

Policy: Forest School Policy
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Holy Trinity Church of England (VA) Primary School



Believe • Achieve • Inspire •

Forest School Policy

SCHOOL VISION

Our vision is for our pupils to flourish in an inclusive, inspirational place of learning where we are happy, respectful, kind and safe.

At Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School our Christian vision shapes all we do.

*"I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live."
Ecclesiastes 3:12.*

- we facilitate opportunities so every child can flourish in a place where they feel **safe, happy and confident**.
- staff **well-being** and professional development is valued and supported in order to fulfil their roles, **inspire** others and experience personal **fulfilment**.
- the school provides facilities that enables our pupils to reach their potential in an **optimum learning environment**.
- the **school plays a central role within our community** and enjoys strong **links with the church, local companies and other schools**.
- we create a culture of vigilance to **safeguard** all children.

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Ethos

At Holy Trinity CE Primary School, we believe Forest School is an opportunity for the children of today to get outside and learn in a safe, stimulating environment. It is a holistic approach covering all parts of the curriculum and allowing children to develop all areas of their learning. The children can experience challenge and managed risk, learning ways to solve problems and deal with new situations.

Forest School is a long term process which allows children to grow in self-confidence as they seek to discover their skills and strengths.



Forest school is a child-led program which promotes individual learning. As leaders and peers facilitate and support learning so the children develop the skills to move their learning forward.

Forest School is a professional practise which allows participants to develop their creativity and imagination, their gross and fine motor skills. The children learn to work collaboratively- developing communication and social skills.

Activities:

We offer a range of activities including the following:

- Building dens
- Fires and cooking
- Mud kitchen
- Games and opportunities for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools including knives and bow saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventures
- Rope trails
- Pond dipping

Session safety and group guidance

Safety sweep:

Before each session the group leader will carry out a sweep of the forest school to check it is safe for the group to use.

Reporting Incidents and Accidents:

If an accident occurs during a forest school session it is to be recorded in the accident book. A school accident form must also be completed for parents and put in their book bags for return to home. Any serious incidents and accidents must be reported to the Forest school leader on return to school.

Register:

A head count will be taken at the beginning and end of each session to ensure all pupils are present.

Evacuation procedure:

All staff must be aware of the evacuation procedure and wear a whistle at all times during forest school sessions.

Clothing:

Pupils must wear appropriate clothing for the activities to be undertaken. In winter wellingtons or a change of shoes are required. Spare clothes for warmth are kept in the forest school hut.

Hygiene:

All pupils must use anti-bacterial soap and wash their hands before eating snacks and after using the toileting facilities.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Holy Trinity Sunningdale Site Assessment
- Sessions involving tool use, camp fires, pond dipping, blindfold trail.

These risk assessments are reviewed before each session and new risk assessments are signed by the headteacher. All fires or stoves must involve a risk assessment being sent to the headteacher.

Risk assessment forms can be found in the Holy Trinity School Forest School Handbook or with the Forest School Leader.

Equipment for Forest School

In the Forest School hut the following equipment is available

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

- First Aid kit – to be replenished on a regular basis
- Emergency procedures
- List of medical needs for the group
- Risk assessment
- Emergency whistle
- Accident forms
- Antibacterial wet wipes
- Medication for individuals should be clearly labelled and taken to Forest School - staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received

OTHER NECESSARY EQUIPMENT:

- Spare clothing, neck scarves and gloves
- Bin Bags

Poor Weather Procedures

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunderstorms or during conditions of extreme cold. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgements about the unexpected conditions. If the wind speeds are predicted to be above 40mph on the morning of the forest school activity the session will be postponed.

Toileting Procedures

- All children will be asked to go to the toilet before leaving the main school
- Children will return to school to use the toileting facilities if required.

Fire Area Operation Procedures

Essential equipment check list:

- Flame retardant Gauntlet Gloves

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- Bucket of Water
- Burns Kit
- Fire steel
- Vaseline
- Cotton Wool
- Fire bowl

The Forest School leader will decide whether it is appropriate to use a fire bowl or set up a fire area.

Fire Area procedure:

- There will be one entrance to the fire area for the use of children and adults.
- Adults and children can only enter the fire area with the permission of the forest school leader. All other children must remain outside the area.
- The children may light or feed the fire using the position of respect. Children will only be given this responsibility when they are deemed sufficiently trained by the school staff. The children must use the fire glove on the feeding hand.
- Children who enter the fire area must be checked for scarves, ties and flapping coats.
- At the end of the fire, water must be sprinkled onto the ashes. The ashes must be stirred. More water must be added to ensure the fire is completely extinguished.
- The cold ashes must be distributed and the fire area returned to its previous condition.

Fire Bowl procedure for Pre-school/Reception teachers.

- A fire area will be set up made of large logs and blue rope if necessary.
- There will be one entrance. Entrance to the fire area is only through this entrance for adults and children.
- Adults and children can only enter the fire area with the permission of the forest school leader. All other children must stand behind the logs and fencing.
- The fire bowl is placed on a stable wood ring, with stools for children to toast marshmallows on either side.
- Children who enter the fire area must be checked for scarves, ties and flapping coats.
- At the end of the fire, water must be sprinkled onto the ashes. The bowl can remain hot for some time. More water must be added to ensure the fire is completely extinguished and the bowl is cool.
- The bowl must be returned to its storage area in Forest School and the area cleared of any evidence of a fire.

