



SOMERSET NATURAL LEARNING ACADEMY

well-being through outdoor learning

Forest School Handbook 2014

Primary School

This Handbook should be adapted to your own specific requirements.

Disclaimer - This generic handbook is for guidance only and does not constitute a code of practice for your Primary School or any other educational institution. The information in respect of the formal procedures for Risk Assessments and obtaining consents for off-site activities from governing bodies or local authorities is non-specific and should be replaced with the specific information that applies to your own working environment.

It is provided for reference purposes only on the understanding that participating adults have the appropriate training, experience and qualifications to conduct outdoor learning and Forest School activities. All users must be satisfied with their own competence and the competence of the children participating in any activity. At no time does this handbook supersede the Schools' Forest School Leader or teacher's own professional judgement as to the safety of an activity, the advice given by your Forest School training body, current guidance provided by the governors and senior management of the school, the local authority's guidance, or the relevant government legislation and advice given by the national health and safety executive.

Primary School Forest School Handbook

Aims - The aim of Forest School and at ***** School is to widen and enrich the pupil experience of school life and enhance their sense of well-being and enjoyment of school life. A key component of this is raising their self-esteem through their successes, their relationships with adults and peers, and their strong sense of belonging to a group with a common purpose.

At the same time it is the aim of the programme to offer different aspects of the National Curriculum entitlement through the medium of outdoor learning. As part of this approach written elements will be reduced, with assessment carried out through observation and oral feedback.

Activities should be challenging but accessible. Children should end each session feeling they have accomplished something worthwhile. At the same time the ratio of pupils to adults should enable a strong focus to be placed on individual needs, group relationships and conflict resolution.

Inclusion - All pupils, regardless of age, gender, ability or disabilities should, in principal, have access to Forest School & Gardening Activities. All pupils should be able to apply to complete a Forest School & Gardening period of training regardless of age, gender or ability. It is our aim to enable all pupils at ***** School experience Forest School & Gardening Activities at some stage in their time at the school

The only grounds for excluding a pupil from Forest School is because their behaviour poses a significant threat to their own health and safety or the health and safety of others.

Community Involvement - In the planning of our Outdoor Learning provision we will work to grow the involvement of the wider community. This could involve staff and pupils from other local schools, family members including parents and grandparents, and the use of community volunteers.

Health & Safety Policies

Leaders, staff and volunteers providing on or off-site outdoor learning must be familiar with the school Child Protection Policy. Leaders must ensure that it informs that planning and conduct of all activities.

Children and Vulnerable Persons - Forest School Leaders, teachers, other educational practitioners and volunteers should regard their duty of care when working with young persons as of the first importance. To ensure all individuals (children, workers, volunteers) are safe and protected the following procedures are to be followed:-

- Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers should be made aware of the relevant school policies and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.
- Forest School Leaders will have an enhanced level an enhanced level Disclosure and Barring check. Any regular volunteer attending Forest School must be D & B cleared. Where a parent volunteer does not hold D & B clearance they must not be left unsupervised with children.
- Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being should be shared with the schools named Child Protection Person, so that the school's child protection procedures can then be followed.
- We regard safety and good practice as our highest priority and it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to ensure general safety during the activities.
- Approved ID badges should be worn by all adult providers, who must identify themselves to children and other adults by their legal names.
- Forest School Leaders must satisfy themselves that copies of Disclosure and Barring clearances and the relevant qualifications of volunteers are approved and held by the school.

Information to Parents

At least once a year parents of participating pupils or potential participating pupils should be invited to a meeting to explain Forest School / Garden activities and to provide a forum for feedback. Participating parents should be invited to observe a Forest School session if they so wish.

Whole school communication to parents regarding Forest School / Garden activities should be communicated to parents in the form of a report published annually and in the school newsletter, on a termly basis.

Parents of children selected for Forest School must be sent the following information: -

- Parental Consent form for Forest School activities providing clear information concerning the nature and extent of the activities.
- To include -

- request for information of any significant health issues, dietary issues and details of medication.(required for off-site activities only, as information is already held within school)
- full parental contact details, both for home and place of work.(off-site visits)
- A brief outline of the Forest School programme of study and what the pupils should expect to achieve by completing the course.
- A list of all the kit pupils are expected to provide for themselves. This should include advise on the purchase of appropriate waterproof clothing. (It must be made clear to parents that inappropriately clothed children will not be allowed to attend Forest School. This includes complete covering of arms and legs and tops that are long enough to form an effective seal with the trousers.
- A feedback form at the end of the course for completion by parents.
- Information concerning ticks and Lime Disease, giving best current advice on dealing with ticks if found.

Staff Pupil Ratios

Low staff - pupil ratios and small groups are a desirable aspect of Forest School & Outdoor Learning and an identified component of its success. This is not only important for safety, but also to enhance the quality of the experience both for staff and children. Children of all abilities enjoy the opportunity to forge new relationships with both adults and their peers and to 'break the mould' of expectations that normally arise in their usual classroom and playground environments. Children are also out of uniform, in 'scruff gear' and this further enables youngsters to let go of their worries and fears about self-image.

It will be the policy at this school to run Forest School type activities with a maximum adult pupil ratio of 1: 6 when off-site. When on site the maximum acceptable ratio will be 1:12 for activities where the risks are identified as low. Where tools are used that pose a significant risk the on-site ratio should be a maximum of 1:6, with guidelines followed with regard to certain types of tools. A 1:1 ratio is required, for example for each bill hook in use. Where pupils have been specifically identified as 'at risk', a 1:1 ratio may be necessary depending on the risk assessment. These ratios do not apply to the use of sharp tools or other higher risk activities, where the ratios indicated in the 'Tools' section of the handbook must be applied.

