

## Health and Safety Policy for Forest School at South Otterington Church of England (V.C.) Primary School.

Policy, procedure and active management practice is in place to ensure the health, safety and well being of participants at all times and comply with relevant regulations.

Forest School leaders and staff are competent, appropriately trained and actively use health, safety and hygiene policies and procedures.

All Forest School participants have an awareness of the appropriate health and safety elements.

## Site

### 1. Use of the Site

The site being used is the Police Headquarters at Newby Wiske. We have permission to use this site from Chief **Dave Jones**. We have been on site visits with John Sutton the Facilities Manager and have discussed the activities that we will be allowed to carry out on this site. A copy of lesson plans and weekly risk assessments must be sent to John Sutton before the session. We must leave no trace of having been on the site apart from the log circle which we have permission to leave on the site.

### 2. Distance

The site is around 0.5 miles from the school with a short walk along village footpaths and a short section over a narrow bridge. Then into the Police Headquarters through the main gate which is used by both vehicles and pedestrians. We then walk along the edge of the training fields and into the woods.

The children are led by the Forest School leader and supervised by parents and teaching assistants. They may walk in one's or two's and are told to walk over the bridge in single file. An adult stops traffic for us to cross the road and children walk carefully through the gates. Once onto the site the children must always be behind the Forest School leader and an adult will be at the back to make sure all the children are in view.

### 3. Boundaries

The boundaries within the woodland are set with pink ribbons which the teaching assistant ties to trees before the morning session and then they are collected by another teaching assistant before we leave the afternoon session. The boundary ribbons prevent the children from going near the pond and also from going onto the police training equipment which looks like an adventure playground. On the first session the children are taken on a walk right round the site and shown where the boundary ribbons are, and told that they must not cross them.

All adults are aware of the boundary ribbons and are observant to make sure that children do not cross them.

#### 4. Noise

John Sutton the Facilities Manager informs us of any sessions when the police are doing 'use of force' training as this can be noisy and we can reassure the children as to what is happening. Sometimes shooting can also be heard on neighbouring farms and children may need to be reassured about the loud bangs.

#### 5. Steep drops

There is a section of wall in the wood that is only around 0.5 metres high but on the other side drops around 2 metres onto the road. Children have been told about this danger and one of the rules is not to go near the wall.

#### 6. Dead Wood and Fallen trees

When the site checks are done as part of the risk assessment the Forest School leader will scan the tree canopy for any dead wood, any branches that have snapped off and may cause a hazard from falling. If there is such a danger the site will not be in use until the wood can be removed. Fallen trees need to be checked to make sure that they are resting on the ground and are stable and not likely to roll around.

#### 7. Bees and Wasps

During Forest School sessions all adults should be vigilant for the presence of bee or wasp nests. If they are found then contact must be made with an agency that can dispose of them. Until the nest is removed Forest School sessions would not take place. All adults should be aware of any children with a known allergic reaction to stings and the trained first aider should be aware of emergency procedures to follow if anyone has been stung.

#### 8. Nettles

As the site is covered in nettles in the summer months children are all advised to wear long trousers and long sleeved tops to prevent nettle stings. The first aider will carry anthisan cream which can be applied to nettle stings. **The first aider will also carry piriton syrup which can be administered for bee and wasp stings and for nettle stings. Parent permission must be sought by telephone if there is a need to administer piriton medicine.** Children are all shown what nettles look like before entering the site.

#### 9. Poisonous plants

As part of the risk assessment the Forest School leader will be aware of any poisonous plants found on the site. All children are told not to put anything in their mouths unless told to do so by an adult. The trained first aider will be aware of emergency procedures should a child swallow something poisonous.

# Rules in Forest School

The first session that the children attend Forest School they will be told that this session will involve a lot of listening to the Forest School leader. They will have to listen to and understand the rules that we all need to follow to keep us all safe while we are here. Children may be asked if there are any rules that they would like to add and parent helpers will also be asked if they think any rules should be added. The activities of different weeks will bring their own sets of rules and these will be introduced at the beginning of the session while the children are sitting at the camp area.

Basic rules for Forest School are:-

1. It is important to listen to the Forest School leader and to all adults.
2. Everyone must do as they are told immediately (this may be for safety).
3. We treat each other with respect.
4. We are aware of those around us.
5. We never cross the boundary ribbons.
6. We never walk inside the log circle (there may be a fire there).
7. We treat all plants and animals in the woods with respect.
8. The Forest School leader always walks at the front on the journey to the woods.
9. Never put anything in your mouth unless told to do so by an adult.
10. Respond to whistle - short blasts return to camp, one long blast run to sound of whistle.
11. Children may carry sticks in the wood but must be aware of the people around them. If they are waving sticks dangerously then an adult will tell them to put the sticks down. Children are not allowed to bring sticks back to school.
12. Children are allowed to climb trees to the height that their hand can reach from the ground. Their feet must always be pointing downwards. Children will be shown how high they can climb on their first session at forest school. All adults to be aware of how high children are climbing.

