

Ringway Primary School

Forest School Handbook

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Vision Statement

Intent

Our vision at Ringway Primary School is built on the core values of RESPECT; respect, equality, self-belief, perseverance, excellence, creativity and teamwork. It is the aim of our Forest School programme to promote and deliver on these values by providing all pupils with valuable outdoor experiences. By working together in the natural environment, they not only learn to **respect** each other but to **respect** the natural world around them. Pupils are taught the importance of sustainability and respecting wildlife. Sessions in Forest School are child-led, with children choosing and designing their own activities. This allows all children to thrive and contribute to the sessions in a unique way, promoting **equality** between all participants. This child-led nature allows pupils the opportunity to take ownership of their learning, finding their own solutions when faced with a problem and manage risks, becoming resilient learners as a result. With this ownership, they feel proud of their achievements, developing their **self-belief**. It also develops their **perserverence** skills, as they are encouraged to keep trying and not give up, finding ways to solve problems. The sense of achievement when they are successful in this promotes **excellence**. Children their own activities, choose their own resources and plan their own projects. This in turn develop **creativity** and independence. There are many opportunities for **creative** work in Forest School, whether that is through crafts, den building, nature art or writing based on their experiences. There is lots of opportunity for **team-work** in Forest School sessions; pupils have the opportunity to work and problem solve together as equals and often work together in groups to achieve success.

Implementation

All year groups will take part in weekly two-hour Forest School sessions with two qualified Forest School Leaders over the course of a half term. Children will have the opportunity to explore and experience the natural world around them all year around. They go outdoors in all weathers, wearing appropriate clothing. Activities include field studies, sensory activities, bushcraft, arts and craft, team-building games, wildlife conservation, imaginative activities, physical play and construction. All of the above are with the aim of developing their social, emotional and physical skills.

The children are also taught about environmental awareness and sustainability. The pupils are taught to care for and respect our area, taking responsibility to develop and grow, and ensuring it is not harmed by leaving it tidy and only using materials that have fallen from plants and trees.

As the sessions are child led, it is the role of the adults involved to act as a facilitator. They are there to create and facilitate opportunities for learning, allowing participants to take the lead and follow their interests when choosing what to do in their time at Forest School. Facilitators, therefore, take on the role of an observer. They observe the participants in the group to see what their interests are, and plan learning opportunities accordingly.

Impact

Because they are given the freedom over their own learning, pupils will develop in confidence, self-belief and independence throughout the sessions. They will have the opportunity to develop problem solving skills and learn to work collaboratively with others. They will learn to respect others and the world around them. Through working together in team building activities and sharing resources, children develop their communication and social skills, as well as grow bonds between each other. By spending time outdoors, using tools and playing games, children develop their fine and gross motor skills, as well as their general physical stamina.

Forest School Policies

Please see http://www.ringwayprimaryschool.co.uk/website/policies/449664 for the following school-wide policies, all of which will be applied during Forest School sessions:

Behaviour Policy*
Equal Opportunities Policy
Environmental Policy*
Safeguarding Policy*
Health & Safety Policy*
Anti-bullying Policy
GDPR Policy

*Please note the following amendments:

Behaviour Policy

The school's behaviour policy and its policy for rewards and sanctions will be implemented by Forest School Leads and any present staff at all times during Forest School.

During Forest School sessions, children are expected to follow the school's rules and behaviour routines. They are reminded of the importance of being respectful to each other and the environment. They are made aware of the boundaries and the importance of keeping everyone safe.

As Forest School sessions aim to be as inclusive as possible, and found beneficial to pupils with SEMH or behavioural needs, pupils will not miss time in Forest School or be removed from the session (unless for the safety of themselves and others) as a consequence of negative behaviour outside of Forest School.

Pupils' mood and behaviour will be monitored and assessed at all times, in particular when using tools. Only pupils exhibiting calm and positive behaviour will be able to use tools (always on 1:1 basis with a member of staff).