Training & Qualifications of Staff

The current policy of the school and local authority with regard to the required qualifications and experience of Leaders and assistant will be adhered to. Activities will normally be supervised by a qualified teacher with suitable outdoor qualifications, such as MLTB certificate, or Forest School Leader (Level 3). Those staff or contracted in persons supporting specified craft activities must have qualifications in their craft and/or verifiable and appropriate experience. ***Contracted in Craft Workers will be expected to have their own Public Liability Insurance specific to that activity.***

For on-site activities staff with other appropriate qualifications and experience may lead activities provided the school is satisfied with their competence. All off-site activities must be supervised by Activity Leaders with the appropriate Forest School qualification. All staff and volunteers involved should experience basic 'outdoor health & safety' training to alert them to the risks of working in the school grounds and enhanced training for the additional risks posed by support outdoor learning off-site in woodland or other outdoor spaces.

In all instances the school should check with the appropriate body that insurance requirements in respect of qualifications has been met.

Recruitment of paid trainers and Volunteers - It is the policy of the school that all volunteers, are DBS (enhanced) checked and a copy of the relevant documentation is held securely at the school office, alongside photocopies of identifying documentation and CV. The volunteer will usually be a parent or member of the local community who has a proven career path and a relationship with the school. The school will encourage volunteers who wish to support Forest School on a long-term basis to obtain the appropriate qualifications.

Recording and Evaluation of Activities and Pupil Progress

Evaluation of the activity programme and pupil progress is a continuous process. Where pupils are selected for a multi-session Forest School programme, because of special needs, the cohort will be monitored as follows:

1. Case Studies. Pupil case studies should be carried out each term. Case study to consist of –

- Pupil Targets relative to the Forest School experience
- Details of general I.E.P. and special needs
- Monitoring of attendance and behaviour in school
- Diary of pupil response in each outdoor session or activity
- Discussion with form tutor to log progress
- Pupil feedback form
- Parental feedback form

2. Outdoor Session Diary. A brief record of all activities in the form of lesson plans.

3. Formal Lesson Observation, Termly lesson observation by a peer or third party with overall outcome judged as Satisfactory or Good. Ideally, this responsibility will be rotated round appropriately experienced members of staff.

4. Non-Selective Groups. Where the groups are being provided with a general Forest School and Gardening entitlement all pupils should provide a documented response in respect of their learning experiences in a format appropriate to their age and ability. A photographic and journal record of the group's work achievements should be maintained by the teaching staff.

5. Evaluation of the programme. The information gathered will be reviewed on a termly basis and used to evaluate the outcomes of the provision and review performance generally.

Behaviour Policy

(The behaviour policy relates to rules and sanctions. Please refer to individual activity areas for rules relating to tool use etc.)

All the normal expectations of pupil behaviour within school, both towards staff and each other will apply. Forest School & Outdoor Learning is part of their normal school day.

There are extended rules specifically with regard to Forest School, which must be made fully explicit to the children from the first session. The key safety rules must be rehearsed with the pupils at the start of every session.

Some children engaging in Forest School will have behavioural and learning difficulties. Behaviour must never be tolerated which puts themselves or other children at significant risk of physical harm. In other areas, for example with regard to co-operative activities and general participation, or in the case of inappropriate language or verbal abuse of another child, targets for improvement will be set and monitored.

It is expected that children will benefit from their time Forest School and Garden Activities. Persistent unacceptable behaviour is an indicator that the pupil is not benefiting from the experience and withdrawal should be considered on the basis of the observed negative outcomes.

In the first session the first Circle Time will be based around the safety rules. These should be negotiated and agreed by all. Children should understand that Forest School activities are only possible if they participate safely and abide by the key safety rules at all times.

Rewards and Sanctions Policy

REWARDS

1. The best reward is meaningful and direct praise, which indicates precisely what it is the pupil has done well. The Activity Leader should make time at the end of each session to praise both the group and individuals as appropriate, as well as at the time of the activity.
2. Where pupils are on multi-session courses improvements and contributions will be logged and an email note to the form tutor and/or parent generated.
3. At the end of any extended course a certificate will be awarded. This should itemise the skills the pupil has demonstrated during the Forest School course.

SANCTIONS

1. In all instances the school sanctions procedures should be invoked in instances of unacceptable behaviour. In all instances the following apply. –

2. All significant incidents of unacceptable behaviour will be recorded.

3 Leaders will talk through the issues raised by unacceptable behaviour with the pupil. In the first instance they should be given the opportunity to agree improved behaviour.

4. Significant incidents of unacceptable behaviour are to be reported to the appropriate member of the school staff or parent(s) as appropriate.

5. Pupils attending an extended programme of study (multiple sessions) who exhibit poor behaviour should, in discussion with the parent or school, be withdrawn from the Activity Programme for 1 week in the first instance. Pupils who persist in unacceptable behaviour may be withdrawn completely on health and safety grounds or on the basis that the experience is not benefiting them.

6. Pupils who fail to co-operate with activities but whose behaviour does not constitute a hazard should be counselled. Depending on their learning needs, emotional difficulties etc. a programme of reintegration should be agreed. If a pupil repeatedly states an unwillingness to be involved, complete withdrawal should be considered on the basis that benefits to the pupil have not been identified.

Managing Risk

Off-site Forest School activity must always be supervised by a qualified Level 3 Forest School Leader with a current First Aid Certificate.

No Activity Leader, whatever their qualification, should plan or supervise an activity outside of their competence and/ or training.

No Forest School, Garden or other outdoor activity can take place with children without those activities being risk assessed. and logged with the school health & safety officer, either as part of the school Risk Assessment procedures or on individual risk assessments logged with the lesson notes. This applies both to the activities themselves and to the sites being used.

The current school policy is to complete the Risk Assessment using the standard online system and lodged with the school Health and Safety Officer. A copy of the global Risk Assessment and any individual activity risk assessment must be filed with this handbook.

Identifying on-site and off-site hazards - Every activity site, walking route and activity should be assessed on an ongoing basis and hazards identified and logged. Once identified the measures necessary to reduce the level of risk to 'low' should also be logged.

