

**ST. PAUL'S**  
**CHURCH OF ENGLAND**  
**PRIMARY SCHOOL**



**ENGAGE - INSPIRE - ACHIEVE**

**The Christian family of St Paul's... moving forward together.  
A caring, exciting and happy school where everyone  
succeeds!**

**Forest School Policy**  
**January 2017**

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

In today's society, many children are missing out on powerful learning experiences. Unfortunately, they are no longer allowed to climb trees, make mud pies or rose petal perfume, build dens, go on a bug hunt or simply explore outside. These are opportunities which spark imagination, develop physical skills, communication and sharing of ideas. Our generation of adults did all these activities not bound by health and safety and fears over risk taking.

At St Paul's Primary School, we are lucky enough to have Larkhill Rise, a supportive outdoor environment within easy reach to allow all our children to take part in activities where they can self-discover and learn from the world around them.

We have passionate and committed qualified Forest School leaders to work with the children, sharing their skills to motivate and inspire the children. Time is less pressured allowing children to think, process ideas and thoughts. Children are supported through their learning through a process of experimentation, trial and error rather than content.

Through opportunities to take part in forest school sessions throughout their time at St Paul's School children will become resilient life-long learners who ultimately learn to respect each other, the environment and its wild life and most importantly respect themselves and who they are.

## **LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES**

Child protection

Health and safety

Medical administration

Behaviour

Equality

Visitor protocol

Child media

## **AIMS AND PRINCIPLES**

The forest school at Larkhill Rise will provide a positive and unique learning experience for our children. Children will have the opportunity to explore, enquire, problem solve and expand their vocabulary through working outdoors in a stimulating environment.

Through taking part in Forest School sessions children's self-confidence and wellbeing will be enhanced by working on self-motivating tasks and group activities which are all hands on.

It is hoped as a result of taking part in Forest School sessions children will grow to have greater resilience, increased self-esteem, be happy and secure and can use the experiences and skills in their future lifelong learning.

The policies and procedures outlined in this document are in addition to whole school policies and do not replace them

## **History of Larkhill Rise**

Working in partnership with Bright Futures Nursery School, Alder Grange Community & Technology School and the local community, Larkhill Rise has been reborn from the original project which was developed in 2005 as an outdoor classroom.

From September 2014, the site is being used by St. Paul's C of E Primary School, and Bright Futures Nursery School to deliver Forest School sessions to groups of children, by trained forest school leaders.

**Staff Qualified as Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and Outdoors First Aid Trained.**

Emma Smith  
Laura Stephenson

### **Volunteer helpers**

Volunteers are vital for the effective running of our Forest School. They often have talents, interests and knowledge about wildlife or growing. Volunteers also ensure that we can ensure safe adult: child ratios

Volunteers must always remain in sight of school staff and under no circumstances be left alone with a child.

All volunteers are provided with a handbook which outlines Forest School Policies and procedures to adhere to. They will also be made aware of how this fits into other school policies namely - Health and Safety, security, medical administration, attendance, behaviour, child protection, equality and visitor protocol, which can be accessed online on the school website or a paper copy can be obtained from the Forest School Leader.

Staff and Volunteers must sign to say they have read the handbook and all the policies and risk assessments.

Failure to adhere to these policies and procedures will result in the volunteer no longer being accepted to work at St. Paul's

### **Safe guarding**

All volunteers and staff are to follow St, Paul's Policy.

Guidance on what to do if a child discloses any information is provided in the volunteer handbook.

Any concerns are to be reported as soon as possible to the Forest School Leader who will then pass this information on to the Child Protection Designated Person - the Head Teacher or if unavailable an Assistant Head Teacher.

### **Lost or missing person procedure**

Children are given boundaries to adhere to and the gate is always locked behind us.

In the unlikely event of a suspected missing child:

- An adult will shout "1,2,3 where are you?" / blow a whistle 2 times
- All children and adults are then to come to the Leader.

- A quick register is taken and if a child is missing the Forest School Leader will search the area with a volunteer.
- A member of school staff will remain with the other children.
- Exits are checked for breach of security.
- If the child is not found within 5 minutes the school office is informed and a member of the Senior Leadership Team will become involved in the procedure and the police may be contacted.

