

Berkswich CE Primary			
School Reference Number C16	Shared with Staff February 2021	Ratified by Governing Board February 2021	Review Date February 2023
Policy Title	Forest School Policy		

As a church school, we delight in God's creation:

"I bless the Lord: O Lord my God, how great you are! You are robed with honour and with majesty and light!

You stretched out the starry curtain of the heavens... 7-8 You spoke, and at the sound of your shout the water collected into its vast ocean beds, and mountains rose and valleys sank to the levels you decreed. 10 He placed springs in the valleys and streams that gush from the mountains. 11 They give water for all the animals to drink...the birds nest beside the streams and sing among the branches of the trees. 13 He sends rain upon the mountains and fills the earth with fruit. 14 The tender grass grows up at his command to feed the cattle, and there are fruit trees, vegetables, and grain for people to cultivate...and bread to give him strength. 17 There the birds make their nests, the storks in the firs. 18 High in the mountains are pastures for the wild goats, and rock badgers burrow in among the rocks and find protection there.

24 O Lord, what a variety you have made! And in wisdom you have made them all! The earth is full of your riches. 31 Praise God forever! How he must rejoice in all his work!"

From Psalm 104 (Living Bible Translation)

We are highly considerate of the variety of beliefs held by our community members; whatever views are held, we encourage all to develop a deep respect and love of nature and the world in which we all live. Forest Schools helps to develop an appreciation of the world and its resources, as well as enabling children to develop their own characters in meaningful ways.

Intent

Forest Schools offer a unique educational experience using the outdoor environment of the forest as a classroom. Research carried out by the New Economics Foundation for the Forestry Commission suggests Forest Schools goes beyond enabling children to develop a love of the natural world. Indeed, high-quality provision is able to make a difference in the following ways:

- **Confidence:** children had the freedom, time and space to learn and demonstrate independence
- **Social skills:** children gained increased awareness of the consequences of their actions on peers through team activities such as sharing tools and participating in play
- **Communication:** language development was prompted by the children's sensory experiences

- **Motivation:** the woodland tended to fascinate the children and they developed a keenness to participate and the ability to concentrate over longer periods of time
- **Physical skills:** these improvements were characterised by the development of physical stamina and gross and fine motor skills
- **Knowledge and understanding:** the children developed an interest in the natural surroundings and respect for the environment

Use with school policies

This policy acts in accordance with all school policies, including (but not limited to):

- Safeguarding policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education document (KCSIE)
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- First-aid Policy
- All policies relating to medical needs and medication

These can all be found via the school website: <https://www.berkswichceprimary.co.uk/policies/>

Forest Schools at Berkswich CE

The Forest School approach to learning is a unique method of outdoor education that aims to use the outdoor environment to encourage confidence, self-esteem, and independence through small and achievable, yet challenging, tasks.

As a Church school, we value the benefits of being outside in the wider community and are fortunate to have access to Holly Bush Coppice, which is located at the rear of the school. The local parish has granted school to access to this area and is a great opportunity for the children to have links with their local community and to take part in sessions in which children are encouraged to care for and respect the environment.

The Forest School sessions will be run by a level three trained Forest School lead and supported by another member of school staff and, on occasion, by a parent volunteer. The current Forest School sessions will run on a 1:10 Forest School Lead to child ratio.

Purpose/Aims of Forest school sessions at Berkswich CE

- Experience, explore and relish the outdoor environment
- Work with natural materials
- Use tools safely and for a purpose
- Build knowledge and understanding of the natural world and their own strengths
- Know and understand the character building that the Forest Schools opportunities present with the aim that this builds their confidence, social skills, communication skills, motivation, independence, physical skills and self-esteem
- Be encouraged and supported to look after the outdoor environment and **develop an interest in their natural surroundings and respect for the environment**

Health and Safety

All staff attending Forest School sessions at Berkswich should be familiar with all school policies. Regular risk assessments will be carried out and shared with those staff who attend Forest School

sessions to ensure the safety of all staff and children.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding

All Forest School sessions are led by a trained level three Forest School leader and supported by members of staff and, on occasion, a parent volunteers. Everyone involved in sessions will be fully briefed on health and safety and the risk assessment of the site and activities. The Forest School lead is fully covered by Berkswich's insurance policy should any accident occur. All activities are carried out with due consideration to the school's Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy and the Safeguarding Policy.

Special considerations

In situations where additional safety measures need to be put into place, such as during a pandemic, these amendments to practice or procedures will be added to the session risk assessments.