Ongoing Risk Assessment is vital to ensure all participants are aware of any potential new hazards and what actions need to be implemented to reduce risk. Some actions may need to be **preventative** and be implemented before a session starts, such as removing trip hazards from a regular path or teaching children

specific appropriate behaviours for planned activities. Other actions may be responsive, for example, leaving a woodland if the weather conditions become dangerous. **It is the Activity Leader's role to ensure all sites are appropriately risk assessed.**

Activity Risk Assessment - Every activity will generate new hazards, for example from sharp tools or heavy objects. In the planning of any activity these hazards should be logged in the lesson plan and the measures taken to reduce the risk to 'low' identified.

Site / Route Risk Assessment

There are 2 types of risk assessment that should be undertaken; Seasonal Risk Assessment and Site /Route Check. The Seasonal Risk Assessment should be undertaken every season and be thorough, looking at any major issues within the site, for example; trees needing surgery, fencing needing maintenance, abundance of poisonous plants growing. Some of the solutions to these identified risks may be fairly long term, such as tree surgery, replacing fencing and removing hazardous plants. However, some short term solutions can also be utilised, such as marking areas out of bounds, changing regular access routes etc until the longer term solution is in place. The daily site check is ideally carried out on the morning the site is to be used, before any groups arrive. This assessment is to check the more changeable features with a site and may include; recently fallen dead wood, litter, any new trip hazards or holes along main paths, poisonous plant growth, overgrown thorny plants, structural condition of semi-permanent shelters, seating, fire area etc. Most of the solutions to these risks can be done before the group arrives, such as; clearing trip hazards from paths, pruning plants and taking down unsafe structures.

It is not necessary to remove all hazards for children who have received appropriate guidance and training and are of sufficient maturity. One of the main values of outdoor learning is to enable children to learn to manage risk and to report significant hazards to the appropriate adult and each other. The categorisation of such risks can be briefly explained as follows -

Subjective Hazards - These are hazards that can be managed by appropriate knowledge, behaviour and training. E.g. "Fungi can be poisonous. We leave mushrooms alone. If you accidentally handle any mushrooms or other fungi make sure you wash your hands before eating."

Objective Hazards - These are hazards that cannot be controlled and are often unpredictable. E.g. "The wind is very strong today and there are some dead and unstable trees in the wood." The risk of trees coming down on a child in high winds cannot be managed in these circumstances and therefore Forest School would not take place in a wood when there are high winds.

The key questions are - "Can I remove the hazard so that the risk no longer applies? If not, ensure a written record of the hazard is generated and kept for future reference. If the hazard can't be removed (e.g. toxic fungi) "can I manage the risk so that it becomes 'low', both in terms of likelihood and

seriousness of outcome. In the case of significant objective hazard, such as a dead tree, an area or activity would be avoided completely if the risk cannot be managed or reduced, with, for example, necessary tree surgery.

In the event of a daily pre-check not being possible, the group leader must precede the party and check that the route is safe. Following any period of extreme weather, walking routes and woodland spaces must be thoroughly checked for new hazards prior to arrival .

Quality of mobile 'phone reception must be an aspect of risk assessment in off-site woodland activities, so that alternative plans can be made to deal with an emergency if signal reception is poor or non-existent.

If the signal is weak then dial 112 on the mobile and this will pick up the best possible signal from the available networks.

On site arrival the quality of signal must be checked as part of the initial safety checks for every session.

Steps in carrying out a site Risk Assessment.

1. Look for and identify the hazards. Remove if possible. Make a written record.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
- 4. Record your findings. Document if advice is sought from a third party.**
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary.
6. Review risk assessments as a continuous process.
- 7. The residual risk must be low.**

Conservation

No planned activity should cause undue erosion or damage to flora or fauna. Any cutting of branches, coppicing or felling of young trees etc. must always be carried out with the knowledge and consent of the landowner. Where significant damage or erosion is identified positive steps must be taken to reverse the damage process. The same applies to Forest School activities in the school grounds.

Insurances

An Activity Leader should be clear about who the insurer is and what the necessary procedures are to satisfy the needs of the insurer. This may include the logging of Risk Assessments on an online system, as is now the case in many local authorities. The Activity Leader should also check if additional information needs to be logged with the appropriate body in respect of any travel or accommodation arrangements.

Professional liability for teachers, assistants and registered volunteers is usually via the school and the local authority. **Insurance for all off - site activities are therefore contingent on consents being obtained through the normal school procedures.**

Please note, off-site Forest School activities require the authorisation of Somerset County Council. Forest School Leaders should register as activity leaders using the EV3 form. This is to ensure that SCC will not be compromised in the event of any legal claim. (Please refer to all SCC guidance for planning off-site activities.)

Risk Management Policies

Some of these policies have specific application to off-site visits. Remember that off-site visits require the following -

- Approval from SCC that the person(s) running the activities are qualified to do so. (the approval process can take several weeks)
- Consent from the headteacher and governors
- Educational Visit Approval Letter from the Outdoor Education Adviser for SCC. (the approval process can take several weeks)
- Appropriate insurances.
- Consent from parents, medical forms and emergency contact numbers
- Completion of all necessary forms including the logging of the risk assessments on the EEC/ Flamefast system or the SCC template.

(the above paragraphs are specific to Somerset County Council and may now be out of date in some respects. These paragraphs should be replaced with the precise requirements of your own school and local authority)

1.1 - Transportation to and from Outdoor Activity Locations - Checks to be carried out prior to Departure.

Transportation to and from Forest School may utilise the school minibus. Bookings for the minibus must be made a term in advance and timings negotiated with the driver.

As a guideline in selecting other destinations for Forest School activities no journey should be longer than 45 minutes.

The transport may park elsewhere after dropping children off at the activity site. **It is vital, therefore, that communication via mobile 'phone is checked regularly to ensure that the minibus can be summoned if necessary.**

Transport to and from activity locations shall always be in accordance with the latest guidelines issued by the LEA and school. The Forest School leader must obtain a copy of these guidelines.