Safeguarding Policy

The school's safeguarding policy applies during all Forest School sessions and staff taking part are up to date and aware of the policy and procedures to follow when they have a concern. All staff involved in Forest School will appreciate that children are more likely to make disclosures when they feel comfortable and content and when they are encouraged to take risks. It is therefore possible that in a Forest School setting, children are more likely to make a disclosure. Staff will follow the school's policy in dealing with and reporting disclosures and will:

- Listen to and take seriously any disclosure or information that a child may be at risk of harm
- Try to ensure that the person disclosing does not have to speak to another member of school staff
- Clarify the information

- Try to keep questions to a minimum and of an 'open' nature e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened?' rather than 'Did x hit you?'
- Try not to show signs of shock, horror or surprise
- Not express feelings or judgments regarding any person alleged to have harmed the child
- Explain sensitively to the person that they have a responsibility to refer the information to the DSL
- Reassure the child that they will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe
- Listen to and take into account (wherever possible) the child's wishes and feelings about the current situation as well as future plans
- Ask any necessary questions to determine the child's wishes and feelings.
- Explain that only those who 'need to know' will be told
- Explain what will happen next and how the child will be involved (as appropriate)
- Ensure there is appropriate support made available
- Complete a cause for concern form on CPOMs.

First Aid Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Staff will follow the school's Health and Safety Policy at all times. They will take into account the following key parts:

Responsibility

Health and safety lead: The nominated health and safety lead is Lisa Robson (head teacher).

School staff have a duty to take care of pupils in the same way that a prudent parent would do so.

Staff will:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do at work
- Co-operate with the school on health and safety matters
- Work in accordance with training and instructions
- Inform the appropriate person of any work situation representing a serious and immediate danger so that remedial action can be taken
- Model safe and hygienic practice for pupils
- Understand emergency evacuation procedures and feel confident in implementing them

Accident and Emergency

Staff at Forest School will have access to First Aid Kit at all times. There will be at least one qualified First Aider trained in outdoor first aid at each session.

In the case of an accident during Forest School sessions:

Accident record book

- An accident form will be completed as soon as possible after the accident occurs by the member of staff or first aider who deals with it. An accident form template can be found in appendix 2
- As much detail as possible will be supplied when reporting an accident
- Information about injuries will also be kept in the pupil's educational record
- Records held in the first aid and accident book will be retained by the school for a minimum of 3 years, in accordance with regulation 25 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1979, and then securely disposed of.

Reporting to the Health and Safety Executive

The headteacher/ business manager will keep a record of any accident which results in a reportable injury, disease, or dangerous occurrence as defined in the RIDDOR 2013 legislation (regulations 4, 5, 6 and 7).

The headteacher/ business manager will report these to the Health and Safety Executive as soon as is reasonably practicable and in any event within 10 days of the incident.

Reportable injuries, diseases or dangerous occurrences in Forest School may include:

- Death
- Specified injuries. These are:
- Fractures, other than to fingers, thumbs and toes
- Amputations
- Any injury likely to lead to permanent loss of sight or reduction in sight
- Any crush injury to the head or torso causing damage to the brain or internal organs
- Serious burns (including scalding)
- Any scalping requiring hospital treatment
- Any loss of consciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia
- Injuries where an employee is away from work or unable to perform their normal work duties for more than 7 consecutive days
- Where an accident leads to someone being taken to hospital
- Where something happens that does not result in an injury, but could have done
- Near-miss events that do not result in an injury, but could have done.

Information on how to make a RIDDOR report is available here:

How to make a RIDDOR report – http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm

Off-site visits

There may be occasions when we will take children off-site to take part in Forest School related activities off-site. When taking pupils off the school premises, we will ensure that:

- Risk assessments will be completed where off-site visits and activities require them
- All off-site visits are appropriately staffed
- Staff will take a mobile phone, a portable first aid kit, information about the specific medical needs of pupils along with the parents' contact details
- There will always be at least one first aider on school trips and visits
- For trips and visits with pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there will always be at least one first aider with a current paediatric first aid certificate
- For other trips, there will always be at least one first aider on schools' trips and visits

Notifying parents

The staff present at Forest School or the child's class teacher will inform parents of any accident or injury sustained by a pupil and any first aid treatment given, on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Reporting to child protection agencies

The headteacher will notify the relevant local child protection agencies of any serious accident or injury to, or the death of, a pupil while in the school's care.

