



Leamington Federation **Forest School Handbook**

Compiled by Juliette Westwood

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1. Forest School Vision

Sydenham Primary School is committed to cultivating a sense of care and connection between children and the natural world. We aim to inspire a life-long dedication to environmental stewardship and a sense of community through deep connections with nature. In our outdoor learning environment, our pupils will gain a better comprehension of the importance of biodiversity, and experience how our actions influence the world around us. With this understanding, we hope that children will make choices in their daily lives to improve the health of the earth, themselves and each other.

2. Forest School Principles and Criteria for Good Practice

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.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

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.

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3:

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

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner

Principle 4:

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

- 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.

Principle 5:

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

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

Principle 6:

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

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

3. Ecological Impact of Forest Schools

When running our Forest School it is important that we look carefully at our site and assess the impact we will be having on the area. We would find it very difficult to run a forest school programme without some impact, however it is about protecting the area for future use. We also need to ensure that within in our activities we are respecting the flora and fauna around the site. The best way to look after our site is first to know it well and understand the short term impacts of the Forest School.

| Activity | What is the nature of the impact? (Does it affect parts of the woodland structure? Is it seasonal? Is it affected by the frequency of use?) | What can we do to minimise/avoid the impact? Can we mitigate with a positive solution? | How will this inform our management plan? (How long does this affect our long term planning?) |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| Trampling | Ground will compact with frequent use of the site. New growth may be trampled. In spring many bulb flowers emerge that are easily trampled. | Establish pathways on the site. Use pathways to move around the site. In Spring, advise site users to avoid trampling Spring flora, including crocuses, snowdrops and primroses. | Use the Spring season to highlight the importance of care for the flora. Teach children about bulb care, not picking flowers, spotting species / pollination. Replant bulbs in areas damage has occurred. Create suitable flower habitats Coppice / prune shrub to help light penetrate. Check new areas of the site are not becoming compacted. Rotate use of different areas of the site, where possible. Monitor the site termly. |
| Noise pollution | Will scare off wildlife. Site is located close to private dwellings – disturbance to residents. | Encourage use of low voices when on the site (discourage loud voices / shouting). Advise pupils of the impact of noise on fauna. Teach pupils the importance of spotting creatures. | Incorporate wildlife identification into planning throughout the year to encourage pupils to respect wildlife. Use UNICEF RRS CRC to promote respect for residents. |
| Fire Lighting | Ground layer logs/twigs burnt, ash left on ground layer. Burnt wood will replenish. If fire area cleared correctly ash should be unnoticeable and eventually will degrade. Field Layer Areas may be cleared for fire. Fires lit under tree cover may mark trees or damage above branches. | Contain fires to one area. Supply old wood from elsewhere. Clear some old wood from site to keep area clear of trip hazards. Whether in small groups or one large Fire, ensure set up and cleaning are supervised. Area would recover in time. | Use fire area only for fires. Collect excess wood blown from trees after strong winds and store for fire use. Build bug hotel with children to provide habitat for invertebrates. |
| Shelter Building | Trampling of flora/fauna at ground / field layer as shelters are built. Breaking of leaves and branches during building. | Encourage pupils to use old wood or wood supplied from elsewhere. Limit and rotate locations for shelter-building. | Plan for pupils to build smaller shelters (for soft toys), rather than larger structures. Consider erecting a semi-permanent shelter in a specific location. |

