



Forest School Handbook



Contents of Handbook

- 1) What are the aims of Forest School?
- 2) What happens at Forest School?
- 3) What to wear for Forest School (Personal Protective Equipment/PPE)
- 4) Toileting and Handwashing
- 5) Health and Safety Policies and Procedures
- 6) Emergency Procedures
 - Emergency Bag Equipment
 - Reporting Accidents and Near Misses
 - Lost child procedure
 - Loose Dog Procedure
 - Stranger on Site
- 7) Fire Safety Procedures
 - Fire Lighting and Usage Procedures
- 8) Food Hygiene
- 9) Guidance for Safe Tool Use and Maintenance
- 10) Legislation
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - The Children's Act
 - RIDDOR
 - Insurance Requirements
- 11) Designated Person Responsibilities
 - Parental Consent letter
 - Risk Assessments

1. What are the aims of Forest School?

Forest School is a long-term process that gives the children at St David's opportunities to achieve and develop self-confidence through hands-on learning in a woodland environment. It takes a holistic approach to learning and gives each child chances to develop perseverance, independence, and sound emotional and social skills, through engaging and achievable tasks.

Through a mix of child-initiated play, exploration and learning, it aims to stimulate creativity by engaging with the surrounding habitats, natural resources and weather within the woodland setting.

Pupils are encouraged to face new challenges with positivity and take reasonable risks while being given opportunities to explore and learn.



2. What happens at Forest School?

All sessions are planned and led by a qualified Level 3 Forest School Leader or someone in the process of completing their training. They hold current First Aid and DBS certificates. All other school staff who help are well briefed in Forest School practices.

Forest School activities are linked to the curriculum and generally include elements of Language, Literacy and Communication, Maths and Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing, Science and Technology, Expressive Arts and Humanities.

Activities can include:

- Den building
- Mini beast hunts and bird spotting
- Woodland crafts made with natural materials
- Using knots and lashing
- Tool use and instruction
- Fire lighting and cooking
- Identifying and sorting natural materials
- Team games and challenges
- Muddy activities! Mud kitchen/Mud faces...Mud!
- Free play, exploration and lots of fun!

3. What should be worn for Forest School?

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Pupils will be outside in varying weather conditions and it is therefore vital that appropriate clothing is worn. (Only high winds/adverse weather conditions would result in a cancelled session).

...For the cold weather

Lots of layers are best for warmth and can be removed if necessary. Old clothes are best as getting dirty is highly probable!

- Hat, scarf and gloves
- Jumper/fleece jacket (with warm undergarments)
- Warm socks (and some spare socks)
- Walking boots/sturdy trainers/wellies
- Waterproof clothing
- Coat

...For the hot weather

In warmer weather it is still important to wear long trousers and long-sleeved tops to protect arms and legs from scratches and sun.

- Sun cream (parents will apply at home/before session)
- Sun hat
- Walking boots/sturdy trainers/wellies (sandals or flip-flops are not suitable)
- Spare socks
- Waterproof clothing and a jacket
- Gloves (will be necessary for some activities)



4. Toileting and Handwashing

There is no toilet on site in the Forest School at St. David's. Participants are encouraged to use the toilet before the session begins. If needed, children will be escorted by a member of St. David's school staff to use the facilities within the school building. A hand-washing station with soap and a towel will be set up in the Forest School area. Paper towels; wet wipes and anti-bacterial gel are also available.

Litter will be removed after each session. A bin bag will be brought to the site before each session begins and will be taken away at the end. The used bag must be placed in the large council waste bins to the right of the Forest School area.

5. Health and Safety Policies and Procedures

Daily Procedures

To ensure the safety of children and adults attending Forest School sessions there are checks which need to be carried out before and after each session. The Forest School leader is responsible for ensuring all checks are completed.

Pre-visit Checks

- Go through the site risk assessment and amend/update as necessary. Remove all visible litter and faeces.
- Ensure risk assessment for activities are completed.
- Remove obvious trip hazards/mark areas if necessary.
- Cut overhanging vegetation from paths, etc.
- Set up hand washing station and a bin.
- Ensure all materials are ready for planned activities.
- Check first aid kit is stocked and hung in position.
- Ensure snacks/hot drinks/fresh water/cups/etc. are available and stored hygienically (Lidded boxes, etc.)
- Ensure fire bucket with clean water, cup and towel are in place.
- Ensure Forest School rucksack contains charged mobile phone and emergency contact numbers, etc. (see Emergency Bag Equipment Pg. 6)



During the session

- Adult to child ratio should be at least 1:8 for KS2 and 1:6 for Foundation Phase.
- Children will be reminded of safety rules including boundaries, emergency procedure, '1-2-3 come to me' call, fire safety and potential hazards.
- De-escalating techniques should be used when dealing with behavioural issues.

