

LARKHILL RISE FOREST SCHOOL POLICY AND PROCEDURES



ENCOURAGE
one another
AND BUILD EACH OTHER UP
1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

Updated September 2025

Ethos statement

As adults, looking back on our childhood we often clearly remember activities such as exploring, tree climbing, making mud pies, den's and rose petal perfume. These are such enduring memories as they sparked our imagination and curiosity, providing challenge and purpose in our play. They helped to develop physical skill and provided many opportunities to talk, share with our friends and resulted in a tremendous sense of achievement. Unfortunately, due to safety concerns and busy lives children today often miss out on these types of experiences, due to fears over safety and time.

A Forest School provides a safe and supportive environment where children can learn to manage risk and tackle challenges. At our woodland location, children will learn from everything around them - the people, the environment, the atmosphere and experiences. In doing so, they will gain a sense of value for the wider, natural world and a sense of responsibility for their environment.

At St Paul's we place a strong emphasis on personalised learning. Our outdoor learning will uphold this value as children will be encouraged to plan and initiate their own learning through aspects of the woodland environment that motivates and inspires them. Forest School is a long-term programme where a sense of community is developed through children visiting in small consistent groups with familiar adults.

Class teachers and teaching assistants will play a supportive role in valuing children competences, capabilities conversations and feelings. They will encourage children to think creatively, providing time for them to develop their thoughts and ideas. We aim to expand upon individuals' potential enabling them to become lifelong strong resilient learners.

At St. Paul's we are lucky to have a fantastic outdoor resource in the Larkhill Rise Forest School development to fulfil our mission statement and Forest School ethos.

History of Larkhill Rise

Working in partnership with Bright Futures Nursery 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 to 2021, the site has been used by St. Paul's C of E Primary School and Bright Futures Nursery School to deliver Forest School sessions to groups of children, under the guidance and leadership of Laura Stephenson who has undertaken Level 3 Forest School Training. At present, sessions are undertaken by class teachers and sessions are based around our current curriculum content.

Aims of Forest Schools

The forest school area 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 outdoor learning 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 outdoor learning 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. As our sessions now link to our curriculum topics and come away from some traditional forest school skills, we hope that children can imbed their substantive knowledge through practical disciplinary activities.

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

Volunteer helpers

Volunteers are vital for the effective running of our outdoor learning sessions. They often have talents, interests and knowledge about wildlife or growing. Volunteers also ensure that we can follow county guidelines regarding adult to child ratios for when the sessions are forest school based led by a forest school leader. (For outdoor learning activities led by class teachers with the support of classroom assistants, normal classroom ratios apply)

- Foundation Stage 1:5
- Key Stage 1 1:7
- Key Stage 2 1:10

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 'Larkhill Rise Forest School Policies and Procedures' to adhere to. They will also be made aware of how this policy 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 school office.

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 C of E School.

Safeguarding

All volunteers and staff are to follow St Paul's safeguarding 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 class teacher leading the session who will then pass this information on to the Designated Safeguarding leader (Sharon Charlesworth) or Deputy safeguarding leads (Andrea Horrocks and Katy Ormerod) as well as recording the information/disclosure on CPOMS.

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 blow one long whistle and all children will gather at the stone semi-circle.
- A register will be taken, if any children are missing the following will happen.
- An adult will shout "1,2,3 where are you?"
- All children and staff will listen for the call back from the missing child "I'm over here" or "1,2,3 where are you?"
- If a child is missing the class teacher 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.

Any child who feels they are lost may 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 and iPads 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 or iPad.

Use of mobile phones policy

No mobile phones are to be used during outdoor learning sessions, except for the emergency phone carried by the class teacher in the Emergency Bag. A walkie talkie is carried at all times by the class teacher to allow communication with the school office if required.

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 the composting toilet 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 class teacher will ask the person to leave the area. If they fail to do so the class teacher will radio the school and speak to the Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher and next steps will be 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 and 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 Outdoor Learning 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 class teacher.

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 outdoor learning leader (Megan Pounder) and the inclusion manager (Andrea Horrocks), parents and class teachers for children who have social, physical and or medical needs.

Activity risk assessments

These will be undertaken by the outdoor learning 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 outdoor learning 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 class teacher as soon as possible if they become aware of anything which worries them regarding the safety of the group. Findings should be reported back to the outdoor learning leader (Megan Pounder).

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 may be used are potato peelers, bow saws and loppers.