| Activity | What is the nature of the impact? (Does it affect parts of the woodland structure? Is it seasonal? Is it affected by the frequency of use?) | What can we do to minimise/avoid the impact? Can we mitigate with a positive solution? | How will this inform our management plan? (How long does this affect our long term planning?) |
|--|---|---|--|
| Bow Saw – cutting of live wood and collecting appropriate branches | Loss of habitat. Movement of ground layer for cutting area. Can be positive in clearing over-grown areas of the site. Ground layer will receive more sunlight allowing new plants to thrive. | Manage the cutting of wood. Rotate areas where wood is cut from. Use wood from areas that are becoming over-grown to encourage new growth. | Ensure all cutting of wood is closely supervised. Cut wood in a way that causes least damage to the tree. Vary wood needed for activities. Collection of wood for cutting will replenish in time. Monitor site termly. |
| Collecting dead wood for activities | Loss of habitat. Can help to keep the site clear. | Bring from external source, if large quantities needed. | Vary activities planned throughout the year to reduce wood consumption. Monitor site each term. |
| Collecting flora and fauna | Loss of habitat. Disruption to natural environment. Harm to insects. Disruption to ecosystem. | Explain to children to only collect small amounts Use ‘caterpillar bites’ from live plants. Replace items collected where found, if possible. Use appropriate equipment for collecting mini-beasts. Provide habitats for mini-beasts. | Instruct quantities / sizes of collections. Inform any adult helpers of these rules each session. Vary and rotate areas used for mini-beast hunting. Monitor site each term. Provide habitats, e.g. bug hotel |
| Using live plants / trees as supports | Damage to trees / plants. | Demonstrate knots that will limit damage to trees. Remove ropes / string after use. | Include which methods of support will be used in planning documentation. Ensure adult helpers also understand need to use ‘safe’ knots. |
| Bringing non-organic materials onto the Forest School site | Disrupts the eco-system. Potential harm to wildlife. | Remove all material from the site at the end of each session. | When planning, consider natural alternatives. |
| Introduction of materials to the site | Could introduce new species which may disrupt the eco-system. | Check material. Keep new material to one specific area. | Inform adult helpers of any new materials, and where they are to be used. Use new materials only if there is nothing else available on the site. |
| Pond Dipping | Ground layer damage to plants during dipping exercise. Disruption to eco-system. Harm to creatures. | Instruct pupils to use suitable pond-dipping equipment. Ground layer should recover when left. Discuss care for the animals to prevent causing harm. Disruption of water habitat should recover when left. | Give clear instructions on pond-dipping methods. Inform all pond-dipping participants. Closely supervise pupils. |
| Litter | Litter is harmful to wildlife. Disrupts the eco-system. | | Due to the location of the site (adjacent to public footpath) and necessary use of the site as a play area during the pandemic, litter may return. Plan for Eco Committee members to undertake regular, supervised ‘wombling’. |

4. Three Year Management Plan

| Problem – Why? What needs to change? | Implementation Activities – How? How will it be done? What blend of implementation activities are required? | Implementation Timings – When? When will it be done? | Final Outcomes – And so? How will the site benefit? |
|--|--|--|---|
| Biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-seed areas showing high damage by use at break and lunch times during the pandemic. • Seed a wild flower area. • Maintain health of native trees – remove dead / diseased branches. • Teach children about bulb care, not picking flowers, spotting species / pollination. • Replant bulbs in areas damage has occurred. Create suitable flower habitats. • Coppice / prune shrubs to help light penetrate. • Create animal habitats: bird boxes, bat boxes, mini-beast/bug hotel; bird feeders • Introduce staff and pupils to the DCSF Sustainable Schools framework, and the three competencies: care for oneself' care for others; and care for the environment • Establish cross-curricular links for biodiversity with the science and geography curricula • Investigate 'Breathing Places Schools' and 'Do One Thing for Nature' each term. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021-2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School is working towards a more effective, more integrated approach to conservation, and raising the profile of the importance of biodiversity with stakeholders. • Natural environment is better-valued by the school community. • Nature and wildlife enriching the lives of stakeholders at Sydenham Primary School |
| Trees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and plant willow and plan to grow living willow sculpture / arch. • Harvest some willow for wreath-making and re-planting. Maintain / develop living willows. • Plant saplings donated by Woodland Trust. • Remove diseased branches on trees and regularly check health of all large standing trees • Coppice one tree annually in winter before spring buds and keep other trees pruned of low pointy branches. • Contact WCC for advice regarding pruning and pollarding schedule. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021-2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy trees • More vulnerable species protected, commoner targeted |

5. Communication Strategy

| Who? | What? | How? | Implementation Timings – When? |
|---|--|---|---|
| Pupils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential information about participation in Forest Schools (dates / timings / clothing) prior to sessions starting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person through direct communication in school (by Class Teachers and Forest School Leaders / Assistants) School website Newsletters Display in public areas of school Assemblies / Collective Worship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Teachers / Forest School Leaders / Assistants meet with children prior to sessions Newsletters shared with pupils weekly by Class Teachers |
| Parents and carers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential information about their child's participation in Forest Schools Follow-up reminders Updates on what the children have done / achieved during Forest school sessions Accidents/emergencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School website Weekly newsletters Teachers2parents text alerts Teachers2parents email Telephone calls to parents regarding accidents/emergencies, using emergency contact details held in the school office / on Teachers2parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletters emailed to parents and carers every Friday via Teachers2parents (paper copies available from the school office) Newsletters uploaded to the 'News' section of the school website every Friday Texts / telephone calls / email, as necessary |
| Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum intent, implementation and impact of Forest Schools Timetabling Staffing Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person through direct communication in school Email on WeLearn365 Staffroom notice board Staff WhatsApp group chat School website Newsletters Staff meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletters emailed to staff every Friday via Teachers2parents Email communication on a needs basis Staffroom notice board updated daily Weekly staff meetings every Wednesday – Forest School information may be shared as full agenda items or as AOB All staff have access to the WhatsApp group daily |
| Other Forest School Practitioners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing experiences / good practice Networking Refresher training New training courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings with in-house Federation Forest School Leaders / Assistants Through Continuing Professional Development opportunities WhatsApp group with local practitioners Local / national / international associations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As required |
| Governors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum intent, implementation and impact of Forest Schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School website Newsletters Executive Head Teacher reports to full governors Governor curriculum monitoring pair | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletters emailed to governors every Friday via Teachers2parents Executive Head Teacher reports emailed and discussed a full governors' meetings termly |
| Local Authority (Forestry Department / Health & Safety) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the site e.g. fallen branches / storm damage to trees / grounds maintenance requirements Accidents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School website Telephone Email on WeLearn365 Warwickshire online accident reporting system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As necessary |

6. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

This handbook reflects the principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. At Sydenham Primary School, we recognise achievement in putting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of our practice to improve well-being and help all children realize their potential. Children's rights are learned, taught, practiced, respected, protected and promoted in our schools. Through participation in Forest School, children receive the following rights:

7. Equal Opportunities

All children at Sydenham Primary School must be given full access to the curriculum with regard to anti-bullying. Staff will endeavour to help all children to reach their full potential irrespective of race, gender, age or ability.

8. Race Equality Statement

We offer a curriculum that reflects the cultural diversity of the school. We teach children to be aware of the diversity of cultures within our school, and to see them as a positive factor that enriches the experiences of the whole school community. We recognise that different languages are spoken and understood by staff and children in our school.

Please also see the school's full Equality Policy below:

[Equality Policy and Objectives](#)



Equality Policy and
Objectives.pdf

9. Health and Safety

Please also click on the icon below to read the health and safety arrangements for Sydenham Primary School.



Health and Safety
Policy School Arrang

a. Emergency Procedure

In the event of an emergency the following will happen:

- Emergency call given.
- Children advised to put tools down by other adults in surrounding areas and to await further instructions.
- Forest School Leader to assess situation and remove any hazards.
- Once any hazard has been removed the leader will deal with the incident or follow the first aid procedures in the case of an accident.

b. Lost Child Procedure

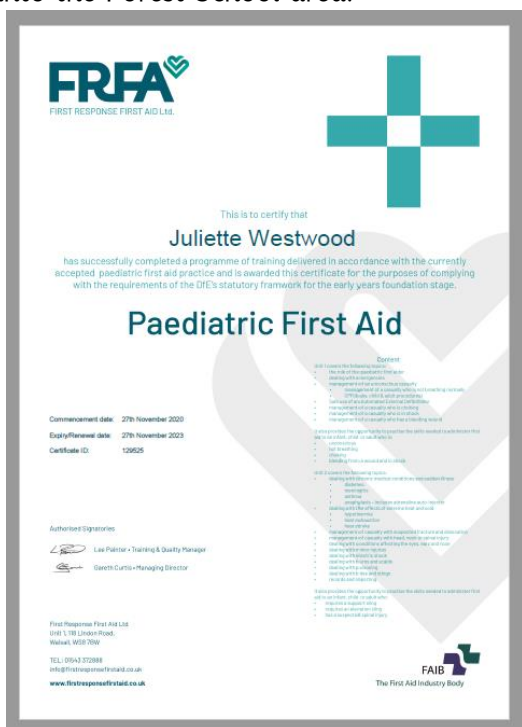
- As soon as it is discovered that the head count at any particular moment does not agree with that recorded at the start of that session, the Forest School Leader will be informed, if unaware
- If an immediate recount still shows a shortfall, all activities will be suspended and "1, 2, 3, come to me" call will be used to rally all group members.

- One adult will be released for a five-minute search of the immediate area, whilst another adult occupies the remaining children with a game/song or story. The main aim to prevent anxiety escalating amongst the children, “1, 2, 3, come to me” will be carried out once more.
- If the Forest School Leader is working alone, the red triangle will be sent to the school office for another adult to come and help.
- If the five-minute search does not discover the missing child/children, the Forest School Leader will take the group back to school, retracing the paths taken earlier. One adult will stay in the area to continue looking, contact will be maintained by mobile phone or walkie-talkie.
- If the group and leader cannot locate the missing child/children, and if the searching adult has not found anyone, the school office will be notified to alert any supporting staff to help in the search.
- At this point, the Head Teacher will be notified by the Forest School Leader of the current situation. The Head Teacher will follow the appropriate policy and process.
- Forest School Staff should immediately make a record of events and timings and last known position of the child/children using the Warwickshire online accident / near miss reporting system.

c. First Aid

Please see the School Health and Safety Arrangements above for additional information about first aid.