Reporting to Ofsted

The headteacher will notify Ofsted of any serious accident, illness or injury to, or death of, a pupil in the Early Years Foundation Stage while in the school's care. This will happen as soon as is reasonably practicable, and no later than 14 days after the incident.

Staff present at Forest School sessions will also be aware of the following additions:

Food Safety

'Don't pick, don't lick, be careful with your stick' routine well embedded with all Forest School participants.

When children take place in a morning session of Forest School, they will return to their classroom at designated break time to collect their milk/snack. Where possible this will be brought out to them and children will have access to hand wipes/sanitiser to ensure clean hands.

Currently no food is cooked during Forest School Sessions. If this is implemented in future sessions, Forest School Staff will:

- Ensure risk assessments with food safety are in place
- Follow all risk assessments
- Wash hands prior to cooking food

- Provide hand sanitiser where hand washing with water is not possible
- Pre-cook food where appropriate
- Be aware of any allergies and procedures in place for these
- Store food suitably
- Ensure equipment is clean before use
- Wash equipment after use
- Ensure no cross-contamination between food

Tool Safety

The Forest School Leaders are responsible for the safe storage, usage and maintenance of all tools:

- Tools are to be checked at the beginning and end of sessions to ensure they are safe to use.
- There will be a clear, designated area for tool use that all pupils will be aware of, with a station prepared with knife block and kneeling pad.
- Tools are to be stored safely in a locked box and only accessed by Forest School Leaders. They are to be returned to locked box immediately after use and Leaders to count all equipment back in.
- Correct and safe use of tools demonstrated to all participants and staff – children to receive tool training prior to use.
- Adults to cup children's hands until competent and trustworthy.
- Tools to be used on a 1:1 basis with trained Forest School Leaders.
- Wellies or sturdy footwear to be worn by adults and children during all Forest School sessions, and especially when using tools.
- When using hand tools, pupils to wear a glove on their non-tool hand.
- Leaders to carry out ongoing risk assessment, monitoring children's mood and behaviour.

Lost or Missing Child

Forest School takes place within locked school grounds so the risk of a child going missing is extremely low; no higher than during any other outdoor activities taking place on school grounds. Forest School Leads are responsible for checking the gate leading to school grounds is locked before sessions. Routines of staying within hearing distance will be well embedded; children know to respond to the '1, 2, 3, Where are you?' call by making themselves visible and heard for a headcount. Measures to control level of risk of missing child in place with regularly reviewed risk assessments. In the very unlikely event of a lost or missing child, staff will follow the following procedures:

- Gather all children in one place and check the register against the children you have.
- Identify which child/children are missing and inform the most senior member of staff at the school.
- Check all external doors and gates are secure.
- Children to return to classroom – at least one member of staff to stay with children while another searches all the places the child could possibly have gone.

- Information to be gathered about child; DOB, where last seen, basic description and photograph.
- Police will be contacted by the most senior member of staff and parents informed within 15 minutes if the child is not found.

During off-site Forest School sessions, staff will follow the appropriate Risk Assessment for the visit to reduce risk. In case of a missing child while off-site:

- Gather all children and staff in one place and check the register against the children you have. Children will be in groups with a designated adult and will return to them to be counted.
- Identify which child/children are missing and inform the most senior staff at school.
- Staff to stay with children to maintain ratios while one member of staff checks surrounding areas and retraces steps.
- Staff will continue to check, regroup and assess every 10 minutes.
- All staff to carry mobile phones while on school visits; staff searching to make regular contact and give updates to trip leader.
- Police contacted immediately or within two minutes of searching the area and parents to be informed.