Children are taught that if they ever feel they may be lost they are to shout “1,2,3 where are you?” and adults will listen and search in the direction of their voice.

### **Use of photographs policy**

Permission must be given by parents, in line with the Schools Child Media Policy. School Staff are to be aware of any children who are not permitted to have photographs taken. Photographs can only be taken on cameras which are the property of St. Paul’s C of E Primary School. These must be downloaded onto the computer at the end of the session then deleted from the camera.

### **Use of mobile phones policy**

No mobile phones are to be used during Forest School sessions. Forest School Leaders to have walkie talkies which link up to office staff as their form of contact with school.

### **Toileting policy**

Children are all asked to use the toilet before leaving the school building.

If children require the toilet during the session they are to be accompanied by a member of school staff to Bright Futures Nursery School to use the toilet.

If a child soils themselves, they must be returned to school by a member of school staff where they will be taken care of in line with school policies by a member of support staff in school.

### **Procedure for an uninvited visitor to the Forest**

If there is unwanted attention from a member of the public, the Forest School leader will ask the person to leave the area. If they fail to do so the Forest School Leader will phone school and speak to the Head Teacher or an Assistant Head as to the next steps taken. If the situation is causing concern regarding the safety of the children, the police will be phoned. The incident will be logged and shared with the Head Teacher.

### **Health and Safety**

St. Paul’s C of E Primary School accepts its legal obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The purpose of this act is to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of health and safety at work. It protects not only people at work, but also the health and safety of the general public who may be affected by the work activities.

In line with St. Paul’s Health and Safety policy, at Larkhill Rise Forest School we ask that all adults and children work in accordance to any instruction or training they have been given.

## **Risk management and Risk assessment**

Risk-benefit management is a fundamental part of life and is a skill needed for young people's safety and well-being. Staff and volunteers have a duty of care towards young people however this certainly does not mean wrapping them in cotton wool. Therefore, we have responsibility not only to keep them safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risk for themselves. (Council for Learning Outside the Classroom)

The Forest School Leader will conduct the following risk assessments:

### **Weekly Site Check**

This will be done in conjunction with Laura Stephenson Forest School Leader from Bright Futures Nursery School.

### **Daily Site check / safety sweep**

This will be done 1 hour before taking a group out and will be undertaken by the forest school leader who is to take the session.

Both of these checks will entail identification of any significant hazards and taking precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level.

### **5 steps to process to risk assessment will take place:**

1. Look for hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risk and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or more should be done
4. Record the findings
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary

Daily site checks will also take into account the weather forecast for the session.

### **Individual risk assessments**

These will be developed by the Forest School Leader, parents and class teachers for children who have social, physical and or medical needs.

### **Activity risk assessments**

These will be undertaken by the Forest School Leader and will entail identifying and managing hazards and risks and also identifying the benefits of each activity. Action will be taken to minimise risk by following procedures for risky activities such as lighting fires and use of tools.

Volunteers will be made aware of all risk assessments and plans for the session in a pre-session briefing with the Forest School Leader.

### **Ongoing dynamic risk assessment**

This takes place onsite throughout the session. It involves professional judgements in response to changing situations - such as deterioration in the weather.

Volunteers are reminded that Health and safety is everyone's responsibility and to inform the forest school leader as soon as possible if they become aware of anything which worries them regarding the safety of the group.

### **Tools use procedure**

Use of tools is important in enabling children to gain new skills, which they can then apply in purposeful situations. It also results in raised self-confidence. We aim that all participants use tools as safely as possible with as little risk to health as possible. Tools that maybe used are potato peelers, bow saws and loppers. The following guidelines are to be followed when using any tool:

- The forest school leader will check that the tools are in good working order.
- Tools are only to be used when the Forest School Leader believes the children are able to do so.
- Correct use of tools - following a tool talk presentations will be given by the Forest School Leader.
- Tools are counted out and counted back in.
- Children are to work 1:1 with an adult when using tools.
- Safe working distances of the tool - 2 arm's length must be in place around participants using tools.
- Tools should have safety guards placed back on as soon as not in use and they should be returned to the designated area.