- A number of staff within the school (including the current Forest School Leader) are qualified first aiders and will administer the care needed.
- First aid kit will be taken to all sessions and will be checked regularly
- Whilst dealing with a first aid incident, the leader will ensure the safety of all other children within the group by advising other adults present of the situation and ask them to monitor the other children, if alone children will be call to the area that the leader is in and if necessary all children will be taken indoors.
- Seek emergency help if needed.
- There will be a first aid kit taken into the Forest School area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school.
- Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms .
- Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into the Forest School area.



d. Fire

Sydenham Primary School **Forest School Fire Safety Policy**

Compiled by Juliette Westwood
July 2021

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Sitting around the campfire as a group: learning, listening, singing, making and sharing food cooked on the fire is a wonderfully communal and magical experience for children. It will stimulate their senses by letting them feel its warmth. They will watch the flames dance and experience its rich smell. We hope it will capture their imaginations and enthusiasm!

The children at Sydenham Primary School will also learn why it is so important in our lives; how to respect fire; the dangers of fire; to be safe and responsible around it and will also learn about the fire triangle (oxygen, fuel and heat) and what is needed to build a small fire successfully.

Sydenham Primary School aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location

- Only agreed area will be used for campfires.
- We have an open fire area with a surrounding fire 'circle' made of logs.
- Only forest school children are allowed in this area on forest school days.
- The positioning of the fire is across the car park from the school building and playgrounds, and the need for an adult present around the fire at all times when lit, will ensure that, if any child does approach, who is not part of the session, there is sufficient time to extinguish the fire.
- Fire areas are surrounded by logs 2 metres from the fire pit.
- When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission. They need to ask, 'May I enter?'
- When allowed to access the campfire, children must walk around the outside of the seating logs and wait for permission to step over. Once permission has been given, they must sit, ensuring legs are drawn into the log and not outstretched.
- Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- Children will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area. NO RUNNING
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
- If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.
- Fires will not be lit in strong winds.

Safety and Responsibility

1. Lighting and keeping fires burning

When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. **A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point.** A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire circle.

- Any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before using storm kettles.
- No flammable liquids or plastics are to be used on the fire.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be extinguished with water until all smoke and steam has ceased. The bowl will be filled with water (this will drain through the holes at the bottom) and the lid placed over it.
- These items will be essential whenever a fire is lit:
 - Fire blanket
 - Heatproof gloves or gauntlets
 - Clean emergency water supply
 - Burns first aid kit.

2. Fire Risk Assessment (see separate risk assessment and FS Handbook)

- The FS leader may teach KS2 children 1:1 how to build a small fire.
- Fires are lit using tinder of various kinds, fire steels or matches.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire.
- The hand should never go over the fire.

3. Extinguishing fires

All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.

- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- FS leader should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

4. Education about fire and fire lighting (notes for adults at FS sessions)

For a fire we need fuel, fire and oxygen – the fire triangle

- Children will collect tinder (dry grasses, very dry leaves, birch bark from the floor, very fine twigs, pine needles or open pine cones) to make an apple sized tinder bundle.
- They collect their kindling. FS leader will also have alternative tinder if wet. Small twigs are best as it's the thickness not the length that counts! They will be separated into piles of different sizes - very fine twigs (a few mm diameter, size of a toothpick), slightly larger twigs (diameter of a pencil), and bigger twigs (approx diameter of adult thumb).

- FS leader will explain that those that make a nice snapping sound when you break them are drier, and good for fire-lighting, whereas if they bend, then they're not very dry and not good for fire-lighting. Bone dry wood and small twigs make less smoke, and standing dead wood is better than wood from the ground.
- FS leader will also have fuel: a few larger diameter pieces of dry wood, own supply of charcoal, dry sticks or small split logs.

Starting the fire

- A few slightly larger pieces of wood will be put in the base of the fire pit to create a dry platform and keep the tinder off the floor.
- Tinder will be lit with a spark from fire striker (fire steel or matches). The finest tinder will then go on, e.g. paper thin bark, pine needles, dry grass, dry (dead) nettles, hay, super thin twigs.
- Someone compared tinder and sizes of kindling as gears in a car. You need to go up all the gears in a car. You need to go up all the gears in order. If you skip a gear, you're in danger of not having enough power and your fire faltering. Gradually add larger sized tinder and kindling. As one piece lights, add another - too much too soon can suffocate the fire of oxygen and put it out.
- We will explain the purpose of a particular fire. For example, the above method is best for getting a fire started, 'grid fires' are good for cooking (a criss-cross piece of metal over it, so that pans and kettles can be heated on a flat surface). Long fires are long burning and are good for keeping us warm overnight but we will not be using these at Sydenham Primary School, as we have no need to. Fires will be built with the session length in mind and with an aim for them to extinguish naturally by the end of the session.

