

Policy Title	EYFS, Holiday Club and Forest School Policy
Policy Lead (Appointment & Initials)	Head of Lower School (TJS)
Date of Last Review	January 2025
Date of Next Review	January 2026

EYFS and Pre-Prep Forest School Policy

General Welfare Requirements:

The provider must take the necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
1.3 keeping Safe	2.1 Respecting each other 2.2 Parents as partners	3.4 The wider context	4.4 Personal, social and emotional development

This document should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies; Action in the event of a child reported as missing; EYFS missing child policy; Supervision of children on trips and outings policy; sunscreen and administration of medicines policy; Behaviour management policy; Use of mobile phones etc

Safety and Emergency Procedures Before, During and After Forest School

The Safety and First Aid Equipment Required for Forest School

Staff running Forest School must hold an up to date certificate in Paediatric First Aid.

Staff must always have access to a mobile phone in case of an emergency.

First Aid Equipment

Sterile adhesive plasters; triangular bandage; safety pins, medium and large dressing; face-guard; antiseptic wipes; eye-pads; ice-pack; disposable gloves; individual children's medication.

Safety Kit Bag

(This contains the first aid kit)

Wet-wipes; anti-septic gel; clean water; kitchen roll; plastic bags; whistle; contact list; relevant medical information; snacks; spare hats/gloves or sun-hats/sun-cream depending upon the season; matches; camera; space-blanket; tarpaulin; copy of risk assessments; identification books.

Tools

- Ratios in forest School are what is reasonable when bearing in mind: the ages of the children, the confidence, training and ability of the staff and the types and needs of the children. High staff ratios reduce risk.
- Tools used in Forres Sandle Manor Forest School for basic skills include: x 10 vegetable peelers*; x2 21" bow saws*; x4 12" bow saws*; tent pegs; rope; tarpaulin; x2 1.5 lt storm kettles with tri-pods; matches; plastic-cups; water container; spoons and other cutlery as necessary.
- All equipment is counted in and out again and all equipment marked with an * is to be used in an adult child ratio of one adult to two children at the most. With saws this is one to one. Matches and storm kettles are only to be used by adults.
- The tarpaulins and ropes may be used to make fun dens and shelters. In an emergency the tarpaulin may be used to provide shelter.

Safety Procedures Before Forest School

(A tree surgeon inspects the school wood land on an annual basis and the grounds are checked frequently by the school grounds men and cleared of harmful litter. However, before each session, the Forest School Leader should inspect the area to be used, to ensure that there are no hazards which are injurious to health and ensure that these are removed. If it is not possible to remove the hazard for whatever reason, the Forest school leader must ensure that all accompanying staff

and children are aware of the risk and the appropriate action to be taken. If necessary, staff/pupil ratios must be adjusted to take account of the risk or a different area used for the sessions Forest School activity until the hazard has been removed. Hazards include: barbed wire, fallen fencing, holes in the ground, bees, ticks, nettles, rubbish etc.

- Employer and public liability insurance is taken out by the school with Zurich Insurance. It covers all activities undertaken on or off the school premises by children and staff, including Forest School.
- As a Forest School Leader I am not qualified to run overnight camps and therefore will not do so.
- Informed consent should be obtained from the parents of children attending Forest School – this is done in a form signed annually and includes specific permissions to climb trees, go in the stream and be near a lit fire with the supervision of an adult.
- Children should be appropriately and adequately clothed for Forest School. In Forres Sandle Manor children are provided with water-proof overalls and two rain-proof coats with reflective strips – one light weight and one fleecy lined for winter. They wear these over their uniform which has as many layers as is desired. Children also wear wellington boots. This protective clothing is worn both summer and winter, though the coat may be removed if necessary providing the children are wearing long sleeves. According to the season, children are also required to wear sun-hats and sun-cream or hats, gloves and scarves.
- Forest School is generally held on the school grounds. However, should it be decided to go off the school Premises the school policy for staff arranging and supervising off-campus trips and outings should be consulted and followed alongside the Pre-Prep Policy for the supervision of children on Trips and Outings. A qualified mini-bus driver must always drive the mini-bus. (copies attached)
- The weather should be checked to ensure that it is suitable for Forest School to take place. Forest School must not take place in the woodland area in high winds and storms. The Moorland area may be used as an alternative, though not during electrical storms. In conditions of ice and snow or heavy rain and mud the Forest School Leader must decide whether it is appropriate to run the Forest school and if so, whether the duration should be reduced and what, if any, additional precautions should be taken.
- All activities should be low risk due to appropriate staffing ratios. The Forest School Leader must ensure that the ratios of staff to pupils is appropriate for the planned activities.