Poor Weather Procedures

Following the ethos of Forest School, we aim to go outdoors in all weather conditions. Parents, carers and pupils are made aware of this and are informed of the clothing and footwear prior to the sessions. The session will be moved indoors for some or all of the session only if it is unsafe for participants, such as in the following situations:

High winds where there is the risk of trees falling
Very wet freezing conditions where there is a risk of hypothermia
Thunder and lightning
Heatwave posing the risk of heat stroke

It will be the decision of the Head Teacher and Forest School Leaders if some or all of the session is moved indoors.

Fire Safety

At present, we do not light fires during Forest School sessions.

If campfires are introduced, full risk assessments will be put in place and the policy updated in advance.

Risk Assessments

A site risk assessment is in place and followed prior to sessions.

Risk/benefit assessments are in place for all necessary, covering the following:

Tool use
Obstacle courses
Natural material/mini-beast hunting
Den building

Risk benefit assessments will be added for any future activities where it is needed, such as campfires.

Environmental Policy

We follow the principles of Forest School and aim to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability throughout all sessions. Participants are taught respect and responsibility towards the environment around them.

We will always leave the site tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We aim through our sessions to leave the area more biodiverse and improve, rather than hinder it. Activities around attracting more wildlife to the site are included in sessions. We will take measures to minimise any negative impact on the area, completing site impact assessments for activities as necessary.

Risk Benefit Assessment

Activity	Impact	Likelihood	Risk	Control Measures	Impact	Likelihood	Risk	Benefits	Decision
Tool Use – palm drills, carving knives, peelers	3	3	9	Tools only to be used on 1:1 basis with trained FS Lead (AR or KT) when there are enough staff to safely observe rest of group. Leader to monitor participant mood - no knives or sharp tools to be used if participants are argumentative with one another or staff. Tools kept in locked tool box. Tool talk to instruct learner on how to use, including unsheathing the knife. Learner kneels with knees together No one to enter safety area around the participant. Work to the side and away from the body. Right handed on right side and left handed to the left side. Wear a glove on the non-tool hand. Knife sheathed and left on chopping block at end of use – not to be used or taken out of designated area and with FS Leader at all times. Returned to tool box at end of session/use	3	1	3	Achievement Creativity Fine motor skills Sense of pride Resilience Learn to turn take Building trust	Yes

				Tools maintained & kept sharp and used for intended purpose.					

Obstacle Course	2	3	6	Eelect equipment and obstacles appropriately. Ensure ropes are not neck level. Check condition of ropes frequently. Adult supervision with appropriate ratios. Check weather to mitigate risk of slips/trips due to wet ground/equipment. Check any trees being used prior to activity. Ensure all participants have correct footwear for activity. Check size of holes in any cargo netting being used. Be careful of entrapment.	1	2	2	Physical - gross motor skills Development of social skills Confidence Cardio-vascular benefits Balance improvement Physical development Self-esteem Creativity Teamwork Knot making skills Risk awareness Know boundaries	Yes

Den building	2	3	6	Teach participants the correct way to carry sticks - in front like a walking stick or dragging behind on ground. Teach safe den structures, e.g. a-line. Trees checked before activity. Participants supervised with high adult:child ratio. If ropes are used, supervise to ensure proper use; away from neck, not wrapped around bodies, not used at neck level. Teach strong, safe knots to use.	1	2	2	Physical - gross motor skills General fitness/cardio-vascular benefits Achievement Creativity Teamwork Risk awareness Knot making skills	Yes
Use of string (e.g. in arts and crafts)	2	2	4	Close supervision when using - not around or close to necks. Monitor use - e.g. if making necklaces pay close attention. Use in dedicated area away from others doing physical activity to ensure no trips/falls over the string.	1	1	1	Creativity Achievement Knot making skills Weaving skills	Yes