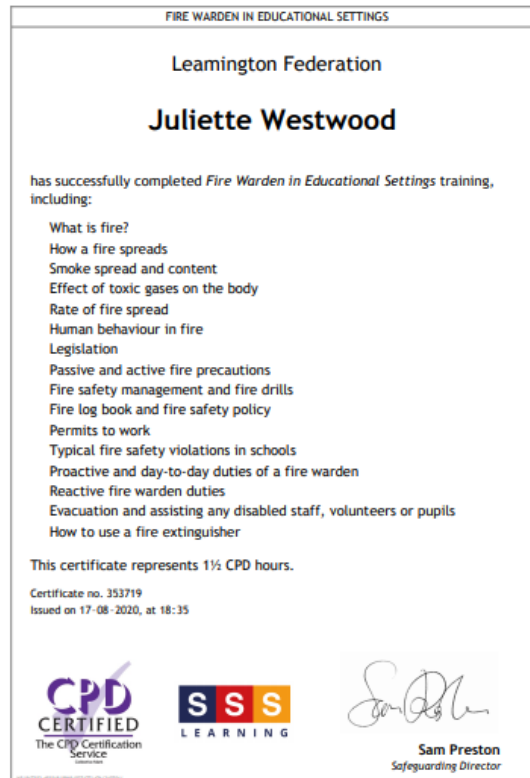
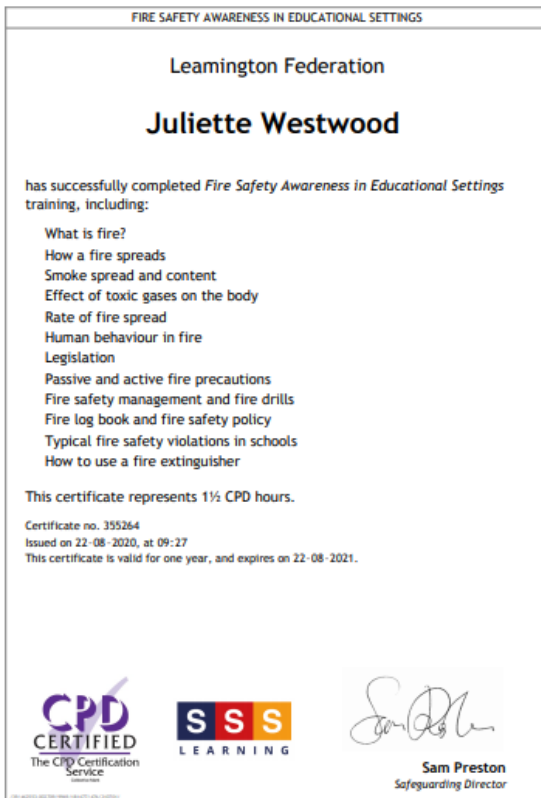
This Forest School Handbook will be reviewed: September 2024

Signed by the Head teacher

Juliette Westwood

Chair of Governors:

Richard Butler



e. Weather

Weather conditions Following the Forest Schools ethos of.....‘there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!’ Children are advised to dress warmly and wear waterproofs if necessary. However, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather:

- In the case of high winds of 25mph or more determined by the met office online.
- In the case of extreme temperature determined by a met office amber weather warning
- In the case of extreme cold of below ‘0’ a session will be cancelled if it is near to this we will ensure children are appropriately dressed, sessions will be made shorter and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

f. Food Safety and Hygiene

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows/waffles and making s’mores. There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and prepared.

Food Preparation, transport and storage:

- Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner (blue plaster or ideally gloves) before handling and preparing food.
- Any food needing preparation will be prepared in the school kitchen e.g. bread dough
- Food will be stored in clean containers and transported in a cool bag to and from the site, with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.
- Raw meats will be stored separately to any other foods.

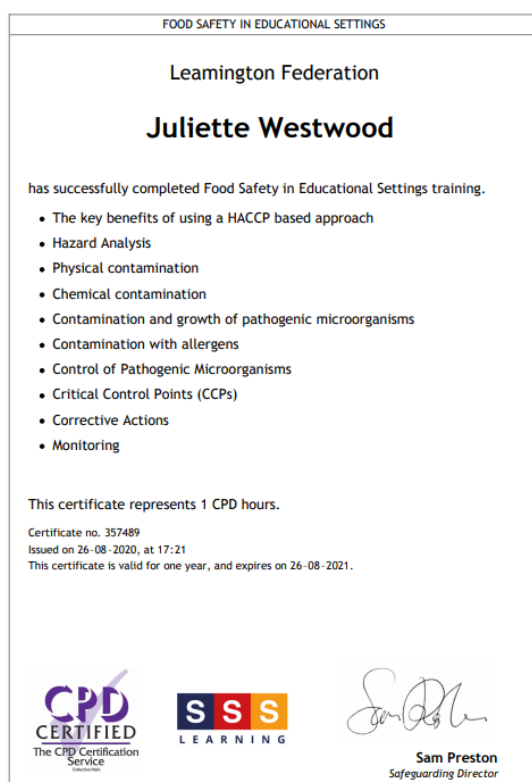
- All 'use by' dates will be checked on foods before eating.
- Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage container