Safety Procedures During Forest School

- At the start of each session, children are reminded of the boundaries. Of particular importance is the boundary with the little stream. This is often dry. However, children are still reminded that they must remain two large steps back from the bank (1m) and during free play periods a member of staff is posted here. Children are also reminded to be aware of hazards such as the uneven forest floor, stinging nettles and potential discarded litter and to take care whilst climbing and balancing. Other routine reminders include, not walking into or across either the forest or fire circles, not eating anything in the forest unless it is given to them by a teacher and not putting unwashed fingers into mouths. Children are reminded that when they hear the whistle, they must stop whatever they are doing and return to the forest log circle.
- Staff must ensure that they are aware of the school policies for: Behaviour Management; The Homely Remedy Policy; The Health and Safety Policy; The Policy for the Administration of Medication; The Policy for First Aid, Accident and Emergency; The Policy for Sick and Infectious Children; the Policy for Lost or Missing children; The No-Smoking Policy and the Policy for the Employment of Staff. (copies of all these are attached)
- During Forest school activities note should be taken of: procedures for the lighting of fires and cooking; conserving species and possible damage to the environment and woodland through overuse; emergency procedures due to sudden inclement weather and shelter and toileting procedures. Details on all these follow below.

Procedures for Fire-Lighting and Cooking

Before lighting the fire

- The permanent Fire-circle will have a base of bricks or stones inset into the ground. This provides an additional safety factor as the peat of the floor of the forest can catch and slow-burn.
- There will be a fire safety zone of 1.5m around the fire. The log seating circle will begin outside this zone.
- For a temporary fire the area must be thoroughly cleared for a hearth and a safety zone clearly marked. In Forres Sandle Manor a temporary fire will only be lit inside a storm kettle or ceramic bowl and not directly on the forest floor.

- Children are reminded that they must always walk around the outside of the log seating circle and never move across the safety zone, or into the fire area, unless invited to do so by an adult. Children must not move around once the fire is lit unless instructed to do so. Children are reminded that they must not throw things into the fire and that they will be invited to feed a fire by an adult. They are reminded that grey ash still can burn and that they must not touch the remains of a fire.
- The fire must be lit by adults and only one box of matches should be in use. This must be returned to the safety kit bag once the fire is lit and not left lying around.

During the session

- When a fire is lit there is always one adult by it.
- There is always one to one supervision of children feeding a fire or storm kettle and they are invited into the safety zone by the adult.
- Children must not move around once the fire is lit unless instructed to do so and they must remain seated unless told otherwise.

After the session

- The fire must be checked to ensure that it is completely extinguished. Water may be used if necessary and the area checked before leaving to ensure that there are no smouldering ashes. Where storm kettles and ceramic bowls are used, the fire is left to burn the little amount of fuel used and to die down naturally. They must then be cool enough to take back to school or collected after the session.
- Children are reminded that grey ash still can burn and that they must not touch the remains of a fire.

Cooking

- Nothing found in the forest area may be eaten.
- Children are reminded that they must not put anything into their mouths, including dirty fingers.
- Hands must be cleaned before children eat or prepare food. This may be done with water, wet-wipes or gel.

- Only clean and appropriate utensils may be used. When sticks are used they should have the outer bark removed.
- Children must be supervised in a ratio of one adult to two children when toasting marshmallows, stick-bread etc.
- The hearth on which a storm-kettle or ceramic bowl is stood should be flat enough to ensure stability. A tri-pod stand may be used with a storm kettle as an extra precaution.
- No rubbish or debris may be left in the forest area. Everything must be removed and the area left as it is found.

Conserving Species and Possible Damage to the Environment and Woodland

- A tree surgeon inspects the school wood land on an annual basis and the grounds are checked frequently by the school grounds men. They ensure that the woodland is maintained. Rhododendrons are a species of tree which tends to take over. However, they also form 'spaghetti' like clumps which are easy to climb into and onto and have long branches that can be bounced on. A compromise is therefore met between keeping the Rhododendron population to a minimum whilst maintaining a good supply of trees for the children's play. There is a dearth of woodland and hedgerow trees such as Elderflower and Hazel, which are useful for Forest School activities. We are going to apply for these species from the www.treesforall.org site of the woodland trust.
- The Forest School is currently held once a week during term time – a maximum of 30 visits to the woodland in a year. However the 'Forest' school location is not always used. This may be because the weather has been inappropriate for the woods or because another environment is more suitable such as meadow land or a more open area. However, we are mindful of possible damage through our use. We try to vary our paths and our locations within the woods to a certain extent and we look out for and protect young trees, flora and fauna.
- Children are encouraged to take an interest in and respect their environment and Forest School is a part of this. We ensure that all litter is removed at the end of every session and that the woodland is left as we found it as far as possible. Children are reminded that they may only use fallen sticks etc from the forest floor and that they may not take anything from a living tree. We may pick wild flowers as a part of an activity, such as colour matching, but we never dig them up and the children are aware that they may not mark or