# Roles in Forest School

Jane Worgan is the Qualified Forest School leader and will be in charge of the Forest School sessions. Jane Worgan has an outdoor first aid certificate and will be the qualified first aider on Forest School sessions. A teaching assistant will help to supervise the sessions and will take over the

role of leader if Jane Worgan was injured or dealing with an emergency. Parent volunteers will be there to help and support the children. They will not be asked to do anything that they have not been trained to do or are uncomfortable with. The roles of the children are to listen to the adults, to help each other and to follow Forest School rules.

## Risk Assessment

The Forest School leader will carry out risk assessments before the sessions begin. A copy of the risk assessments will be held in the school, the Forest School leader will carry a copy of the risk assessment and a copy will be sent to John Sutton, Facilities Manager at the Police Headquarters.

Risk assessments will be completed for the site, for any children with specific behaviours and for the activities to be carried out such as tool use and fire lighting.

Risk assessment should be completed for each session and should be evaluated, dated and amended after each session.

## Lost person

On the first visit to the site the children and adults are shown two points to return to if they are lost. The first is on the field and is a brown fire assembly sign for visitors to the site. The second is the log circle in the wood. A regular head count will be done by the forest school leader when the children are collected together. A class list will be carried to each session. If someone is found to be missing an adult will stay with the children and another adult will check both of the lost people points, they will then check round the woodland shouting the child's name and then return to the adult and group of children. If the child cannot be found the school will be informed and they will instigate their missing child procedures. (See attached copy of missing child policy)

## Bad Weather

If the weather conditions are considered to be too dangerous to go to Forest School e.g. gale force winds or thunder and lightning, a decision will be made to cancel the session. It may be decided that it would be safe to conduct the session on the school field away from trees. If it is decided to cancel

the session all parent volunteers will be informed. If conditions deteriorate while we are at Forest school a decision will be made to leave the woods and return to school.

## Hygiene

Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before setting out for Forest School sessions. A portapotty will be carried as essential equipment. All solid matter must be removed from the woodland site.

Children will wash hands with hand gel before drinks and snack time.

Children will be encouraged to wash their hands on return to school.

## Tool Use

The Forest School leader will have been fully trained in the use of all tools that are to be used in a Forest School session. Tool use should be appropriate to the age of the children attending Forest School. A lesson plan should set out how the tool is to be used and the purpose for the use. A risk assessment should be completed for any activities using tools. Parents should be aware of the lesson plan, should have read the risk assessment and be aware of the first aid emergency procedures in case it is the First Aider who is injured. All tools should be carried to the site by adults.

- Tools should be introduced by the Forest School leader
- A safety talk should be given by the Forest School leader
- All tools should be stored in a central tool area, these should be counted out and counted in
- Children should be supervised at all times with tools
- All adults working with tools should be shown how to use them safely.
- Procedures for care and cleaning of tools should be followed.

## Care and Cleaning of Tools

See attached sheet - 2.3 b Check, clean, maintain and store tools safely.

# Use of Personal Protective Equipment

The use of personal protective equipment will be outlined in all risk assessments for each session. Adults will be made aware of these before each session. Children will be told about personal protective equipment in the safety talk at the beginning of the session when the activity is being introduced.

Adults will be informed of the need for steel toe capped boots if they are planning to carry anything heavy. If they do not have these it is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to make sure that they are not carrying heavy objects.

Children may need to use safety gloves and safety goggles and may need to wear a fire gauntlet when working near the fire. It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to ensure that these are available and that the children are wearing them. All personal protective equipment must be kept in good working order.

## Shelter Building

The Forest School leader will produce lesson plans and risk assessments for the activities involved in shelter building. All adults on the session will have read the lesson plans and risk assessments and will be aware of emergency first aid procedures. All adults carrying heavy wood will be wearing steel toe caps. Children will be given a safety talk before the activity begins. It will be explained to the children before they begin that they are not allowed to leave anything in the woods that wasn't already here such as sheets, rope, tape and that if they use these things to build their shelters they will have to take them down before we leave.

## Fire Lighting

When a session of fire lighting is planned a separate risk assessment must be carried out. A copy must be sent to John Sutton, Facilities Manager at the Police Headquarters. All adults should be aware of the risk assessment, the emergency procedures and aware of the emergency first aid in case it is the first aider who is burned.