1.2. - For Health and Safety reasons and to ensure good communication with school, Activity Leaders must ensure that at least 2 mobile 'phones are carried by the leaders prior to departure. These should be checked as part of the departure procedure.

1.3 - Before Departure Leaders must visually confirm that all the required paperwork and the emergency kit is on board. (see 'Paperwork' & 'Emergency Kit' below .

1.4 - An up to date weather report must have been obtained and reviewed with participating adults. No departure to woodland spaces in the event of high winds or electrical storms. Expectation of any severe weather should be taken into account in deciding whether or not to curtail or cancel activities. The weather report will be obtained from the internet by the designated leader on the morning prior to departure.

1.5 - Paperwork to be carried at all times and included with this handbook:

- Emergency Contact details for all children in the group.
 - Parental Consent Forms.
 - Pupil Medical Notes
 - For overnight camps, there must be an emergency school liaison number carried i.e. The Head's personal telephone number.
 - Phone numbers of the minibus driver and an emergency contact at school.
- Contact number of local taxi firm that provides minibuses at short notice also to be carried .

1.6 – Activity Leaders must ensure that 2 working mobile 'phones, utilising different networks, are carried at all times.

1.7 - Emergency Contact Information - Emergency Contact Information (to be carried at all times and a copy left at school with the register etc.)

Emergency contact details and information as of **(insert date)** are as follows:

School Telephone Number -

Numbers of Mobiles Carried - (please add names and numbers below)

Numbers of Current Minibus Drivers - (please add names and numbers below)

Numbers of local commercial minibus providers -

Location for Forest School (grid reference and address) - (Please insert)

1.8 - Emergency Equipment Pack:

Forest Leaders must ensure that the following equipment is available for all off-site activities irrespective of weather or location. The only exception is Forest School activities at the school itself. The equipment is to be stored in a waterproof plastic bag within a rucksack and its contents checked fortnightly or after any use.

- sealed First Aid Kit (to be replenished and date re-sealed after each use of contents)
- emergency bivvy bag
- compact sleeping bag
- kissu capable of holding 8 - 10 people or equivalent emergency bad weather shelter.
- 2 spare sets of woolly hat and gloves
- 2 sets of basic waterproofs (trousers & tops)
- compass
- 1:25000 map of area being used
- pack of high energy long-life food, such as Mars Bars in sealed container
- 1 litre of drinking water
- Whistle
- Pad and Pen
- Emergency contact details, including transport, on a laminated card.

With regard to on-site activities, the leader must satisfy himself/herself that First Aid back - up is available at the school office. A further small First Aid kit should be available to deal with very minor cuts and scrapes.

1.9 - . Registers:

A register must be taken before off-site departure and an accurate list of pupils left at the school office. A register must also be taken before departing from Forest School activities. This applies irrespective of numbers. The register must include the emergency contact numbers for all children in the party.

1.10 - Clothing Check - Leaders must satisfy themselves that the pupils have the appropriate clothing and that sufficient spares are carried to deal with any shortfall.

Pupils must carry or be wearing -

- suitable footwear for the activity
- long trousers and socks, to provide complete leg cover *regardless of the weather.*
- waterproof trousers and cagoul
- long-sleeved top, with good seal between top and trousers at midriff.
- extra layer in case of cold weather
- suitable hat and gloves in winter or cold conditions.

Inappropriately clothed children must not be taken out unless satisfactory clothing can be provided by the school.

Children have small body mass and therefore hypothermia can happen suddenly and with little warning. Children must remain appropriately dressed for the weather conditions. In hot conditions legs and arms must remain covered in woodland spaces. Check regularly to ensure they are well hydrated and comfortable, whatever the weather.

1.11 - Transportation of Equipment

Any equipment carried must be secured in a rucksack or equivalent and safely stowed under forward seats. They must be stowed so as not to constitute a trip hazard in the event of minibus evacuation. Tool carrying must be kept to a minimum and must be stored on site whenever possible. **Under no circumstances are loose tools or equipment to be carried in the minibus.**

1.12 - Stowing of Rucksacks

Individual rucksacks belonging to pupils should be stowed underneath seats.

1.13 - Seatbelts

No vehicle is to be used which is not fully equipped with functional seat belts. All seatbelts must be checked as fastened and functional before the start of each journey.

1.14 - Delays Returning to School - If there are significant delays in returning from Forest School the school must be contacted. If lateness is significant parents must be contacted.

1.15 - Bus Cleanliness - Forest School Leaders and pupils to be responsible for leaving minibus clean and to periodically clean thoroughly.

1.16 - In the event of on the day cancellation, alternative planned garden activities will take place whenever possible. Failing this, pupils will return to normal lessons.

2. Site Arrival & Departure

2.1 - All pupils are to rehearse the key safety rules before disembarking from the bus. These are: Stranger danger, don't wander off, always be in a pair or more, don't approach dogs, horses, farm animals or any wildlife, don't run without express consent, watch for trip hazards, stay within the boundaries, if lost stay put and shout for help in the agreed way.

2.2 - Do a visual check of the bus to ensure that the children have removed all necessary kit from the bus. Do a count of pupils before moving away from the transport and continue to count at regular intervals throughout the activity period.

2.3. - If driven to site agree return times and exchange mobile 'phone numbers before bus departs.

2.4. - If bus is departing check that all required equipment and paperwork, including contact numbers, are removed from the bus. Always check the First Aid kit and other emergency equipment is removed.

2.5 - A leader to walk ahead of the party into the woodland space to check that nothing has changed since the pre-visit. When leading children there should be an adult to the front and an adult to the rear.

2.6- Make sure every child understands the 'lost child' procedure before commencing activities.

2.7 - If the children are new to the site, familiarisation activities must take place before they are allowed to move about the site. These include boundary walking, mapping landmarks, calling for help and locating adults.

2.8 - Ask each child to ensure they have all their possessions. Check site for litter.

2.9 - Do a tool count. Ensure that all tools - and particularly clasp knives - are accounted for.