Equal Opportunities

It is our aim that gender, learning ability, physical ability, ethnicity, linguistic ability and/or cultural circumstances will not impede pupils from accessing Forest School sessions. We endeavour to ensure that all our sessions can be adapted in order for all children to access and take part. If an intended participant is not able to access the activities, then an alternative will be found of equal purpose for the whole group and session.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All medical care plans are kept in the school office and staff are briefed on those children taking part who have medical care plans. Medicine is administered in the school medical room. All emergency contact details are located in school grab bags which is taken to each Forest School session and looked after by a staff member. Advice is sought from the school's first-aid lead and the SENDCo as necessary. Medicine is taken out during sessions if this is in line with an individual's care plan.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Each activity planned by the Forest School lead is risk assessed and each risk assessment is stored electronically in the Forest School folder as well as hard copies kept with Forest School lead in order for these to be shared with relevant staff and volunteers

Behaviour

The safety of all children and staff is of the utmost importance. Sessions will follow the school's behaviour policy and any addendums added during extraordinary times. Due to its highly motivational nature, children who can find self-regulation challenging in other situations, often find that they are able to extend concentration and self-control within Forest School sessions. However, in the interests of the safety of all participants, children who are not able to take part safely cannot continue within the sessions. Alternative provision will be provided as possible, with the aim of individuals learning to cooperate and support team members for more extended periods of time.

First-aid

The Forest School lead will have current and relevant first-aid training and adhere to first-aid policies

and procedures. A first aid kit will be present at every Forest School session as well as a mobile phone in case of an emergency.

Forest School Sessions

Equipment and Tools

- Tool work and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest School. The lead will manage, maintain and store all tools and equipment.
- All tools will be used with Forest School lead supporting and observing children. No child will be left unsupervised while using any tools
- It is not expected for any support staff or parent volunteer to use tools with children, only a level three FS lead will deliver tool sessions/tasks.
- All tools and equipment are risk assessed, maintained and managed regularly checked before each session.
- Tools are only introduced to the children when the FS lead deems they are ready.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment and tools are repaired, cleaned or replaced.

Clothing

Children attending Forest School sessions will need bring suitable clothing to each session. Clothes should be brought to school in a named carrier bag. Children should wear long sleeve trousers and tops during all weather conditions.

Spring	Wellingtons, outdoor boots/trainers warm/waterproof coat, waterproof trousers, sun cream
Summer	Wellingtons, outdoor boots/trainers waterproof coat, waterproof trousers, sun cream
Autumn	Wellingtons, outdoor boots/trainers, warm/waterproof coat, hat gloves, scarf, waterproof trousers
Winter	Wellingtons, warm/waterproof coat, hat gloves, scarf, waterproof trousers

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place: Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:

- ✓ *Stand behind the log*
- ✓ *Step over and sit down on log*
- ✓ *Stand up, turn around and step over log*
- ✓ *Children are not allowed to cross the log fire square or step into the square.*

A full container of water will be on site during each Forest School session.

When lighting a fire:

- Only level three Forest School lead will take responsibility for the fire; lighting it, maintaining it while it is burning and distinguishing at the end of each session.
- The fire shall be contained within the marked out log circle.

- The ground around will be scraped back to bear earth and all flammable material shall be removed.
- Check for low hanging trees or exposed tree roots.
- A large container of water is always available at the side of the log square.
- When the fire is being lit all children are sat on logs, and children remain seated while the fire is burning. Unless instructed by Forest School lead to come up to fire area
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.

Cooking

When cooking during Forest School sessions:

- All staff will be aware of any dietary requirements of the children.
- All waste food is removed from Forest School site at the end of each session.
- Everyone should wipe their hands and use antibacterial gel before handling any food.

Routine and Procedures for Forest School session

Prior to each session the Forest School lead will:

- Carry out a sweep of the site prior to each weekly session,
- Check risk assessments are up-to-date
- Check first aid kit is stocked,
- Check emergency contacts are in grab bag
- Check tools and equipment are safe and clean

Prior to the Session

Before each Forest School session, the children will be toileted and changed into appropriate clothing. The lead will set behavior expectations and carry out a simple listening activity to gain children's attention.

During the Session

Children will participate in various activities which are inclusive, age appropriate and catered to all abilities. The Forest School leader will have a mobile phone on her person at all times, so that contact can be made at all times with the school office if another member of staff is toileting children or in case of emergency. A Forest school grab bag with emergency contacts and emergency blankets will be with groups during each session.

After the Session

Equipment and tools will be cleaned if necessary and stored as appropriate. The Forest School grab bag will be stored in school office. Risk assessments will be amended as necessary should the need arise.