The following guidelines are to be followed when using any tool:

- The outdoor learning leader will check that the tools are in good working order.
- Tools are only to be used when the outdoor learning leader believes the children are able to do so.
- Correct use of tools - following a tool talk presentation will be given by the outdoor learning leader in consultation with Laura Stephenson level 3 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 class teacher.
- Fires can only be set in the designated fire circle area within the brick fire pit.
- All seating must be at least 1 ½ meters from the fire with a clear entrance and exit point.
- Once lit, fires must be supervised by the class teacher.
- Flammable liquids are not to be used to light fires.
- Safety equipment - fire gloves, burn 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. Children who are asthmatic or have other breathing conditions should be positioned away from the smoke and if symptoms start they should be removed away from the fire circle and smoke area.
- 1:1 supervision is to be in place with the class teacher 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 the outdoor learning sessions they may incorrectly identify and ingest harmful berries, fungi or fruit outside these 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. Children will use wipes and hand gel to clean their hands before partaking in snacks.

The class teacher will make adults aware of any child who is unable to eat specific foods due to allergies. They will also be informed that this information is to remain confidential. We will be harvesting fruits and vegetable that have been grown specifically by the children in the vegetable patch. Any fruit or vegetables harvested from Larkhill Rise Forest School will be thoroughly cleaned, prepared and possibly cooked on the fire pit. Children may also take-home produce that has been grown in the vegetable patch.

Gardening policy

Children will be supervised while gardening or using hand tools to plant or deweed in Larkhill Rise Forest School. Hands will be washed with soap and water once the children have returned to school.

Caring for animals policy

Children are taught to care for animals such as rabbits 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 wellbeing 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 the medical kit will be undertaken by the class teacher prior to their session. Parents should 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.

Emergency Bag (Sid the Sack)

This is kept separate to all other items taken to Larkhill Rise Forest School and is the responsibility of the Outdoor Learning leader to check the contents and replenish weekly. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to bring the emergency bag to all outdoor learning sessions.

This kit will contain: copies of risk assessments, register of the children attending, any personal medication of children, first aid kit, emergency plan, walkie talkie, whistle, emergency life blanket, burns kit and emergency food.

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 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 - class teacher to blow the whistle, all activities stop and children return to stone semicircle to a staff member, who will take them to a place of safety and complete a register and request help (if required) from school via the walkie talkie.
2. First Aider to attend to casualty/ies with an adult helper. The casualty/ies will be closely monitored, and first aid administered.
3. The school office will be contacted and informed of the injury and asked to contact parents and inform the Head Teacher via walkie talkie.
4. The emergency services are to be contacted by an adult helper. They will provide the operator with the following information
 - An assessment of the casualty's injuries.
 - The location of Larkhill Rise - Behind St Paul's School POSTCODE BB4 8HT.
 - The GRID REFERENCE of the location of Larkhill Rise - SD810237.
 - The what3words reference - term.moons.score
 - The time of the incident
5. A volunteer will meet the ambulance crew on the ring road and escort them to the casualty.
6. An incident report will be completed and given to the Head Teacher 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, long sleeved tops and waterproof top and bottoms are recommended all year round. A set of warm 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 2 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 class teacher. 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, Gardening, Weeding and Planting.

Daily operating procedure

Before each session: The class teacher will complete a risk assessment / site sweep.

The class teacher will check all items are in the emergency bag and that the walkie talkie is charged, add any additional medication to the bag. The class teacher to check any equipment and tools are in working order and safely stored. The class teacher will set up any equipment / experiences in Larkhill Rise Forest School. The class teacher will brief volunteers and staff regarding risk assessments and activities planned.

Session opening

- Register will be taken in class.
- Adults support children in putting on outdoor clothing.
- Children will line up in pairs and 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 the class teacher, supported by TA's and the outdoor learning leader.

Head counts, Games and activities, Children review their learning, Extinguish any fire, Check all tools have been returned, Remove any litter, Ensure emergency bag is intact and returns with us, Take register, Adults to ensure children walk safely back to school in pairs, children to tidy away clothing and wellies

After the session

Make any repairs to resources / clothing. Top up any resources used from the emergency bag. Complete evaluation forms and report any damage or hazards to the outdoor learning leader. Download photographs and delete from camera. Complete any incident / accident forms if needed.

Poor weather procedure

Outdoor learning sessions will not take place if there are high winds, ice, extreme cold or storms. Hourly wind speeds should be checked via the MET office website prior to the session. Winds are issued in MPH (miles per hour) and underneath it will issue the highest gust in any given hour. Wind speeds should be 30mph or below in Larkhill Rise Forest School and no more than 40mph on the open field. Advice should be sought from the outdoor learning leader if you are unsure about the weather. 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 may be 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 outdoor learning programme an environment where people feel valued.

All children should be adequately dressed to ensure they are able to take part in outdoor learning activities. For children with additional 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 outdoor learning 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 class teacher, 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 a member of staff. 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

Parental consent and updated medical forms are required to enable children to attend Larkhill Rise Forest School, the consent form must contain up to date emergency contact details and any medical conditions that their child may have.

This Policy will be taken to the Governing body in October 2025