2.10 - In the case of activities taking place or returning after school hours log the arrangements for the collection of children. Have contact numbers to hand.

2.11 - Take a register of pupils at the end of the activity whether on or off site. This also applies to after - school activities. Count pupils on to the transport.

3. Lost Child Policy

3.1 - Pupils must be informed that they are only to leave the main group in pairs and to obtain consent for movement other than those which are a part of normal activities. Pupils must inform leaders if they need to make a toilet break or leave the group for any other reason. Children must be familiar with boundaries, landmarks and location of adult prior to commencing an activity.

3.2 - Children must be familiar with the 'lost child' procedure and rehearse it at the start of each session. Children must stay in sight of the agreed landmarks. If a child is satisfied they are lost they should stay put and call for help in the agreed manner every minute or so.

3.3 - In any outdoor area, leaders are to designate the boundaries for pupil movement. These should be within the range where visual supervision is possible.

3.4 - In the event of a child being lost the remainder of the group is to be kept together under the supervision of a leader. All pupils must be questioned to obtain any information they may have as to the whereabouts of the missing pupil, or if a mobile number is available. A child shall be deemed missing if they have not been seen for five minutes.

3.5 - The remaining available leader(s) should instigate a search for the missing pupil(s). If the pupil is not located within twenty minutes the school is to be informed and the police alerted. (25 minutes after last sighting) THESE TIMINGS APPLY ONLY TO CHILDREN OVER THE AGE OF 8. Children with 'at risk' behavioural profiles may require an immediate response to their noted absence. (see the individual pupil Risk Assessment)

3.5 - Precise information about the location of last sighting should be noted down before communicating with school. School to take responsibility for contacting parents and the authorities if good 'phone communication with the school exists.

3.6 - Three short blasts on the whistle shall be reserved specifically for summoning an immediate emergency roll call.

3.7 - In the event of the party having to return to school without the missing child, at least one responsible adult must remain behind. That person must have contact details for the whole party to hand in case this information is needed by the authorities. Their contact

number, location and grid reference must be noted down prior to the departure of the party. The remaining adult should remain in the same area and continue to call the child using the agreed words.

3.8 - Under no circumstances is the location where the child was last seen to be left without a suitable adult in attendance until the appropriate authorities have arrived and taken over the search. That adult must have a proven method of communication with the school whenever possible.

4. Risk Management Policy for Woodland Spaces

4.1 - . The leader of the activity must satisfy themselves that the outdoor space to be used is safe for the intended activities.

4.2 - . Woodland areas should be periodically checked for significant introduced hazards, such as broken glass or other man-made sharp objects and trip hazards.

4.3 - There will be termly checks of trees within the main woodland activity areas. Dead trees or dead large branches to be identified and removed as necessary by a qualified tree surgeon or woodsman. Where remedial measures cannot be taken immediately the area around the hazard is to be indicated to pupils as 'out of bounds'. Hazardous areas are to be identified with black/yellow 'hazard tape'.

4.4 - Dew ponds and other areas of open water are to be identified to the pupils and indicated as 'out of bounds'.

4.5 - If a shoot is taking place in neighbouring woods leaders must satisfy themselves that it is too distant to pose a hazard. If children hear activity they are to shout 'hello' 3 times loudly to alert beaters to their presence. If nearby shooting is identified the emergency roll-call (three long blasts on a whistle) should take place and pupils held at the central meeting point until a Leader has liaised with the shooting party. Adults working with the children should wear high viz jackets to facilitate location, both to the children and third parties.

4.6 - . The area of use for Forest School should be clearly defined. Pupils new to the area are to 'walk the boundaries' as a first activity and leaders must satisfy themselves that pupils can navigate back to the central meeting point. (e.g. with 'treasure hunt'.)

4.7 - Pupils are not to pick mushrooms, fungi, berries or flowers. Under no circumstances are pupils to consume anything picked in the woods.

4.8 - . Pupils should move through the woods using paths wherever possible. Pupils are not to be allowed to run where there are trip hazards from deadfall. Main pathways and the central area around the fire to be cleared of trip hazards at the start of each session.

4.9 - In the event of unexpected high winds or electrical storms, woodland activities must cease immediately and shelter sought in the nearest safe location pending the arrival of transport. (In the case of Chalkham Woods the barns at the end of the concrete track.)

4.10 - Tree-climbing is not allowed.

5. Fire Activities

5.1 - Fire - lighting activities and making hot drinks etc. with fire must be supervised by an appropriately qualified and experienced adult.

5.2 - The Fire area is a defined area kept free of all trip hazards, including bags and firewood. Children are not to walk across the fire area when the fire is lit.

5.3 - Lighting procedures. A leader must supervise all fire-lighting and fire management.

5.4 – Pupils lighting a fire must first be instructed in safe fire construction and use of matches. Lighters are not to be used. The use of a good quality fire steel and cotton wool balls for fire-lighting with children is strongly recommended as the safest and most reliable option.

5.5 - Children are to be instructed before the first fire-lighting session not to remove burning sticks or embers and not to 'play' with the fire. Leaders must show them safe ways to add fuel to the fire that does not put the child at risk.

5.6 - Hot liquids must only be moved by adults. Adults must then pour drinks in to cups placed on the ground or other low, stable surface. **Hot liquids must never be poured in to a cup help by a child.**

5.7 - A water butt containing a minimum of 15 litres of water must be available in case of fire accident. A fire blanket must also be available and positioned at a conspicuous point. Both water supply and Fire Blanket must be out and clearly visible before commencing fire activities.

5.7 - In the event of a burn injury leaders must follow the procedures set out in their First Aid training - currently to cool the burn for a minimum of 10 minutes in cold water and to wrap in cling film as appropriate. Emergency services to be contacted or immediate professional treatment sought in the event of all but minor localised burns. Parents are to be informed in all cases, even for the most minor of burn injuries. (N.B. If calling out emergency services provide GRID REFERENCE, NEAREST ROAD DETAILS. Have to hand track condition details where relevant. If an adult leader is available send runner to any road gate.)