Tool Use Procedures

Using tools is an important part of our work as it enables participants to develop new practical skills that develop self-confidence. We aim to ensure that all people participating in tool sessions do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Tools that may be used: potato peelers, fire steel, bow saws and knives.

The following guidelines are to be followed when using tools:

- The forest school leader will check that all tools are fit for use before the session
- Only tools that are in a safe working condition will be used
- Tool talks- telling staff and pupils about correct and safe use of tools will be demonstrated to all staff and pupils
- All pupils are to be supervised closely by competent leaders
- Tools should be kept in safe designated area when not in use – none should be left unattended outside this area
- All knives will be sheathed/closed immediately after use

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- Bow saw guards will be replaced immediately after use
- Pupils will remain seated at all times when using knives
- Safe working distances and suitable ratios will be maintained at all times

Forest School Emergency Evacuation

Rationale:

It is essential that all children and staff that use the Forest School are kept safe and aware of the emergency evacuation procedures. It is our utmost aim to ensure that all involved have fun learning experiences in a safe and secure environment.

Procedures:

- Forest school leader will always have a whistle around their neck.
- In the case of an emergency three long blows on the whistle will be sounded.
- The Forest school leader will immediately contact the school- through mobile phone and inform them of the emergency evacuation.
- The Forest school leader will call 999 and notify police, ambulance, fire of location and requirement.
- On the whistle all the children will assemble in a silent line where they entered the forest school site. The register will be taken and the children counted. The Forest school leader will then make a decision whether to remove the children from the woodland immediately or to wait for support to arrive from school.
- If any children are missing the emergency whistle will be sounded.
- In the event of any missing children at possible danger in the woodland the Forest School leader will make a decision as to what to do next.

Post code reference for emergency services: SL5 0NJ

Grid reference: SU950673

In the event of a medical emergency:

- Any emergency that may arise, whether in the form of a medical emergency or relating to a piece of equipment that has failed, will be dealt with by the class teacher.
- In the event of anything of a medical nature that is beyond Immediate Temporary Care the school office will be phoned and the casualty will be transferred to hospital and the parents informed.
- Whilst waiting for emergency help the class teacher will treat the patient and will send the rest of the class back to school with the supporting adult if the casualty is unable to be moved. A first aid trained adult from school will join the class teacher immediately.
- A detailed report of any incident must be reported on the accident sheet, stored in the Forest School Handbook in Reception class, on the day of the incident and passed to the Headteacher immediately.

Responsibilities of the Children

- To take personal responsibility for their own safety as well as the safety of others and line up at the entrance to Forest School as soon as they hear the emergency signal.
- To listen to and follow safety information given to them.
- To ensure that they inform an adult immediately when they have witnessed an accident.
- To ensure that they inform an adult immediately when they witness anyone behaving in an inappropriate unsafe manner in the woodland.

Environmental Policy and Environment Impact Assessment

We aim for all our staff and children to engender a high level of respect for the natural world and encourage all to be involved in decisions about their environment and safety.

We aim to consider when participating in activities the impact on the environment and aim to minimise impact through our forest school rules and through demonstrating and encouraging a respect of the woodland environment.

Litter: A bin is provided in our base camp for litter and food waste. At the end of each session this is removed from the site and taken back to school.

Minimising Impact:

Activity	Impact	Mitigation
Mud Kitchen	Footfall/Trampling- worn out flooring. Ground cover used by children in their cooking activities Wildlife disturbed by human presence	On a regular basis move mud kitchen around site in order to allow areas to recover.
Pond dipping	Branches and shrubs cut back to reduce leaf litter in pond. Wildlife in pond disturbed.	Wildlife always to be returned to pond. Limit pond dipping to an annual activity so that the wildlife is given time to recover
Den Building	Hazel coppiced from within site to provide sticks for den building. Wildlife disturbed by activities.	Restrict activities to those trees that can tolerate them. Use wood from other sources.
Fires	Ground level kept clear to stop fire spreading. Changes in soil chemistry, increases in pH levels and carbon can be harmful to some plants and essential nutrients may be removed. Fires can travel underground even when they look extinguished. Removal of deadwood that provides homes and an essential part of the ecosystem.	Ensure all fires are completely distinguished before leaving the site. Choose fire site in a location which is already bare and ecological impact is minimised. After fires, site to be returned to former condition with all evidence of a fire removed.
Cooking	Food waste may attract particular animals and affect the biodiversity.	All food waste and litter to be removed from site at the end of each session.
Base Camp	Footfall – trampling can make base camp extremely boggy- have had to move site.	Rotate base camp to new areas as necessary allowing area to regenerate and recover.
Tree Climbing	Damage to trees.	Restrict activities to those trees that can tolerate them. Establish climbing trees.
Collecting Natural Materials	Plants and shrubs damaged.	General: no pick no lick rule. Children know not to pick items from trees and from ground level. Occasional scavenger hunts- monitor effect on field layer.

This policy was adopted by Holy Trinity CE Primary School and agreed by the Standards, Achievements and Curriculum Committee and ratified by the Full Governing Board.

Approved by.....on behalf of the School Governing Board.

Signature:.....

Date:.....