Handling, Cooking and Eating Food

- A fresh, clean, bucket of warm soapy water will be available for children to wash their hands before handling food or utensils
- Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire procedure. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.
- Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

Clearing away and cleaning up food

- ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults.
- The area is checked to ensure there is no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.
- ALL utensils and pans will be washed at the station in hot soapy water and stored away correctly.



g. Behaviour

The Forest School leader will follow the school's Behaviour Policy, however if the behaviour of an individual, or group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others safety at risk then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School leader.

h. Insurance



School Insurance
Policy.pdf

i. Risk Assessments

Please click on the icon below to read the generic risk assessment for Forest School learning. Forest School Leaders must ensure that additional risk assessments are completed for specific activities.



Forest School Risk
Assessment.pdf

j. Site Safety Sweep


| | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Date: | Time: | Weather: |
| Name of Forest School Leader: Juliette Westwood | | |
| Checklist | Checked? Yes/No | Comments/Actions |
| Boundary fence | | |
| Pond fence | | |
| Low branches | | |
| Fallen branches | | |
| Litter | | |
| Broken glass | | |
| Vandalism | | |
| New poisonous flora | | |
| Slippery areas | | |
| Animal faeces | | |
| Weather effects | | |
| Equipment ready | | |
| Standing water | | |
| Other hazards | | |


k. Forest School Rules for Children


- Walk, don't run! (trip hazards, falling onto branches)
- No picking and licking! (don't pick thing and put in mouth, keep fingers away from mouth)



- Leave any rubbish and tell a grown up (any rubbish missed from sweep must be picked up using gloves and litter pickers and disposed of appropriately).
- Don't stand on logs (other end can flick up and hurt others; people don't want to sit on muddy logs).
- Don't touch fungus/toadstools, tell an adult (can be poisonous - adult can show found ones to group where they are found).
- Don't go near the pond without adult permission and supervision (risk of drowning).
- Keep to the paths, unless you have adult permission to leave them.
- Do not go beyond red triangle sign on drive, without adult permission and supervision (leaf mulch is really deep and cannot be sure what is in there).
- Do not scare the creatures that live in Forest School (it is their home and we are visitors).
- Treat our Forest School with respect (do not wilfully damage any of the natural resources).
- No shouting or screaming (only if people are really hurt).
- When standing up from sitting in log circle: 1 – stand up; 2 - step over logs; 3 – off you go.
- Recall: “cuckoo” or ‘red Indian’ call is used by adults only. This is then repeated by all children twice and they walk back to log circle and sit down, quietly within 1 minute. (May be used by children in an emergency situation).
- Stick rules vary on activity but no longer than arm as a rule, carried at side not on shoulder.



I. Using Tools

| | |
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| <p>Tool</p> | <p>Bow Saw</p>  |
| <p>Purpose</p> | <p>Used for cutting branches greater than around 1 ½ inches in diameter. The blade can be removed and replaced when worn or broken.</p> |
| <p>Safety Equipment</p> | <p>Blade cover (sheath) Handle</p> |
| <p>Personal Protective Equipment</p> | <p>Gloves can be worn on the helper hand but should not be worn on the hand holding the tool.</p> |
| <p>Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations?</p> | <p>The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group.</p> |
| <p>Transportation</p> | <p>Stand with the saw next to your leg with the blade facing down. Walk with the saw next to your leg with the blade facing down. Pass keeping the blade facing down, turning the handle to offer to the other person. Keep beside you: on a clear space/tool mat where it will not hit other hard objects with blade facing in and handle facing out or leaning up against a tree stump.</p> |
| <p>Working Space</p> | <p>“Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support</p> |


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| | with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | With a partner, saying “to me to, to you” to get a rhythm of forwards and backward motion, then allowing the other to pull. Can be used individually with someone supporting the log so it stays firm. Cuts on the push and pull. |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | Clean using a metal brush then cloth and oil to remove dirt and moisture from the blade.  Peg toothed blade Raker toothed blade You can purchase two types of blade to use with a bowsaw. A raker toothed blade is best for green wood and a peg toothed blade for dry wood. |
| Storage | Store it in a waterproof toolbox or container. Check the tool is clean and dry before storing and ensure the sheath is covering the blade. |