At the end of a session

- A register will be taken.
- We will ensure fire is out and the area is made safe.
- We will pack away and store all equipment and resources safely.
- Litter and consumable items will be removed.

6. Emergency Procedures

Emergency Bag Equipment

In addition to resources and materials to suit the planned activity, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag with them. The emergency bag will contain:

- A First Aid Kit and an Accident Report Book

Instant ice pack Cleansing wipes Space blanket Disposable gloves Sterile non-medicated dressing Burns gel	Triangular bandage Safety pins Plasters Eye bandage and eye wash Cling film
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- Risk Assessment Folder (Site Risk Assessment, Activity Risk Assessment and Session Risk Assessment)
- Register with medical information and emergency contact details
- Clean Water
- Medication for individuals (labelled with name, instructions and parental consent form)
- A means of communication (mobile phone)

Reporting Accidents and Near Misses

In the event of a minor accident or near miss during a Forest School session the FS Leader must log it in the Accident Report Book kept with the First Aid Kit, stating date and time of accident as well as the name of the person injured and any persons involved with administering First Aid. Near misses must be recorded for future risk assessments.

In the event of an Emergency

- The FS Leader must be informed of an emergency immediately.
- The FS Leader will delegate a member of staff to call the emergency services and the school.
- The school will contact the parents of the casualty.
- A designated person will take responsibility for the rest of the group. The children should be kept safe and calm.
- Once the casualty has left the site the FS Leader will assume responsibility for the rest of the group and make the decision to continue with or to cancel the rest of the session.

Lost Child Procedure

- A register of participants should be taken to every session.
- Ensure children are aware of the boundaries during the safety rule talks.
- Make regular head counts during sessions by using '1, 2, 3 come to me' rule.

If a child is missing:

- Use '1, 2, 3 come to me' to bring all children together.
- Call the register to be sure that there is a missing child.
- Ask children and adults when and where the child was last seen.
- FS Leader should designate one adult to stay with children while all other adults search the area, calling the child's name (maximum 5 minutes). Adults use mobile phones to keep in contact with each other.
- If the child is still not found FS Leader will inform the school's head teacher and phone the police. School will contact child's parents. FS leader will give all relevant information to the police and control will pass to the police.
- FS Leader will record all details on Incident Record Form held within school.

Loose Dog Procedure

There may be an occasion where a unleashed dog finds its way into the Forest School area. If a dog approaches the group they should be advised not to run about or act in an excitable manner around the dog. Preferably keep their arms by their sides, use quiet voices and stay as still as possible. Allow the owner to deal with the dog and report the incident at school. However if the dog is without its owner, FS Leader should attempt to call the dog until it leaves the FS area and the school grounds.

Strangers on site

It would be quite rare for a stranger to find their way onto the Forest School site as the site is within school grounds and the gates are kept locked during school hours. However, if a stranger is seen on site it is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ask the person for identification and their purpose for being there. If the situation were to escalate the FS leader should phone the school for extra assistance.



7. Fire Safety Procedures

- Fires will only be lit when it is deemed by the Forest School Leader that the children are ready and the safety rules are fully established.
- The fire must be at least 1.5 metres away from any seating area.
- There must be gaps in the seating area around the fire to allow for exit and entrance.
- A bucket of water with a cup and cloth will be located at a designated spot close to the fire.
- A fire will never be left unattended.
- A fire will not be lit in adverse weather conditions.
- The fire will be fully extinguished at the end of the session.
- A burns First Aid kit will be brought to sessions when the fire is lit.
- No one should be closer than 1.5 metres to fire unless tending the fire or cooking under adult supervision.



Fire Lighting and Usage Procedures

- Hair must be tied back and scarves or ties on clothing must be tucked away.
- Kneel down on one knee to attend the fire using fire gloves and a kneeling pad.
- Strike matches or Flint and Steel away from body.
- Use newspaper or cotton wool to start fire then use twigs to establish the fire.
- If smoke blows into eyes, children are encouraged to close their eyes and count to 10 rather than trying to move around away from the smoke.
- Do not lean over the fire.
- Do not throw rubbish or other items into the fire.
- When cooking at the fire (e.g. toasting marshmallows) no more than 3 people will use the fire at one time.

