pre-school has a Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy etc. to enhance aspects of health and safety

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives, potato peeler)
- Open Fire
- Rope and string
- Shelter building
- Collecting natural materials

First Aid: Nominated staff within the school are qualified first aiders and will administer the care needed, the Forest School Leader has an enhanced first aid certificate to specifically cover outdoors. Ensure the safety of all other children within the group and the possible need to evacuate them indoors. Seek emergency help if needed. There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school. Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms, contact HSE if it is a serious accident. Emergency procedures are within the Forest School Sessions handbook which is taken into the woodland each session. Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into woodland.

Use of Tools

Children and adults will be trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory. Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children. They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used. Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and how to use before they use. Tool use will be on a ration of one to one.

Use of Fires

A Forest School Leader must always be present when a fire is lit and must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire.

Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.

- Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log.
- Step over and sit down on the log seat.
- Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
- Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).

Environment: Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. At the Academy will promote environmental awareness and care for our environment. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported. The woodland will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. We will remove all litter and debris we take into the woodland and have regular litter picks to remove other refuse which is in the area. We will be caring towards our neighbours and try to minimise the amount of smoke and noise produced. Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas of the woodland. Branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries for people entering the woodland unsupervised (without the Forest School Leader), they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored and used as fire wood. During the winter months large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them.



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Roles and Responsibilities:

Forest School Leader: will have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification, CRB enhanced disclosure and an outdoor first aid qualification.

Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- *Risk assessments for session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.*
- *Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs.*
- *Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.*
- *Administration of first aid and first aid kit.*
- *Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.*
- *Organising emergency procedures.*

Staff/ students / volunteers: will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times, support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or before should any incidents arise or laws and policies change.