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| Tool | Bit and Brace  |
| Purpose | Used to drill holes |
| Safety Equipment | Top and side handles |
| Personal Protective Equipment | Gloves can be worn on the helper hand but should not be worn on the hand holding the tool. |
| Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations? | The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group. |
| Transportation | Walk holding handle with bit facing downwards. Pass holding just above the bit and offer the handle to other person. |
| Working Space | “Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | Use tool with a partner. One person applies pressure to the top handle and the other person twists the handle in a clockwise direction. To release the tool, continue to twist clockwise and pull upwards. |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | Use cloth and oil to remove dirt and moisture. |
| Storage | Store it in a waterproof toolbox, container or tool bag. Check the tool is clean and dry before storing. |


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| Tool | Gimlet/palm drill |
| Purpose |   |
| Safety Equipment | Handle |
| Personal Protective Equipment | Gloves can be worn on the helper hand but should not be worn on the hand holding the tool. |
| Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations? | The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group. |
| Transportation | Transport at the side of the body, blade pointing towards the ground. |
| Working Space | “Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | Twist handle in a clockwise direction using even pressure. To release the tool, continue to twist clockwise and pull upwards. |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | Use a metal brush and cloth to remove any dirt. |
| Storage | Store it in a waterproof toolbox or container. Check the tool is clean and dry before storing. |

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| Tool | Loppers |
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| Purpose | Used for cutting branches smaller than around 1½ inches in diameter |
| Safety Equipment | Handles Some loppers have a safety catch |
| Personal Protective Equipment | It is not necessary to wear gloves when using loppers |
| Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations? | The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group. |
| Transportation | Walk with one hand on the bottom arm, one on the top arm and the blade facing forwards. Pass by holding centre of arms and offer handles to other person. Place on the floor next to you with the handles facing forwards and the blade behind you. |

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| Working Space | “Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | Loppers are generally used by one person at a time and are a relatively safe tool to use and a good introduction to using tools in the woodland. Children should ensure they have a good footing and that the branch they are cutting is not bearing weight before cutting. Co-operative work between two children can be encouraged by them using the loppers together, one holding the stick or branch to be cut and the other operating the loppers. |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | Use a metal brush then cloth and oil to remove dirt and moisture from the blade. Sharpen using a metal file. |
| Storage | Store it a waterproof toolbox or container. Check the tool is clean and dry before storing. Check the safety catch is engaged. |

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| Tool | Penknife  |
| Purpose | Multi purpose tool. In forest school knives are primarily used to cut cord and for whittling. |
| Safety Equipment | Knife sheath Knife handle and finger guard First Aid kit |
| Personal Protective Equipment | Gloves should be available for use on the helper hand. No glove should be worn on the hand holding the knife. |
| Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations? | The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group. |
| Transportation | Transport with blade in sheath, at the side of the body, blade pointing towards the ground |
| Working Space | “Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | Children should be taught the correct position to sit and you should ensure they are always cutting with arms over their legs and away from the body. |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | Use a cloth and oil to remove dirt and moisture from the blade. Sharpen using a wet sharpening stone (whetstone). |
| Storage | Store it a waterproof toolbox or container. Check the tool is clean and dry before storing and ensure the sheath is covering the blade. |

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| Tool | Billhook |
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| Purpose | Traditionally used for cutting shrubs and bushes in forest school the billhook is used primarily for splitting wood. |
| Safety Equipment | Sheath, tea towel or soft cloth for wrapping the billhook Handle |
| Personal Protective Equipment | Gloves can be worn on the helper hand but should not be worn on the hand holding the tool. |
| Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations? | The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group. |
| Transportation | Stand with the hook next to your leg with the blade facing down and the hook facing forward. Walk with the hook next to your leg with the blade facing down and the hook facing forward. Pass with the hook and blade facing down hold the top of the tool and pass the handle towards the other person. Place on the floor on top of its sheath. Hook and blade facing inwards and handle facing forwards. |
| Working Space | “Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | One person should hold the bill hook with one hand firmly on the handle and pinching the hook with the other. The blade should be placed at the top of the log to be split. The second person will use a mallet or piece of wood to strike the top of the bill hook and drive the blade into the wood. |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | Use a cloth and oil to remove dirt and moisture from the blade. Sharpen using a cigar sharpening stone. |
| Storage | Store it a waterproof toolbox, container or toolbag. Check the tool is clean and dry before storing and ensure the sheath is covering the blade. |

| Tool | Mallet |
|--|---|
| Purpose | To provide a force to tools that split wood. To hammer wooden pegs into ground. |
| Safety Equipment | Handle |
| Personal Protective Equipment | No gloves on tool |
| Adult:child ratio recommendations, age/ability recommendations? | The level of supervision and ratio of staff to children should be decided upon based on the client group. |
| Transportation | Walk holding handle of tool next to leg with head facing downwards Pass holding top of tool and offer the handle to the other person. Place on ground or surface with handle facing backwards. Or return to designated place. |
| Working Space | “Two arms and a tools distance” apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this |

