



## **Newbold School Forest School Handbook**

**This handbook** is for use by both Newbold School Forest School Staff and Forest School volunteers. The policies within the handbook are closely linked to all the policies that Newbold School adheres to. Further details of all Newbold School's policies can be found on the school website.

### **The Role of the Forest School Leader**

The Forest School Leader will take into account and prepare for all the health and safety issues that could arise at a Forest School session and will inform teachers, group leaders or parents clearly of their role.

The role of the leader is to improve and to help children's self-esteem and confidence grow. They ensure that the participants learn at their own pace.

The group leader will be responsible for communication, for completing health and safety and risk assessments, following policies and procedures, administering any first aid along with Newbold School Paediatric First Aiders. They will also maintain the first aid kit along with current first aid staff, counting equipment in and out and maintaining tools.

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### **1) Setting Up and Packing Down Guidelines**

**The day before Forest School session:**

All staff and volunteers will be familiar with the Newbold Forest school handbook and its policies before taking part in the session. All staff will have read the Newbold School Forest School Risk Assessment before taking part in any activities.

- The Forest School leader and teachers will remind parents of the kit list at the beginning of term.
- The Forest School leader or teacher will remind parents about the risk from ticks.
- Forest school leader or teacher will gather all the equipment together using a check list. Ensure this includes the fire safety register.
- Forest school leaders or teacher will ensure tools are in good condition and the First Aid kit is complete. The leader will also check the list of participants for additional health requirements.

#### **On the day of a forest school session:**

The Forest school leaders will also check the site.

This will include:

- Checking for dog mess and dangerous objects.
- Checking for any increased risks due to changes in the weather.
- Carry out all safety checks in line with the risk assessment.
- Arrange logs and stumps for seating if available.
- Put up shelter if needed.
- Cut any dangerous eye-level branches.
- Prepare boundary markers.
- When all staff and children are present the Forest school leader or teacher will take a headcount and the group will set off.

#### **At the end of the session:**

- There will be a 'tidying-up' time when everyone will be expected to take part.
  - All tools will be counted back into tool bags.
  - All boundary markers will be collected in.
  - The water canister can be emptied. Take shelters down. Remove any litter bags from the site.
  - All the children will be encouraged to help to carry equipment if appropriate.
  - Before leaving the forest the Forest School leader or teacher will carry out a headcount.
  - We will leave the forest with a Forest school leader or teacher at the front of the line and a member of staff at the rear.
  - All equipment will then be returned to Newbold School and cleaned if necessary or left to dry.
- Equipment will then be returned to the storage cupboard or shed and locked away.

## **2) Forest School Safety Talk and Rules**

### **Rules of our Forest School:**

1. This is our work area, cones mark the boundary. Stay inside the coned area.
2. Take care with sticks. Stick carrying-hold them pointing down (demo) or take your stick for a walk along the ground.
3. Dogs - Are usually friendly but we don't know what mood they are in so -'Keep still, keep quiet, keep together'
4. Nettles and brambles – avoided as much as possible and cut back in key areas.
5. We only eat food we brought with us, not what we find in the forest. The 'no pick, no lick' rule.
6. Try not to put your fingers in your mouth and eyes. Wash our hands before eating.
7. Slappy branches - help your friends with these as you pass through woodland areas.
8. Leave the wild flowers for other people to enjoy. The 'no pick, no lick' rule.
9. Fire circle: do not walk into the fire circle, only adults touch the fire.
10. Revision of what we do if we get lost. Stay where you are and shout.
11. Have fun.

### **5) Forest School Leader's responsibility**

The Forest School leader or teacher will

- Create an environment that is as safe as possible and without risk to health.
- Take all reasonable precautions to prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health.
- Use, maintain and store equipment safely.
- Ensure that all staff are competent in the work in which they are engaged.
- Reviewing all reported accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences to enable corrective measures to be implemented.

The Forest School Leader, teachers, the head teacher, the deputy leader as well as the Board of Governors are responsible for assessing risks to health and safety arising out of Newbold School's activities and introducing suitable steps to eliminate or control any such risk identified.

The Forest School leader is responsible for the day to day implementation, management and monitoring of the Health and Safety policy at Forest School. The leader is required to report any matter of concern regarding the Health and Safety policy to the Head Teacher.

The Forest School leader will ensure that:

- Regular Forest School safety inspections are carried out and the reports accurately logged.
- Any action required as a result of a health and safety inspection is taken as rapidly as possible.