5.8 - Pupils are to be instructed not to throw waste materials into the fire, including waste food and plastics.

5.9 - At the end of fire use the fire is to be smothered with dirt or water. This must only be carried out by leaders. In dry weather, particular care must be taken that the fire is out. Water can be used, provided hot stones are not doused. **Under no circumstances is a smouldering fire to be left at the end of activities.**

5.10. - With care, guidance and experience, children should be allowed to make and feed the fire. They must not be allowed to poke the fire or remove burning embers.

6. Tool Safety

6.1 - No child is to be trained in the use any piece of equipment unless the Activity Leader is satisfied with their own competence and training in supervising the use of the equipment and the appropriate ratio of supervision can be provided. Tools should be numbered. Knife issue (round-headed clasp knife or hook knife) must be logged against a name on issue.

6.2 - Regular checks of the condition of the tools should be carried out, both to confirm that the list of tools held remains accurate and that the equipment is in good condition and safe to use. It should be stowed in a robust rucksack for carrying, with all sharp edges covered.

6.3 - No child is to retrieve a tool for themselves. All tools must be issued directly to the child by an adult at the location the tool is to be used.

6.4 - The range of tools the children are currently permitted to use after training and with the correct supervision ratio are as follows - peelers, bow saw, bill hook, spade, round-ended clasp knife, mallet, loppers, wheelbrace.

6.5 - Before issue, tools should be checked to ensure they are fully serviceable.

6.6 - Tools only to be issued by a leader and must be counted out and counted back. When clasp knives are used particular care must be taken to ensure they are all accounted for at the end of the session.

6.7 - No child is to use a tool unless they have been fully instructed in its safe use.

6.8 - In all instances tools can only be used where the child is under close supervision. This means within the proximity that would be achieved in a typical classroom. Individual activity sheets should specify the appropriate ration. With round-ended clasp knives it would be 1:3 with an experienced group, with bill hook 1:1.

6.9 - Pupils must wear the appropriate safety clothing. In particular this means:

- Gloves are to be worn at all times when sawing or supporting others who are sawing.
- Hard hats must be worn where the activity creates any risk of head injury. (e.g. where there is a risk from falling branches or a heavy object, such as a mallet, is raised to head height, or when coppicing).
- Pupils to be visually checked before using tools for loose clothing that may cause a hazard.
- Goggles to be worn when there is a risk from flying splinters or other particles.
- Steel toe cap wellies or hard boots to be worn when digging.

6.10 - Leaders must position the First Aid Kit where it is visible and in proximity of the activity.

6.11 - All injuries, however minor, to be logged and reported on return to school.

6.12 - Specific Tool Safety Instructions

Clasp Knife

- Blade must be locked closed when not in use. The Activity Leader must check that blades are locked open prior to use.
- Blade must be locked closed before being carried or handed to another person.
- All cutting movements to be away from the body
- Pupil to be sat down on stable seating.
- 1:3 maximum permissible ratio of supervision
- Free hand to be gloved with leather garden glove.
- Pupils must work far enough away from each other to ensure that injury of one pupil by another is not possible.

Bow Saw

- 1:2 maximum permissible ratio of supervision (2 bow saws in use)
- Protective gloves to be worn on hand not holding saw.
- Saw horse must be used for small log sections (less than 7cm thick and shorter than 1 ½ metres. (small logs are difficult to stabilise for sawing purposes)
- All timber must be stable and well supported before sawing commences.
- Under no circumstances are pupils to saw branches off trees, except for coppicing width (maximum 3cm).
- Coppicing to be carried out with 1:1 supervision
- No sawing is to take place above chest height
- Saw blade to be covered when not in use or being carried.
- Saw to be stored in the designated place or on saw horse so as not to become a trip hazard when not in immediate use.

Billhook & Mallet

- Billhooks should be prepared by having any pointed end rounded off
- (KS2 onwards only) 1:2 maximum permissible ratio at KS2 with a member of staff supervising two pupils using a single billhook.
- Protective gloves must be worn and hard hats.
- The billhook is only to be used as a splitting tool and must never be used to hack.
- The billhook is always placed on the piece of wood to be split and driven through with a mallet. This usually involves a team of 3 – one pupil holding the billhook, a second using the mallet and the supervising adult.
- The mallet should never be raised higher than head height.

Loppers

- 1:1 only permissible ratio of supervision
- Always carry locked closed with blades pointing downwards.
- Maximum 1 cm thickness for lopper use by children. Loppers not to be used above head height.
- Pupils not engaged in cutting to be at a safe distance from the activity

Post Hole Driver

- Only to be used by adults unless children are in year 6 or above and of suitable build and strength. In this instance the post must be 'started' by adults until secure in the ground and at a height appropriate to the child. Post-rammer to be placed over the post by an adult. 1 adult to supervise the 2 children using the post-hole driver.
- Steel toe-cap wellies or boots must be worn.
- Hard hats must be worn.

Specific safety instructions for individual tools must be added to this handbook as they are brought into use.

7. Toilet Policy for the Outdoors

7.1 - The Activity Leader should satisfy themselves as to the availability of toilet provision prior to a visit. Where none are provided this information should be communicated to children and parents prior to the visit. Where facilities are provided they should be checked on the day of the visit by the appropriate adult prior to first use.

7.2 - Where toilets are not provided, children must be reminded of this prior to departure so that they can make use of school toilets as necessary.

7.3 - Toilet paper and other sanitary materials are brought to site.

7.4 - Use compost toilets where provided.

7.5 - Pupils needing the toilet must inform a member of staff they are going.

7.6 - Pupils should take a companion of the same gender for safety and to act as look-out.

7.7 - If necessary a spade will be provided to dig a hole. Solid waste must be buried.

7.8 - Pupils must wash hands in running water or use antiseptic wet-wipes after going to the toilet.

7.9 - If a child should require assistance this task should be designated to the appropriate approved member of staff only.

