

Aldersbrook Primary School – Forest Schools Policy

Aim

The school aim to offer both children and practitioners a shared understanding of the ethos of a forest schools setting. This approach enables the learners to be independent, courageous, self-motivated, and considerate towards others and sets them up for lifelong learning. This practice supports the development of self-esteem and self-confidence.

There are many issues to consider within this policy and we aim to remain true to the forest schools ethos and approach.

Health and Safety

The schools forest schools programme will support all children develop responsibility for both themselves and others within the group. Forest school will help encourage early risk management strategies and ensure that the youngsters start to consider the impact of their actions on both themselves and others.

Vulnerable Children

Forest school practitioners regard their duty of care when working with young persons as extremely important. We ensure that all children, workers and adults are safe at all times. Everyone involved with our forest school is made aware of the schools health and safety policy, risk assessments including site visit and planned activities.

All adults involved with our forest school are made aware of the relevant school policy and make sure that everyone adheres to the guidance contained in them.

All of our forest school practitioners hold a current full DBS and we ask that any regular volunteers offering help at our sessions also have this. If we have any adult attending a session and they do not hold a DBS certificate they will not be left unsupervised with any children. Should any adult have any concern about a child's physical or mental wellbeing this should be shared with the school's named Child Protection Lead. This sharing of information will enable the school child protection policy to be followed.

Safety and good practice is extremely important and it is the responsibility of every adult (staff or volunteer) to ensure general safety when working with youngsters.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. Any concerns raised by either an adult or youngsters must only be shared with those who need to know such as the forest school lead and class teacher. This will enable to correct procedure can be followed.

Equality and Inclusion

Everyone attending our forest schools session should be treated equally.

The school is committed to:

- Providing a secure environment where children feel that they can flourish and that their contribution is encouraged and valued.
- Include and value any contribution made of any child or adult to our understanding of equality and diversity.
- Make sure that inclusion is seen as a main focus and runs through every part of the planned sessions.

The legal framework for this guidance is:

- Race Relations Act 1976;
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000;
- Sex Discrimination Act 1886; and the
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001;

Cancellation of Sessions Procedure

There may be a time when it is not possible to run a forest schools session and the group/session must be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. These may be because:-
Staff illness – which prevent staff/child ratio being met.

Severe weather conditions.

Any situation that poses a health and safety risk.

In the event of this situation arising we recommend that:-

Cancellation decisions are made as soon as possible and that all staff, volunteers are informed.

The school will endeavour to run the forest schools session whenever possible, however we reserve the right to cancel a session/s on the day, however we will aim to inform those concerned as soon as possible.

Evaluation Procedure

In order to develop the forest school programme and ensure good practice is maintained throughout we recommend the following:

- 1) Evaluation of session planned – looking at what dispositions and attitudes are being developed.
- 2) Evaluation from children – how did the session go, what was good, what can be improved.
- 3) Evaluation from all staff involved in the session – how did the session go, what was good, what can be improved and complete evaluation sheet for each child that has attended a session.

Environmental Considerations

The schools approach to the forest school ethos has at the heart awareness of the environment. Wherever possible, environmentally friendly products and recycled materials should be used when appropriate. Adults should lead the way by modelling good practice and showing the youngsters that the world in which we live MUST be cared for. Children attending the forest schools sessions should be included when making site checks and planning environmental games.

Policy agreed September 2021

Policy to be reviewed September 2022