### **3) First Aid Equipment List for Forest School**

- Sterile Wipes x 5
- Plasters of various sizes
- Conforming Bandages x 3
- Non adhesive square bandages x 3
- Scissors
- Hand gel
- Disposable gloves x 5
- Water bottle (labelled when last filled)
- Children's specific medication and details
- Emergency First Aid Manual

### **Kit Bag List for Forest School**

- Shelter
- Wooden Mallet
- Register
- Accident book
- Plans
- Risk assessments
- Plans, Session timings and kit lists in poly pockets
- Water Container filled the morning of Forest School
- 2 x mobile - phone and one other mobile (on different network).
- Contact details of all parents and emergency contact information for all at Forest school.
- Hand wash gel
- Trowel and spade
- Camera
- Wet wipes x 2
- Tissues
- Secateurs
- Boundary cones
- String (10m)
- Flammable material for fire including cotton wool, old man's beard.
- Waterproof matches, fire sticks
- Big tarp
- Snack and drink requirements.
- Fire Safety blanket

### **Additional Forest School items for some sessions**

- Stump
- Wax crayons
- Wool
- Group lists
- Session plan
- Snack

These lists are seasonally influenced and will need to be adjusted accordingly.

#### **4) Forest School Health and Safety Risk Assessments**

**Please see Forest School Risk Assessment**

#### **5) Forest School Health and Safety**

Newbold School takes the maintenance of health and safety extremely seriously as a matter of both legal and moral importance. All staff will be familiarised with the provisions contained within this policy as part of their induction and be expected to act in accordance with them at all times.

Newbold School aims to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff, children, visitors and other individuals who may be affected by the Forest School activities. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and their associated Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) and guidance will be complied with at all times.

Please see Newbold School Health and Safety Policy

#### **Insurance**

The Children Act 1989 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, place a number of legal responsibilities for Newbold School. Therefore, Newbold School has insurance cover appropriate to its duties under this legislation, including Employer' and Public Liability Insurance. Responsibility will, in most cases, rest with Newbold School, but staff will take reasonable care, both for themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. If Newbold School is held responsible for any incident that may occur, public liability insurance will cover compensation.

#### **6) Clothing Policy**

To ensure that the children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the forest environment we require children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Clothing will get muddy so old home clothes are required.

We require children to have long sleeves and long trousers in **both** winter and summer. This is particularly important in the summer to protect from tick bites, sunburn, stinging nettles and thorns.

## **Winter Clothing**

The general rule is to wear lots of layers which keep in the heat and can be removed if needed.

Children require:

- Warm hat
- Gloves NB not mittens
- Vest
- Long sleeved t-shirt/shirt
- Jumper/fleece
- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Wellies with warm socks/walking boots
- Thermal underwear

## **Summer Clothing**

- Sun hat
- Sun cream applied before session
- Light long sleeved top
- Light long trousers
- Wellies or enclosed shoes/boots (no sandals)

Forest School leaders and staff will ensure all the children are appropriately dressed before leaving for our Forest School Locations.

## **7) Sheltering and Toileting Policy**

### **Sheltering:**

In the event of very extreme weather e.g. high winds, thunderstorms, the usual forest school session will not take place. A simplified activity will take place at the school.

During each Forest school session we will ensure that shelter is provided from sun and rain.

The trees in the forest will provide good sun cover. We will also erect shelters from tarpaulins. We will erect our Group Outdoor Shelter if we feel it is needed. We will take ground tarpaulins to provide comfort in the cooler months.

### **Toileting:**

We will ask the children to use the toilet before leaving the setting. If the children need to go to the toilet we have tissue and a spade to dispose of the waste.

All adults supporting the Forest School are DBS checked so are able to support children with toileting but we will try to ensure a staff member accompanies the children where possible.

We anticipate the children will need less support with this activity as the sessions increase.

## **8) Woodland Conservation Policy**

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about an appreciation, respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

It is important to bear in mind the ecological impact of running a Forest School and with that in mind consideration will be given to the following:

- Children will be educated not to pick up anything that is still growing.
- Unless the locations have an abundance of a woodland resource required for specific activity, materials will be provided by the Forest School leaders from various other sites.
- The Forest School leaders will observe the effect of the school route to and from the forest location and if necessary adjust the route to ensure the woodland flooring has time to recover.
- Where beneficial to the woodland Newbold School will cut back laurel, brambles and holly.
- Forest school leaders will ensure that woodland species are conserved and will endeavour to plant new species if damage has occurred.

## **9) Hand Tool Safety Policy**

Newbold School is committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development, both indoors and outdoors.

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leaders and staff. The Forest School leaders will inspect the tools before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased.