8. Eating

8.1 - Pupils must use antiseptic wet-wipes or wash their hands in running water prior to consuming food.

8.2 - Pupils should eat at designated mealtimes only, for reasons of hygiene and as part of developing social skills. Where possible, food preparation will be a communal activity. Pupils will be encouraged to bring food to share and to bring a healthy variety.

8.3 - Pupils will not be allowed to eat anything gathered in the wood.

8.4 - Pupils will be encouraged to use minimal packaging in their own food preparation.

8.5 - No meat products will be cooked on the open fire. The only exception is commercially prepared cooked meat, such as frankfurters, taken straight from a sealed jar or tin. **NO PREVIOUSLY OPENED FOOD PRODUCTS OF ANY KIND TO BE USED.**

8.6 - Pupils will only experience cooking on an open fire after the necessary safety training in cooking and Fire Use (see Fire Safety section)

8.7 - With the exception of overnight camps it is strongly recommended that only the following food products are cooked with children - Toast, Crumpets, Marshmallows.

8.8 - Any activity involving food preparation - requires an Activity Leader with a Food Hygiene Certificate to supervise.

8.9 - Ensure the immediate availability of basic fire-fighting kit. - typically a bucket of water, bucket of sand and a fire-blanket.

9. Overnight Camps

9.1 - Overnight camps will only take place on sites where the leader has been able to carry out all the necessary site visits and risk assessments. In most instances they will be at local sites. The advantage of a local site is that parents can be called up in the event of a distressed child or an emergency.

9.2 - Forest School Camps are different in nature and purpose from other camps. Numbers should not, therefore, exceed 12 children. The local sites available would suffer environmentally from larger camps. If larger camps are planned these should be supported by the appropriate professional organisations offering the necessary facilities and expertise.

9.3 - For Forest School a minimum staff / DBS cleared volunteer ratio of 1:3 is required or as set out by the Governors of North Cadbury Primary and Somerset County Council. Two adults must be qualified Forest School Leaders or possess alternative qualifications approved by Somerset County Council. All participating adults should be DBS cleared. There must be at least one male and one female adult present irrespective of the gender mix of the children.

9.4 - An account of all the activities for the camp should be included in any consent form in order to ensure that the Governors and local authority are satisfied with the qualifications held by the leaders.

9.5- The visit must not be advertised to children or parents prior to consents being obtained from the Governors and Local Authority for the specified date(s).

9.6 - Leaders must satisfy themselves as to the availability of all necessary kit prior to advertising a future overnight camp. If they plan to utilise kit provided by parents they must satisfy themselves as to the adequacy of the kit ahead of the departure date.

9.7 - For overnight camps there will always be a 'meeting for parents' for those whose children wish to participate. At these meetings the required kit will be specified. Of particular concern is the provision of adequate thermal mats and sleeping bags that are at least '3 season'. Thermal liners can be added to sleeping bags to bring them up to standard. Leaders must also be satisfied that the clothing provision is fully adequate, both in terms of layers, hat and gloves, footwear, waterproof trousers and tops.

9.8 - Camps that are planned well in advance are vulnerable to adverse weather. Overnight camps, particularly in woodland spaces, will be cancelled or curtailed when the weather is sufficiently adverse. Alternatively, if the camp is arranged at a site where bunkhouse facilities exist, wet weather alternative accommodation could be arranged. Parents should be appraised of any cancellation risk in the initial communications and at parent's meetings.

9.9 - On site transport should remain available. If this is not possible, the leader must satisfy himself/herself of the speedy availability of transport - for example by parking a minibus on the road. Emergency evacuation drills must be rehearsed, tested and understood by all participating adults.

9.9 - Catering on Camp - This is potentially one of the most hazardous activities for an overnight camp. All participating adults must be clear about their policies and procedures prior to a camp involving children. Cooking procedures must be rehearsed and the 'do's

and don'ts fully agreed by all participating adults. Burns and scalds cause some of the hardest to treat injuries.

At Key Stage 2 cooking will be fully monitored by adults for health & safety reasons. A member of staff or volunteer must hold a Food Hygiene Certificate. **Under no circumstances are staff, children or volunteers to bring individual gas, petrol or solid fuel cookers to the camp.**

Cooking areas will be clearly designated, with one or two fires. If tripods are used they must be made of iron and firmly set into the ground. Improvised tripods must not be used as they are inclined to tip over. **Please refer to Section 5 for more detailed guidance on fire safety.**

It is anticipated that children will have experienced all aspects of cooking health and safety prior to the visit.

Ideally, cooking will take place using the heat from open fires. Children will have 'planned' their meals as part of the activity and may provide or 'order' food depending on how the activity is organised. Cooking will be carried out by an adult who will supervise the children in their designated tasks. Children can 'toast' etc. as set out elsewhere. Children can 'stir' but must not lift or handle hot liquids or remove vessels from the fire. All cooking procedures involving children must be fully supervised at all times. Kelly kettles can also be used, with kettle or pan attachments, by adults who have been trained in their use. Children can be utilised to 'feed' the fires under direct supervision but at no time are to remove hot pans / kettle etc. Meths burning Trangias may also be utilised by adults.

Under supervision, children can transfer food from a cooking vessel to another vessel or plate once it is removed from the heat provided a spoon etc. is used. Both cooking vessel and plate must be on the ground or other suitable surface whilst the transfer is made. Children must never hold either plate, cup or cooking vessel during the transfer of scalding liquids or foods.

9.10 - Part of the activities may be building shelters and sleeping in them. Full alternative provision must be made in case of inclement weather, shelters not being completed or other adverse conditions. Part of this provision will include 'late night evacuation' at the end of all activities or in case of storms. Parents must be appraised of this possibility at the planning stage.

9.11 - Any outdoor site used for an overnight camp will be left as it was found. This includes the removal of any shelters built. This particularly applies to the removal of man-made materials.

9.12 - All other Forest School and Garden Activity policies apply.

