

Health and Safety Guidance

The Forest School ethos has six principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011. These state:

Principle 1:

Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

Principle 2:

Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

Principle 3:

Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

Principle 4:

Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Principle 5:

Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Principle 6:

Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

The fourth of these principals needs to be considered under the Health and Safety Guidelines for Buckland Newton Primary School. The **criteria** for achieving this principal are:

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Forest School Procedures

In line with the Principles of Forest School and the safety procedures at Buckland Newton Primary School the following areas are subject to consideration when operating Forest School sessions. During Forest School sessions, all school policies will be adhered to, and the Health and Safety table covers the additional procedures that are specific to Forest School sessions. These must be actioned and dated by the Forest School Leader and reviewed on a regular basis.

Health and Safety

This is the area which can be the most problematic for Forest School Leaders. Finding the safe balance between giving the children more freedom and greater opportunity to explore their environment and take reasonable risk, whilst keeping them safe, requires due consideration. In an increasingly risk averse society this may present problems for staff and parents which is why it is crucial that risk assessments are thorough and reviewed on a regular basis.

Risk Assessment

A hazard is something that can cause harm, a risk is the likelihood either high or low that the hazard will cause harm. In Forest School, as in other areas of learning, it is important for children to be able to take reasonable risk. It is vital to take the children's experience into account when planning activities and reviewing the risk assessments. For instance the Reception children in September may have had no previous experience of Forest School and will most certainly not have any experience of our own Forest School Area, these facts must be considered very carefully when planning activities.

The 'Health and Safety at Work Act 1974' applies to all places of work and it covers areas such as Risk Assessment, Emergency Procedures, Welfare of all, Training, First Aid and Reporting and Recording. The law requires you to '*look at the risks and to take sensible measure to avoid them ... so far as is reasonably possible.*' (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974)

Before Forest School Sessions take place the site and all activities are risk assessed by the Forest School leader. These assessments are regularly updated as appropriate. Activities are not begun and will be stopped if the level of risk is too high. (See Risk Assessment section of the handbook).

Safeguarding Children

The DFE and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) illustrates how 'individuals and organisations must work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' (Every Child Matters). With this in mind the established school policy on Child Protection will be adhered to. At the most basic all adults working at the school whether it be on a voluntary or paid capacity have a current enhanced CRB.

The child to adult ratio at Forest School must be high. The school policy states that on offsite trips the adult to child ratio will be a minimum of 1:6 in Reception, the local authority guideline for this age group is the same.

Before children commence Forest School they are given an appropriate introductory talk about what is involved in the Forest School process, with particular emphasis on safety and boundaries.

Site Degradation

This can become an issue for a Forest School site that receives regular long term use. If this occurs an alternate site or site rotation may have to occur. The Forest School Leader needs to be aware of the trees/plants/shrubs in their site and will need to change sites or boundaries on the present site to allow this to happen. The grounds at Buckland Newton Primary will be cared for by the 'Go Green' club members and staff. School Summer holidays should be sufficient time for the site to recover. A baseline survey has been carried out (see appendix) in order to monitor any long term impact on the site.

Learning and Development

The children experiencing Forest School are Reception to Year 6 aged, so the planning must be in accordance with Early Years Foundation Curriculum, KS1 and the KS2 curriculum, including appropriate planning and observation.

Recommended ratios by Dorset Authorities:

These ratios are made in conjunction with the 'DORSET COUNTY COUNCIL Regulations & Notes of Guidance for Off-Site Educational Visits and Related Activities with 'EVOLVE' 2013' and take into consideration any future visiting parties to Buckland Newton Primary's Forest School Site, as well as classes from the school.

The following ratios are for day sessions using the School site or if activities are taken off site (These ratios would be greater for overnight stays please see specific risk assessments):

Under 2 (in the classroom) 1:3 – BNS practice for Forest School **1:1**

Age 2 (In the classroom) 1:4 – BNS practice For Forest School **1:2**

Age 3 to 5 (in the classroom) 1:8 – BNS practice for Forest School **1:4**

Key stage one, (e.g. 5-7 year olds) **1:6**

Key stage two, (e.g. 8-11 year olds) **1:15**

Key stage three, (e.g. 12 –14 year olds) **1:20**

Key stage four, (e.g. 16+ year olds) **1:20**

		Actioned:
Health and Safety		
Risk Assessment	- Adhere to school policy - Risk Assessment for site and activities	
First Aid	- Adhere to school policy - Forest School Leader to have Outdoor First Aid qualification - A paediatric 1st Aider to accompany all EYFS Forest School sessions - First Aid box to always be taken to sessions - Individual medical needs documented	
Emergency Procedure	- Adhere to school policy - School Incident Form is placed in the Forest School Guide Book - Record and Report all incidents and emergencies and file - Meeting point – following Fire Emergency procedures and lockdown procedures	
Parental / Guardian Consent	All parents / Guardians to complete parental consent forms	
Protective Clothing	- All parents/Guardians to provide children with change of clothes, appropriate waterproof clothing and footwear. (See appendix) - Staff informed of appropriate clothing required for Forest School Sessions	
Tools	All tools to be stored appropriately and to be operational	
Use of Fire	- Adhere to Forest School Fire Protocol (see appendix) - Drinks to be taken to all Forest School Sessions - Hand wipes and Hand gel provided for each session - Ensure water bucket (containing water), fire blanket and fire gloves are in plain sight and easy accessed at all times - Children are reminded about Fire Safety every time a fire is planned and before the Fire is lit. - The fire is put out carefully at the end of	

	every session.	
Safeguarding Children		Actioned:
• Vetting and Barring	Adhere to school policy ie. All staff and volunteers to have current CRB enhanced disclosures	
• Parental Permission	- Adhere to school policy - Refer to Health and Safety document - All children to have permission from Parent/Guardian for the use of photographs and digital recording	
• Staffing	- Adhere to school policy on adult : child ratio as outlined in the Health and Safety section of the Forest School Book - Prior to the start of Forest School provide each member of staff with a copy of the Forest School Guide - Adhere to school policy - No unauthorised adults at Forest School Sessions - Staff are responsible for regular head counts - Staff who plan Forest School sessions must do so in accordance with the Forest School guidelines and incorporate Health and Safety Factors for each activity - Forest School INSET will take place annually to share new ideas and discuss sessions that have worked well in the year.	
Environmental Impact		Actioned:
• Sustainable use of site	Monitor site termly for ecological impact	
• Care of flora and fauna	- Liaise with experts as required - Baseline survey	
Learning and Development		Actioned:
• Forest School Ethos	Reflected in planning	
• Planning, Observation and Assessment	Adhere to school policy and EYFS guidelines	
• Equal Opportunities	- Inclusion of all children in Forest School sessions - Access statements if required	
• Behaviour Management	- Adhere to school policy - High staff to pupil ratio	