damage the trees, though they may use them in their play. We may hunt for mini-beasts, but logs etc are replaced and creatures returned to where they are found. The children are aware that the woodland is the home of many insects, animals and birds and that they are guests in their house and so must behave with care and courtesy.

- If fires have been lit during a session care is taken to ensure that it has been extinguished and the area made safe. Care is taken to protect the peat based forest floor from the possibility of slow burning fires which may travel through it as no fires are ever lit directly upon the bear ground. (Please see 'Procedures for Fire Lighting and Cooking')
- If caught short, children needing to urinate are taken to a designated area on the edge of the boundary. This is out of public view and away from play areas and is varied to avoid over use and damage to the environment.

Emergency Procedures due to Sudden Inclement Weather and Shelter

Please see 'Safety procedures before Forest School'.

- Every care is taken to ensure that the weather is appropriate for Forest school before it is embarked upon and that the environment has been assessed. For example that the ground and trees are not hard and slippery and therefore dangerous due to ice or driving rain or that high winds have not made the woods hazardous.
- In sunny, warm weather extra drinks and water are taken along with a supply of sun-cream and sun-hats. The sun cannot easily penetrate the heavy tree canopy of the woodland in summer but if necessary, time outside may be limited. Overalls are still worn as protection along with welly boots.
- In icy, cold weather or snow, time outside may also be limited. Shelter may be provided from the wind using tarpaulins and hot drinks provided and a fire lit to keep warm. Children are encouraged with activities designed to keep them active and moving and children dress appropriately with warm layers under their overalls and waterproofs and hats, gloves and scarves. Spares of the latter are carried in the Safety kit bag. There is no sloping ground in Forres Sandle Manor that would be suitable for sledging, so this is not an issue, but we would take advantage of snowy conditions to build snow men and sculptures and enjoy this seasonal treat whilst carefully monitoring the children and changing conditions.

- In high winds we do not use the woodland area. Instead we go into open grounds and activities are adapted or adjusted to these conditions. Before the woodland is used again it is checked to ensure that there are no dangerous branches and if there were this area of the woods would be avoided and the hazard reported to our grounds men.
- In electrical storms we do not go outside at all. Should we be caught unawares we retreat into our Forest School outside classroom, which is a brick 'summer house' on the edge of the woodland. We would wait here for the storm to pass. A tarpaulin is carried and in an emergency this could be used as a shelter to protect the children if we are caught outside during heavy weather. Realistically however, we would use our Forest School outside classroom and we are never far from a school building.

Toileting procedures

- The 1974 Health and Safety at work Act states that toilets should be provided.
- Before Forest School all children are encouraged to go to the toilet. If the children need to go to the toilet when we are in the woodland we ascertain what they want to do and act accordingly. If they need to simply do a wee they are taken to a discreet, designated boundary site and encouraged to do so there. For any other reason children are taken back into the school which is close by. Urinating in public can be an offence, and though the school grounds are private property we are aware of this and do not wish to encourage this practise generally. Additionally, for reasons of child protection staff are keen that children use the school facilities where ever possible. Children are always taken back to school if we are visiting the Moorland or fields and staff ratios allow for this.
- I am aware of Ventilated Improved Pit Latrines etc but such a construction is not needed at Forres Sandle Manor, nor is it suitable. The water table in the woodland area used for Forest School is quite high and such a construction could cause contamination. Bournemouth Water are however happy for the boundary area to be used in an emergency.

Safety Procedures After Forest School

- At the end of all Forest School activities the area used is left as it has been found. Litter is removed, fires safely extinguished and mini-beasts returned to habitats.

- Should an incident have occurred during our session there will be a reporting session at the first opportunity. At this time the situation will be analysed and assessed for improved practise and a written report of the incident made. Relevant people will be informed as necessary and procedures and policies such as for example the Lost or missing child policy, adapted as necessary.
- If a child has been injured during the session, we will check that the relevant procedures as indicated by our policy documents were followed and the appropriate documentation signed by parents and staff.
- Carry out a visual check of children for ticks.

Please see all enclosed Policy Documents.