Natural material/ mini beast hunting	2	2	4	Check site before session for litter/broken glass/animal faeces/dead animals/trip hazards. Remove where possible, give warnings or cordon off area where not. Teach the don't pick/don't lick rule to mitigate risk of poisonous/stinging plants or fungi. Disinfect hands immediately if there is contact with any of above - monitor participant closely. Follow site risk assessment for procedures with stings/bites. All staff present to be aware of allergies in group and care plan in place for this - monitor these participants more closely. All staff to be aware of any SEN children who may need closer supervision/help following 'don't pick, don't lick' rule.	2	1	2	Exploration Connection with nature Independence Social skills Team/pair work Science/nature learning Risk awareness	Yes

Forest School Risk Assessment - Site

The Hazard	What might happen?	Potential level of risk H L M	Controls	Level of risk after controls	Responsibility
Uneven environment	Slips, trips and falls	M	Site check carried out by staff before each session. Hazards removed from environment or highlighted to children at beginning of session depending on risk level. Group made aware of necessity to move safely.	L	AR/KT
Animal droppings	Children may touch animal droppings.	L	Site check carried out before hand. Remove any animal droppings found with plastic gloves and bag. If appropriate, leave for children to observe (e.g. interest in wild animals on site) but remind not to touch and remove from site immediately after.	L	AR/KT
Eating/handling of natural items	Illness from ingesting poisonous items, e.g. berries, fungi Allergic reactions Stings from nettles	M	Site check carried out prior to identify and remove any poisonous plants. Participants taught the 'don't pick, don't lick, be careful with your stick' motto. Procedures in place to follow in case of this; collect example for identification, contact parents, monitor child. All staff on site to be aware of any allergies in group and the procedures to follow if an allergic reaction should occur.	L	AR/KT/Other staff on site
Trees	Could fall and cause serious injury. Conduct lightening in storm.	H	Trees receive checks by qualified professionals yearly (?). Forest School sessions cancelled/taken indoors during storms or high winds (gusts over 35mph). AR and KT to check weather forecast in advance and make decision to cancel accordingly	L	AR/KT LR/IP (organising tree checks).

			and to monitor weather during sessions and bring children indoors as needed.		
Stinging insects	Children may get stung by wasp/bee/other stinging insect during Forest School Session.	M	Children to wear long sleeves/trousers. Teach children the procedure for if they are approached by stinging insect – keep still and calm, not to move quickly or try to move insect. Teach children not to touch stinging insects, even if they are dead. If child gets stung, apply First Aid as appropriate and monitor for allergic reactions. All staff present to be aware of any pre-known allergies and to follow the care plan in place for this accordingly (e.g. antihistamine, epipen etc).	L	AR/KT/any other adults present
Stinging nettle	Children may get stung by nettles growing on site.	L	Check during pre-site check for any nettles. Cut back if needed and make children aware not to touch. Apply first aid to any stings.	L	

If the level of risk remains HIGH controls you need to seriously consider activity and conduct a full risk benefit assessment.

Signed _____

Forest School Communication Strategy

Groups to communicate with:	What information is required?	When?	Format
Students/participants	Clothing needed Expectations/boundaries during session What Forest School is	week prior/ during session	orally, videos, photos
Parents	Time/date of session Clothing/coat/footwear needed First Aid information Activities Value of Forest School Photos of activities Any resources that could be donated	Prior to session Post session	Newsletter/ Class Dojo Class Dojo Accident slips (first aid)
Headteacher	Value of Forest School Link to ethos of school Benefits to children	throughout term	Appraisal meetings, staff meetings
Governors	How funding is used Show value/impact	yearly	subject meetings
Funders/local businesses	The value and benefit to participants Resources needed How funding/resources would be used	As needed	applications letters emails
Other staff/teachers	Value of Forest School and impact on learning Ethos of Forest School for when taking part	As needed termly	Handbook Staff meetings
Site manager/council gardeners	Risks Any areas to leave unmowed/protected Areas designated for fire	As needed	Meetings Walk arounds