Fire safety equipment must be taken to the site. Fire blanket, bottles of water and a bucket for submersion of burns.....

The fire pit should be set up on arrival at the site and the fire safely extinguished and fire pit removed at the end of the session.

# Clothing

Waterproof jackets and trousers will be supplied by the school for all children attending Forest School. Children will be told to bring wellington boots for all sessions. At the parents meeting the parents will be told that children's clothes will get wet and dirty so will need to be playing out clothes. Long trousers and long sleeves will be needed all year round due to nettles on the site. It will be stated that if children do not have appropriate clothing they may need to be left at school with another class for safety reasons.

# Essential Equipment

There are items of essential equipment that must be carried to Forest school every week. These can be distributed among the adults and carried in back packs. Other equipment that may be needed will be activity specific.

## Essential Equipment

- First Aid kit
- Risk Assessment
- Lesson plan
- Mobile phone
- All adults to carry whistle, hand gel, notebook tissues
- Portapotty
- Drinking water and cups
- Roll mat
- Groundsheet
- Spare clothes
- Camera
- Class list

# Communication with parents

At the beginning of the year all parents are sent a letter to tell them that Forest School will be taking place this year. They will be told what children need to wear, what they will be doing and will be invited to a parents meeting to give them information about what Forest School is, when their child will be going, what they need to wear and also asked if they would like to volunteer to help on the sessions.

Each term/year a display of forest school photographs will be displayed in the school for parents to see.

## **Legislation**

All current legislation that is held in school will be followed in forest school.

This includes:-

Equal opportunities and diversity policy

Health and Safety policy

Disability Discrimination Policy

Policy on checking criminal records

Teaching and Learning policy

Child protection policy

Behaviour policy

Special educational needs policy

Accident procedures

Incidents and near misses

Forest School policy

## **Ratios**

The legal ratios for school visits are:-

Under 5's - more than 1 adult to 6 children

Years 1 to 3 - 1 adult to 6 children



Years 4 to 6 - 1 adult to 10 - 15 children

When doing Forest School sessions it is preferable to have high adult/child ratios as the children will get more from the experience with more individual attention from adults. All adults are equipped with a notebook so are able to write down things that the children say that show they have acquired new skills and knowledge. They can also write down things that the children are interested in and would like to find out more about allowing session to be more child initiated and child led.

It is also important to have high adult/child ratios to ensure children's safety and to enable them to take risks with the support of an adult. When the Forest School leader is working 1:1 with a child with a tool or fire lighting it is important to have a teaching assistant to organise and supervise the rest of the children.

It is the aim for Forest School at South Otterington to be run by a teacher qualified as a Forest School leader, supported by a teaching assistant and helped by parent volunteers. The aim is to have a ratio of 1 adult to 5 children.

## Insurance

Forest School at South Otterington School is covered by the schools insurance. (See attached copy of insurance)

## Forest School Leader Agreement

The Forest School leader will hold a Level 3 Forest School leader qualification; will hold a current DBS check and will hold an Outdoor Paediatric first aid qualification.

The planning, risk assessments, site checks and organisation of adults and children is the responsibility of the Forest School leader.

At the beginning of each session the Forest School leader will ensure that all parent helpers have read the lesson plan and the risk assessment and will be aware of their roles during the session.

At the beginning of the session the Forest School leader will explain the rules of Forest School clearly to the adults and children. They will be reinforced weekly.

All objectives, aims and learning intentions for each lesson will be linked to the National Curriculum and to the Early Learning Foundation Stage goals. A copy of the planning will be given to the class teacher and notes, photographs and evaluation will also be given to the teacher after the session for her record keeping.

It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to promote emotional intelligence, self esteem and appropriate behaviour and learning. This will be done by including a variety of activities each week, by allowing the children to take risks and to revisit areas of interest on a regular basis. Where possible, learning will be child led and child initiated which will promote self esteem and confidence. Team work and group games will encourage good behaviour and cooperation. Praise and noticing good behaviour will be an aim of all adults at Forest School.

## Consent Forms

At the beginning of all Forest School sessions a parents letter will be sent home to explain to parents what Forest School is, how it runs at South Otterington School and inviting them to a parents meeting to give them more information. The letter will also include a consent form for them to sign, giving permission for their child to attend Forest School sessions. Any children not given permission to attend Forest School will stay at school and work with another class during those sessions.(see copy of parent letter and consent form).

Mrs Jane Worgan 2010

Updated by Mrs Jane Worgan 2013