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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Higford School aims to use the natural environment to instil the Forest School values. This approach to outdoor learning encourages students to develop independence, motivation, co-operative working with peers and adults, appropriate risk taking and an appreciation of the outdoor environment. Forest School is a predominantly student-led approach which builds on their interests and skills. It encompasses emotional aspects of learning through the development of self-esteem and confidence as well as establishing positive relationships with others. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round.

**Implementation:** It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

## 2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Forest School has environmental awareness at its core. Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. Staff will model good practice regarding care for the environment and all litter will be removed at the end of each session.

The woodland will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. Brambles and nettles will be removed for the main pathways but apart from this will be allowed to grow. Likewise, branches at eye level will also be removed from main pathways to ensure safety.

A three-year environmental impact plan is to be in place to ensure minimal damage is done to the site and its surrounding area.

## 3.0 HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATION

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Forest School aims to support students in developing appropriate risk taking skills in a structured and controlled way. In order to ensure safety a high staffing ratio is always in place. In order for a Forest School session to take place there must always be at least one Level 3 trained Forest School leader in the session.

A comprehensive risk assessment is in place which covers all possible activities and eventualities. Prior to each session a risk assessment is carried out to assess risks such as weather or harmful plants on site. These risk assessments are dynamic and will be responsive to any changes which may occur such as changes to weather.

All students will wear appropriate clothing and footwear to Forest School dependent on weather. Students are to wear long trousers at all times. Waterproof trousers and coats are available for all students to wear and are encouraged, particularly when the weather is cooler.

If a fire is lit during a session, then a competent person is to stay with the fire at all times. There will always be at least 10 liters of water available for putting out the fire and the fire should not be near low overhanging trees. The size of the fire will be dependent on the students involved and their previous behaviour around fires. Students will be supported to understand the rules around the fire.

The school also has a Health and Safety Policy and Safeguarding Policy to enhance aspects of health and safety.

#### **4.0 FIRST AID**

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The Forest School Leader has an enhanced first aid certificate to specifically cover outdoors. There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school if required.

#### **5.0 CONSIDERATIONS FOR EQUALITY & INCLUSION**

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Forest School is inclusive by nature. Throughout Forest School we aim to use the students' interests to support engagement by all. The sessions follow a similar structure each week in order to reduce students' anxieties and enable them to fully engage in a calm manner. All students will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all.

All staff will adhere to the schools' Autism Friendly Policy and Single Equality Policy.

#### **6.0 USING TOOLS**

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Students will be taught how to use tools safely and correctly. When working with tools children will be working at a maximum ratio of 1 adult to 2 children. The use of tools will be covered in the risk assessment.

Using tools with students should be carried out on a 1:1 basis to begin with. Students should be introduced to tools gradually with tool use beginning with a potato peeler. As their experience within Forest School progresses this can be extended. Knives should be closed after use and tools returned to a secure container. Tools should be put away clean. Billhooks, knives and saws should be wiped with an oily rag. Persistent marks can be removed with emery paper. Billhooks should be wrapped in a leather case or an oiled rag to prevent the blade rubbing against other tools. Saws should have their covers replaced and pen knives should be stored closed. All tools should be returned to the box or bag when not in use. Tool should not be left unattended.

Tools should be kept sharp as a blunt tool is a dangerous tool. Billhooks and knives should be sharpened using a sharpening stone. The stone should be taken across the blade towards the cutting edge using single one-way movements. Always sharpen with the cutting edge away from you. Blades should be re-oiled after sharpening. The blades on saws should be checked regularly and replaced once starting to wear.

When cutting wood, remember that green wood is easier to work with. Wood left will season and harden, as the moisture is lost from it.

## **7.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

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The Forest School Leader will have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification, CRB enhanced disclosure and an outdoor first aid qualification.

The Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.
- Planning for sessions including differentiation for individual children's needs.
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
- Administration of first aid and first aid kit.
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
- Organising emergency procedures.

A Forest School Handbook is taken into the woodland on each visit, this contains vital information needed for each session.

Staff and volunteers will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times as well as supporting the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

## **8.0 CANCELLATION PROCEDURE**

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There may be times when Forest School sessions have to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. These may be:

- Staff illness – which prevents staff / child ratios being met.
- Severe weather conditions.
- Any situation that poses a health and safety risk.

## **9.0 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

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All staff and volunteers must be familiar with these procedures (appendix 1) in the event of an emergency

The Forest School Leader will be responsible for phoning the emergency services if required. The Leader must have a mobile phone and school radio during sessions. The information for the emergency services (grid reference if appropriate) is to be kept with the Forest School Leader when undertaking a session as well as with reception.

After any accident or emergency staff are to ensure relevant records have been made.