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| | and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances. |
| Method of Use | Hold handle and hit billhooks or axes into wood. |
| Inspection | Check for any loose / split bits of wood |
| Cleaning and Maintenance | No need to clean Remove any loose bits of wood |
| Storage | Store in large water proof and air tight container / tool bag |

m. Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when children climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.

n. Toileting

Children are invited to use the toilets before we leave the school buildings. Children will be allowed to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. The nearest toilets are to be found in the Green Hut.

o. Rope and string Use

We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

p. Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.

q. Picking up and playing with stones

Stones may be picked up and transported. All staff should be aware of PICA issues and monitor these children carefully. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

r. Leaving the Forest School Area

Leaving the Site We work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' that we were in the wood as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters should be taken down, imported materials need to be removed. All equipment is carefully counted out and back in again, especially when using tools and tent pegs. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish will always be removed. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult.

9. Safeguarding:

a. Anti-bullying

Please click on the link below to read the school's Anti-bullying and Behaviour policies.

[Anti-Bullying Policy](#)
[Behaviour Code of Conduct](#)

b. Confidentiality

Please click on the link below to read the school's Confidentiality Agreement
[Confidentiality Agreement](#)

c. Child Protection

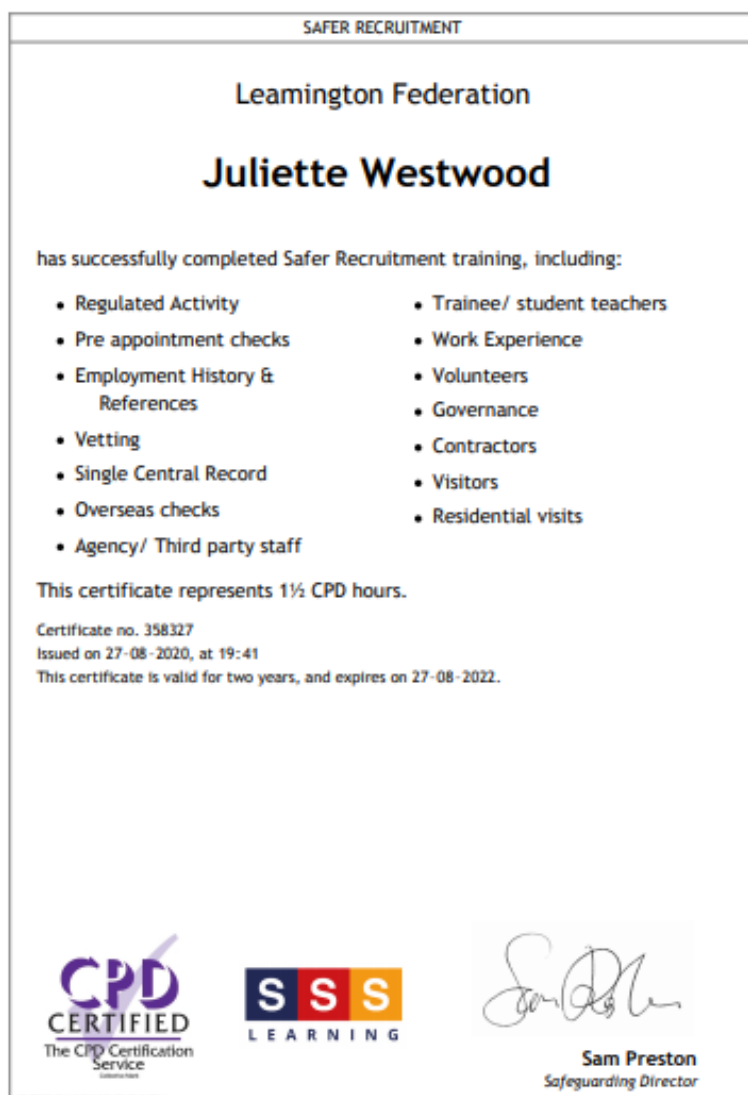
Please click on the link below to read the school's Child Protection Policy
[Child Protection and Safeguarding Executive Summary](#)
[Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Covid-19 Appendix](#)
[Staff Behaviour Code of Conduct Executive Summary](#)
[Whistle-Blowing Policy](#)

d. GDPR

[Data Protection Policy](#)
[Privacy Notice for Pupils and Parents](#)

e. Safer Recruitment (DBS)

[Safer Recruitment and Employment Policy](#)



This Forest School Handbook was ratified:

July 2021

And will be reviewed:

September 2022

Signed by the Head teacher

Juliette Westwood

Chair of Governors:

Richard Butler