Attachments -

- i) Forest School Site Risk Assessment
- ii) On Site Risk Assessment Form
- ii) Generic letter to parents

10. This handbook anticipates the range of activities set out in the lesson plans. Any new activity will be subject to the required planning, risk assessments and training, qualifications and competence of the adult leading the activity.



On Site Forest School Site Risk Assessment

For use in all areas being considered for Forest School activities.

Location

Describe the geographical location of the site
Describe the landscape and terrain (i.e. hilly, forest)
Describe any hazards the site presents in getting to and from the location (i.e. transport)
Describe the potential for children to get lost at the site
Describe any hazards at the site related to roads etc
Describe any hazards that may arise from other people using the site
Describe hygiene and shelter facilities at the site
Conclusions and constraints on using the site

Signed **Date...**



SOMERSET NATURAL LEARNING ACADEMY

well-being through outdoor learning

EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT FORM for Forest School Activities

VENUE.....

DATE AND TIMES.....

Activity/Process	Hazard to Health & Safety	Risk Level H/M/L	Precautions taken to reduce risk

Control Measures

Carried Out By..... Date.....

Please read this carefully before giving consent for your child to participate in Forest School

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Your son/ daughter is being offered an opportunity to experience Forest School. Forest School is very popular in many schools and is a rapidly expanding activity nationally. The educational and health benefits for children and young people have been recognised for more than a decade now. Of particular value is the opportunity to work with children of all abilities and an adult to student ratio of no more than 1:6. Forest School is delivered by qualified Forest School Leaders.

The main aims of Forest School are to enable your child to enjoy natural spaces, to develop self-reliance, co-operative skills and experience aspects of the curriculum in a practical 'hands-on' context. Forest School teaches practical skills including the safe use of a range of tools. Tools they will be trained to use include spade, bow saw, round-ended clasp knife, billhook. Sharp tools are used under close supervision and after training in their safe use. As part of Forest School, children are also taught shelter - building and fire lighting. On some occasions hot drinks and food are cooked on an open fire.

The venue will usually be *****, near *****. As with any woodland, there are natural hazards the children need to deal with, including briars, nettles, lying timber, midges and ticks. Forest school takes place in all weathers (except strong winds) so children may get wet and muddy.

Forest School sessions usually run from *****until the close of the school day. Children are back in time for the school buses. Transport to and from *****is by school minibus. Children are asked to bring a packed lunch in a lunch box.

The activities will be monitored and evaluated by *****. On a weekly basis the sessions will be led by *****, who is a qualified Forest School Leader. He/She will be supported by *****, a member of staff of ***** school. Parents are welcome to volunteer to support this activity.

Things you need to know -

Clothing -

Legs - Long trousers must be worn. Loose fit dungarees or overalls are ideal. These should be old as they are likely to get dirty.

Tops - Plenty on top in cold weather (aim for 4 layers with a coat in freezing weather). The 4 layers might be vest, shirt or sweatshirt, jumper or fleece and rainproof jacket. There must be at least one layer of long sleeves worn. THERE MUST BE A GOOD JOIN BETWEEN TROUSERS AND TOPS TO PROTECT THE MIDRIFF FROM MIDGES AND TICKS. (It is when children bend over and expose waistlines that the majority of bites occur.)

Head - Please provide a woolly hat or similar in cold weather. We will provide hard hats & gloves as required. Provide a sun hat in summer.

Hands - Please provide woolly gloves or similar in cold weather.

Feet - Please provide wellies or thick-soled strong old shoes (**not trainers**). Where suitable footwear cannot be provided the school has a small range of suitable wellingtons.

The important thing to look for is a thick sole with a good tread and strong toe area. The foot MUST be completely enclosed. (no sandals or pumps)

Waterproofs - In wet weather children must wear a waterproof shell. These can be purchased from most outdoor clothing stores. The shell consists of waterproof trousers and a top long enough to cover the bottom. The Glastonbury Trust will normally have several spare sets of waterproofs to deal with emergencies.

Photographs -

Your consent is requested to take some photographs of your child's participation in the activities. Photographs can be useful for school display and training purposes, and for assessment. Any photographs taken may have 3 possible uses -

- 1. For school display and course evaluation only.
- 2. For training purposes at the school.
- 3. Inclusion on the school website (in small format and usually in a group shot, with no individual identification)

You may withdraw photographic consent at any time. Not giving consent will not affect your child's participation in any of the activities.

Minor Injuries -

Whereas every attempt will be made to keep your child safe and all activities are risk assessed, accidents may occur. In the event of a significant injury you will receive a 'phone call, or, in the event of minor cuts or bruises, a note of explanation and recommendations in terms of seeking further medical advice.

You are asked to check your child for ticks after each session. Lime disease is carried by some ticks. Removal of the tick in the correct manner within 24 hours is very important to prevent infection.

How can I find out more? -

A copy of the Forest School Handbook & Code of Practice will be kept at the School Office and is available on the school website. More information can be obtained from ***** by emailing *****or contacting the school office on *****.

Parents have a special opportunity to attend a special meeting to find out more about Forest School on..... More information about the meeting is on the school website.

When we have received your consent you will receive a separate letter detailing the timings of the Forest School session(s) your child will attend.

.....

Activity Leader.....

Forest School Permission Slip

Pupil Name.....

Tutor Group.....

I have read the letter regarding Forest School Club and give consent for my child to participate in the activities within the school grounds. I understand that appropriate clothing must be worn and they may be unable to participate if suitable alternative clothing is not available.

I am not aware that my child has any medical condition that may be aggravated by working in an outdoor environment.

Name of Parent/ Carer.....
number.....

Contact

Signature of Parent/ Carer..... **Date**.....

Photo Consent Form.

I give / I do not give (delete as appropriate) my consent for photographs to be taken of my child for use by St. Ben's for training and evaluation purposes. I understand that separate consents will be requested for the use of any image for training / website purposes by the Glastonbury Trust.

Signature of Parent/ Carer..... **Date**.....