### **Fire procedure**

- Fires can only be lit by the forest school leader.
- Fires can only be set in the designated fire circle area.
- All seating must be at least 1 ½ meters from the fire.
- Once lit, fires must be supervised by the forest school leader.
- Flammable liquids are not to be used to light fires
- Safety equipment - fire gloves, burns kit, fire blanket and water are to be kept close to hand.
- All participants will be given clear guidelines as to how to behave and move around the fire area.
- If there is a strong wind children are to be positioned away from the direct line of smoke and given guidance on how to deal with smoke.
- 1:1 supervision is to be in place with the Forest School Leader if children are going to cook on the fire.
- All fires must be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of the session.

### **Tree climbing procedure**

- Children may only climb identified trees.
- Children must ask an adult before climbing a tree.
- Adults must check the tree for loose or rotten branches.
- Adults must check the area below the tree is free from any sharp objects.
- Children are permitted to climb to limits below 1 ½ meters.
- An adult must be present and be near enough to catch a child.

### **Nil by mouth policy**

There is no safe way of ensuring that children eat only safe berries, fungi and fruits or that the fruit is clean and edible. There is also the possibility if children eat those identified as safe in Forest School sessions they may incorrectly identify and ingest harmful berries, fungi or fruit outside Forest School sessions. For this reason, Larkhill Rise adopts a nil-by-mouth policy regarding any items found in the forest.

Drinks and a snack are brought into the forest for the children to have each session. They are to use hand gel to clean their hands before partaking in snacks. The Forest School leader will make adults aware of any child who is unable to eat particular foods due to allergies. They will also be informed that this information is to remain confidential.

On occasions adults may harvest fruits that are edible to clean and prepare back in school.

### **Gardening policy**

Children are to wear gardening gloves and be supervised. Hands must be washed once finished.

### **Caring for animals policy**

Children are taught to care for animals such as chickens on site - providing food and water and space to move. Children will wash their hands after animal caring sessions. Permission must be given by the children's parent / guardian to do this. Staff will be made aware of any children with allergies. If there is concern over the well-being or health of an animal advice for an expert will be sought.

### **First Aid**

Only qualified members of staff can administer medication and first aid when needed. Checks on medical kit will be undertaken by Forest School Leaders.

#### **Parents are to**

- keep staff up to date on any medical conditions.
- Medication will be kept in the Emergency bag with the corresponding paperwork for children who have on going medical needs such as asthma. .

Refer to the school administration of medication policy

#### **Volunteers are to**

- be made aware that information regarding children's medical needs is confidential.
- Take responsibility for their own medication they may need for ongoing medical conditions.
- Complete next of kin and emergency contact information
- Complete the form outlining any ongoing medical conditions they may have.

### **Emergency Bag (happy bag / Sid the sack)**

This is kept separate to all other items taken to Larkhill Rise and is the responsibility of the Forest Leader initially and then in emergency, members of school staff

This kit will contain:

- copies of risk assessments
- names of the children attending
- any personal medication of children attending and permission / administration forms
- first aid kit
- emergency plan
- walkie talkies
- emergency whistle
- emergency life blanket
- bivvy bag
- burns kit
- emergency sugary food
- water

### **Emergency and serious incident procedure**

Emergencies are never wanted, but they can still happen.

In most cases the emergency can be resolved on-the-spot by the TA taking the group away from the incident and the Outdoor First Aider providing first aid.

**However, if a serious incident was to occur the following procedure would be followed.**

1. Secure the safety of the group - "1,2,3 where are you?" or 2 blows of a whistle. All activities stop and children return to TA, who will take them to a place of safety.
2. First Aider to attend to casualties with an adult helper. The casualties will be closely monitored and first aid administered
3. The emergency services are to be contacted by an adult helper. They will provide the operator with the following information
  - a. an assessment of the casualty's injuries
  - b. the location of Larkhill Rise - Behind St Paul's School POSTCODE BB4 8HT
  - c. The GRID REFERENCE of the location of Larkhill Rise - SD810237
  - d. The time of the incident
4. A volunteer will meet the ambulance crew on the ring road and escort them to the casualty.
5. The school office will be contacted via the walkie-talkie and informed of the injury and asked to contact parents and inform the head teacher. Telephone: 01706 215893
6. An incident report will be completed once the casualty is in the hands of the medical team.