8. Food Hygiene

- Wash hands before handling or cooking food.
- Tie hair back .
- Cover cuts and grazes with appropriate dressing.
- Do not handle food if suffering from stomach upsets or colds, coughs and flu.
- Use separate chopping boards for raw and ready to eat foods.
- Store food in clean, plastic, lidded containers.
- Clean all utensils after use.
- Food should never be left uncovered.
- All leftover food should be removed from the site and not left for birds or wildlife.



9. Guidance for Safe Tool Use and Maintenance

General

- Tools should be kept clean and in good working order/well maintained (e.g. oiled)
- Children should only use tools when they have been shown how to use them and under adult supervision.
- Tools should be kept in a locked container (they should be counted in and out).
- Where appropriate tools should have safety sheaths and catches on when not in use.
- Carry tools at side of the body with the cutting edge facing down.
- Pass to others using the handle first.



Potato Peelers

Generally used in Forest School to peel bark (for roasting stick, etc.). Rest the stick on the ground or a bench not on legs. Hold the potato peeler away from yourself and peel away moving peeler towards the ground. Carry at the side of the body by the handle and pass to others handle first.

PPE—Glove to be worn on non-working hand.

Secateurs

Used for cutting small branches and pruning back brambles etc. Put the wood to be cut as close to the hinge as possible and use the length of the handles to give maximum leverage. Always close the secateurs when not in use. Carry at the side of the body by the handle and pass to others handle first.

PPE—Glove to be worn on non-working hand.

Loppers

Used for cutting branches up to approx. 5cm. Put the wood to be cut as close to the hinge as possible and use the length of the handles to give maximum leverage. Always close the loppers and store safely when not in use. Carry at the side of the body by the handle and pass to others handle first.

PPE—Gloves to be worn on both hands.

Tent Pegs

Used to hollow out elder beads (pith removal). Poke the piths away from body towards the ground. No running around with tent pegs. Carry at the side of body and pass to other curled top first.

PPE—Glove to be worn on non-working hand.

Bowsaw

Used for cutting logs. Hold the wood to be cut securely with a gloved hand. Use a push and pull action preferably with a second person as in picture below. Carry at side of body with blade facing down. Pass to others using the handle.

PPE—Glove to be worn on non-working hand.



Axe

Used for splitting wood. Log to be split is placed on secure surface. Axe is placed on top and hit with a wooden mallet preferably with a second person as in picture below. Carry at the side of the body with cutting edge facing down or behind. Always replace guard. Pass to others handle first.



PPE—Glove to be worn on non-working hand.

Knife

Used for cutting, shaping, carving and removing bark. Stand or sit comfortably and securely. Lock elbows in to body and work the blade moving away from you. Sheath blade when not in use. Carry by the handle with blade pointing down at the side of body and pass to others by the handle.



PPE—Glove to be worn on non-working hand.

10. Legislation

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

HSWA provides a framework for ensuring the health and safety of all employees in any work activity. It also provides for the health and safety of anyone who may be affected by work activities e.g. pupils/students and visitors to educational sites, including parents and volunteers.

St. David's Catholic Primary School is committed to ensure the safety of pupils and adults while participating in Forest School activities and as such rigorous Risk Assessments are made. There is a overall site Risk Assessment and a daily checklist for each session to add on any new potential hazards. In addition there is an activity risk assessment for each session.



The Children's Act 2004

The Children Act 2004 was designed with guiding principles in mind for the care and support of children. These are:

- To allow children to be healthy
- To allow children to remain safe in their environments
- Helping children to enjoy life
- Assist children in their quest to succeed
- Help make a positive contribution to the lives of children

St. David's Catholic Primary School is committed to ensure the well being of all pupils at all times. Staff and volunteers in Forest School have a responsibility in relation to Child Protection and Safeguarding and are committed to taking all reasonable measures to promote the welfare of each child participating in Forest School and associated activities.

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

In relation to RIDDOR, an accident is a separate, identifiable, unintended incident, which causes physical injury.

St. David's Catholic Primary School is committed to ensure that all injuries are recorded with a date, time and persons involved. At Forest School there is a fully stocked First Aid Kit on site at all times together with a Accident Record Book. There is always a minimum of one qualified First Aider at the Forest School site and all staff follow the recording procedures in the case of any incident.

Insurance Requirements

All pupils and staff are covered by the school insurance policy.

St. David's Catholic Primary School, St David's Lane, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 1LH

Telephone Number: 01352 752651 Email: damail@hwbmail.net

11. Designated Person Responsibilities

Acting Headteacher: Miss A Edwards

C.P.O: Miss A Edwards

Forest School Leader: Mrs H McNaught

First Aider: Mr C Williams