This will be achieved by following these guidelines:

- Staff to child will vary depending on the tool in use. The ratios will vary from 1:1 to 1:4.
- Tools will be kept in the preschool tool bag and only removed by the Forest School leaders, staff or volunteers.
- Adult and child sized gloves will be available and are to be used when appropriate.
- Penknives must be opened and closed by Forest School leaders, staff or volunteers.
- Running with tools is prohibited

- Pointing with tools is prohibited
- Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.
- Bill hooks should not be swung or used with gloved hands, and will only be used under the guidance of Forest School Leaders.
- Bow saws must have a blade guard on them when not in use. Blade guards will be removed and put back only by Forest School staff, or volunteers.
- Wood being sawn must be supported on a saw horse or a natural sawing break - hands must be kept away from the blade. Adults and children must be given instruction and demonstration on the appropriate and safe position with which to saw.
- When using peelers and pen knives to whittle, children will remain seated, have their elbows on their knees and whittle away from the body.
- All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session.
- Volunteer helpers must receive basic training on the use of individual hand tools before being allowed to use them with children.

## **10) Emergency Procedure Policy**

Our school is committed to encouraging and promoting good health and to dealing efficiently and effectively with illnesses and emergencies that may arise while children are in our care.

All participants will be briefed on what to do in case of emergency. Under duties set out in the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, the Pre-School recognises its responsibilities in providing adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable suitable first aid to be given.

The Forest School Leader/teacher will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will attend to the casualty, giving first aid where necessary. After all such accidents or incidents will be recorded in detail and logged in the Incident Record book or the Accident Record Book.

Parents/carers will be asked to sign in the relevant section of the book to acknowledge the incident or accident and any action taken by Forest School and its staff.

Newbold School will notify Ofsted and Social Services of any serious accident, illness, injury or death of any child whilst in its care. Notification will be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident occurring. The Forest School leaders and other relevant members of staff should consider whether the accident or incident highlights any actual or potential weaknesses in the policies or procedures, and act accordingly, making suitable adjustments where necessary.

### **In case of injury**

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance:



- In serious cases, 999 should be dialled using a mobile phone carried by the Forest School Leader. The Forest School Leader or teacher will be responsible for notifying the parent.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- One member of the staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
- If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the child's parents will be updated about the situation by the staff remaining.
- In minor cases, the Forest School Leader or teacher will arrange to contact the parent of the injured child so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor or home.

## **12) Fire Safety Policy**

Newbold School understands the importance of vigilance to fire safety hazards. All staff, volunteers and children are aware of the fire safety procedures set out in this policy.

Campfires and the use of storm kettles are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Newbold School aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires and/or storm kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

### **Location**

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for the campfire.
- The campfire area will be enclosed by logs or large stones to prevent the spread of fire.
- The storm (Kelly) kettle will only be used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.

### **Positioning of Children and Adults**

- Fire areas are surrounded by logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit. The logs represent the campfire boundary.
- Once lit an adult will remain by the fire at all times.
- When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- Seating on tarps will be organised around the outside of the fire boundary. Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.

- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire. With one to one adult help children may carefully place fuel for the fire on the edge of the fire. We will ensure that the ratio of children to adults is at least 1:4 outside the fire boundary area.
- 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.

### **Type of Fire**

- Criss-cross fires are used to provide a large amount of heat and light and are fast burning.
- Long Log fires are good for cooking as they are slow burning and require little fuel.

### **Cooking**

- If food is to be cooked at Forest School, the Forest School leaders are responsible for ensuring that the food has been transported, cooked and stored in a 'safe to eat' manner.

### **Safety and Responsibility**

- Only adults are permitted to light fires. This will usually be the one of the Forest School Leaders.
- Fires are lit using fire lighting blocks, newspaper and matches or a Swedish fire stick.
- 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.

### **Extinguishing**

- 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.
- Forest School Leaders should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, 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.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled. It will be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.
- The use of a fire blanket is available should it be necessary to use one.

### **Storm (Kelly) kettles**

- Only Forest School Leaders are to light the fire in the fire pan.
- The Kelly kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground.
- Children can feed the fire with one to one supervision but they must have been shown how to do so safely. Stick held at the end and dropped in from the side; hand should never be placed over the top of the kettle.
- Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water (see above)
- The Kelly kettle will be removed from the fire pan by one of the Forest School leaders. To do this safely they will lift the kettle using the sides of the metal handle, pouring will then be controlled by using one hand on the top of the handle and the other on the chain.
- The Kelly kettle should never be heated with the cork in.