### **Clothing**

Advice is given to volunteers and parents regarding suitable clothing for cold and warm weather. Long trousers and long sleeved tops are to be worn all year round. School will

provide waterproof over suits for all children. Spare clothing is stored in the emergency bag. Protective clothing is provided as needed for tool use / fire activities.

### **Entrance and departure policy**

Larkhill Rise has sets of keys held by Bright Futures Nursery School and St. Paul's C of E Primary School. At St. Paul's one key must remain in the office, whilst the other is used by the Forest School Leader. The site is locked when not in use. The gate is opened and then locked behind the group when entering and exiting.

### **Activities that may take place:**

- Den making
- Nature study
- Team games / collaborative play
- Creative experiences
- Imaginative play
- Physical activity
- Tool use \*
- Fire use \*
- Tree climbing \*

*\*see separate procedures above*

### **Daily operating procedure**

#### **Before each session:**

- Forest School Leader will complete a risk assessment / site sweep.
- Forest School Leader will check all items are in the emergency bag
- Forest Leader will add any additional medication to the bag and permission / administration form for the child.
- Forest School will check that morning that volunteers are able to attend and that the ratio of 1 adult to 4 children is in place for the trip.
- Forest School leader to check any equipment and tools are in working order and safely stored.
- Forest school leader will set up any equipment / experiences in the Forest.
- Forest school leader will check the walkie talkie and has a signal in the forest. The other walkie talkie to remain in the office.
- Forest leader will brief volunteers regarding risk assessments and activities planned.

### **Session opening**

- A register will be taken
- Introduce any new faces
- Adults support children in putting on outdoor clothing
- Adults ensure children walk safely to the site
- Boundaries and guidelines are discussed once at the site

### **During each session**

- Ongoing risk assessment with regard to changes in weather, behaviour, safety and activity by Forest School Leader, supported by volunteers
- Head counts
- Games and activities
- A snack or drinks might be had.

### **Session closing**

- Children review their learning
- Extinguish any fire
- Check all tools have been returned
- Remove structures
- Remove any litter
- Ensure emergency bag is intact and returns with us
- Take register
- Adults to ensure children walk safely back to school
- Adults help children remove outdoor clothing
- Adults clean and tidy away clothing

### **After the session**

- Make any repairs to resources / clothing
- Top up any resources used form emergency bag
- Complete evaluation forms
- Complete any incident / accident forms if needed

### **Poor weather procedure**

Forest school sessions will **not** take place if there are high winds, ice, extreme cold or storms. The Forest School Leader will use BBC weather online forecast to make a judgement about expected conditions the day of the session.

In wet weather a shelter will be built immediately or before the session by a trained adult.

If the weather deteriorates unexpectedly during a session it maybe that the session comes to an early end.

### **Equal Opportunities**

St. Paul's C of E Primary School is committed to equal opportunities for all and we aim to provide through our Forest School programme an environment where people feel valued.

All children should be adequately dressed to ensure they are able to take part in Forest School activities. Additional clothing is provided as well as waterproof over suits in a range of sizes.

For children with addition physical needs modifications may need to be put in place to ensure that they can participate to the best of their ability. An individual risk assessment will be developed with the parents, SENDco, 1:1 TA support and the Forest School Leader.

## **Behaviour**

Clear sets of boundaries and guidelines are in place and a positive behaviour management philosophy is in place.

However, if it becomes apparent that the actions of a child is likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others, volunteers must report this immediately to the Forest School Leader, who will take the following steps to de-escalate the situation:

- Recount the facts of what they have seen in a neutral tone.
- Remind the child of the Forest Rules or guidelines they have not followed.
- Listen to all parties involved.
- Establish what needs to be done to resolve the problem, encouraging them to consider the happiness and safety of other members of the group.
- Provide calming down time if needed with TA.
- Monitor behaviour and praise positive changes.

Children who can on occasion struggle with controlling their emotions and behaviour will need an individual risk assessment and 1:1 support.

## **Parental consent**

Parents are to be informed of the activities that could take place at forest schools. They must sign to say they are willing for their child to take part and provide information regarding medical history, allergies and insect stings.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

The Forest School Policy will be reviewed on a two year cycle unless any required at an earlier period of time.

This policy will be ratified by the Governing Body in January 2017

**Signed by Mr W Aitkin (Chair of Governors)**

**Date January 2017**

**This policy will be reviewed on or before the following date: January 2019**