



Asterdale Primary School

Forest School Handbook Including Policies and Procedures

Approved by the Governing Board: December 2020

Next Review Date : December 2023

Signed : _____

Mission Statement

At Asterdale Primary School we aim to use the natural outdoor woodland area to offer the children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves.

Forest School is an holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover all aspects of the EYFS and National Curriculum, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity.

The main aims of Asterdale's Forest School are;

- To experience the outdoor environment for an extended period of time developing a relationship with natural spaces.
- To promote children's self-esteem and confidence using the Forest School area.
- To foster independent, resilient, creative learners.

Forest School Site

The Forest site at Asterdale is located at the far side of the school playing field. Site Grid Reference SK 410354.

This is a secure site with no unauthorized access to public or vehicles. The area is marked by a roped fence to set site boundaries. The site is within very easy access to the main school building but far enough away to create the natural space of a woodland.

Asterdale has additional policies, which will be adhered to alongside this policy during Forest School sessions within our woodland.

- Equal opportunities
- Health and Safety
- Child protection and procedure
- Safeguarding
- Behaviour and discipline

- Design and Technology
- Inclusion
- PHSE
- Science

Legislation considered for policy:

Health and Safety at Work Act
 Race Relations Acts 1976 & 2000
 Children Act 2004
 First Aid at Work Regulations 1989
 Personal Protective Equipment Regulations
 Food Safety Regulations 1995

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors

- Ensure they are aware of Forest School ethos, procedures and objectives.
- Ensure they are informed of the health and safety procedures in place for Forest School.

Head Teacher

- Ensure sessions comply with the regulations and guidelines.
- Be confident that the Forest School Leader/Group Leader is competent to monitor the risks throughout each session.

They will also ensure that:-

- Adequate child protection procedures are in place.
- The risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place.
- The Forest School Leader or another member of teaching staff is competent to lead the activity and is familiar with the site.
- The adult: child ratio is appropriate.
- Parents have signed consent forms.
- Arrangements have been made for the medical and special educational needs of children attending.
- Adequate first aid provision will be available.
- There is adequate and relevant insurance cover.
- The Forest School leader has access to a copy of the emergency procedures, the names of everyone in the group and contact details for the next of kin.

Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of each session. The leader will:-

- Have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification and an outdoor first aid qualification.
- Follow the health and safety guidelines and policies.
- Undertake comprehensive risk assessments.

- Clearly define each adult's role.
- Be aware of child protection issues.
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision is available.
- Undertake the planning and preparation for each session, including differentiation for individual children's needs.
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
- Supervise the use of tools use, cleaning and storage.
- Organise emergency procedures.

Additional Adults/Volunteers

Other adults will be clear in their roles and responsibilities. They will:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group - reminding children of rules and boundaries within the setting and following them themselves at all times.
- Follow the instructions of the Forest School Leader and help with the control and discipline.
- Model good practice throughout the session.
- Carry out delegated roles and responsibilities.
- Support children to manage their own risk.
- Speak to the Headteacher/Forest School leader if concerned about the health and safety of children at any time during the visit.
- Be DBS checked.

Parents

The Forest School Leader will:

- Provide written information and briefing sessions to help parents decide whether their child should take part in Forest School sessions.
- Tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit.
- Invite parents to support Forest School sessions as a volunteer if they wish.
- Parents will need to sign a consent form and give the teacher information about the child's physical health.

Equality and Diversity

All children 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. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc.

Special Educational Needs

- Forest School aims to provide a welcome and appropriate learning opportunity for all children providing an environment in which all children are supported to reach their full potential.
- We welcome children with special needs who can participate in Forest School, if appropriate, after consultation between all relevant parties.
- Changes and adaptations can be made to the programme of activities to meet children's specific needs.

Health and Safety

Forest School sessions, by their nature, encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play if they are considered too dangerous.

Risk assessments will be carried out for each activity and for the use of all tools and equipment. A pre-visit site check is also carried out before each visit. Risk assessments will be in place to cover other eventualities. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School Leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice. While delivering outdoor learning we will always adhere to the schools Health and Safety, Safeguarding Children, First Aid and Food Safety Policies to enhance all aspects of health and safety.

Risk Assessments will include:

The site of the Forest School

Risk Assessments for the use of tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives, loppers)

Fire

Rope and string

Shelter building

Water

Collecting natural materials

Being off the ground

Blindfolds

First Aid

- Forest School Leaders hold an advanced first aid certificate, which specifically covers outdoor first aid.
- They will administer care needed during each session following the First Aid Policy already in school and in line with Forest School Procedures.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of every child and will assess the possible need to evacuate the children indoors.
- They will seek emergency help if needed and there will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area. This will be kept in a place that is accessible to all. Additional first aid equipment is located within school.
- If an accident occurs, an accident report form will be filled in. Normal school procedures will be followed and parents will be contacted to inform if this is felt necessary.
- All staff and helpers are made aware of medical conditions of the children - inhalers, epi pens etc. and these are taken into the woodland as needed.

Emergency Procedures

- In the event of a minor injury occurring, initial first aid will be carried out by the Forest School Leader.
- If it is necessary, the child will leave the woodland with an adult to go to the medical room on the school site. In this event a report slip will be sent with the child to notify the school first aider of any details.
- In an emergency, the Forest School Leader will contact the school by mobile phone ensuring a quick response for emergency services.
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Emergency bag equipment

- Full first aid kit
- Mobile phone
- Health and Safety Handbook
- Risk assessment for group on the FS site.
- Safety sweep for the day's session
- Non antiseptic wet wipes
- Pen and accident book
- Bin bags
- Scissors

Personal Protective Equipment

- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. This includes a waterproof coat, waterproof trousers and wellington boots.
- Gloves to be worn to protect hands and keep clean when necessary.
- Sunscreen and hats must be worn during hot weather.
- Hats and scarves to be worn in cold weather conditions.

Asterdale Primary School Forest School Tool Policy

Statement of intent

To enable Asterdale Primary School to have Forest School sessions it will be essential to use real hand tools. This allows children to develop new skills and maintain the woodland. It provides opportunities for children to safely assess risk. Children and adults will be trained through tool talks on safe handling of the tools and will work with an experienced member of staff to develop their own skills.

Aim

To allow children and adults to use tools safely within the woodland setting.

Method

Before any tool is used a tool talk will be given to each child or adult who is present. Once children are used to this, they will then give the tool talk themselves. Procedures will be followed at all times; this will include the position of the adult or child's body when they are using the tool.

When using the tool a safe working distance will be observed (two arms and a tool) and a safe working area will be clearly marked.

Tools will be stored safely in a designated locked box. The box will be kept within the fire circle where an adult will be present at all times. All tools will be counted in and out at the start and end of each session to ensure no tools get left within the woodland or lost.

Protective clothing will be worn at all times when using tools, where necessary.

Most tools will require one to one supervision with children. Bow saws will require two children to use the tool to work in teamwork. Children will not be left alone with tools.

All tools will be checked for damage or wear before use. Damaged tools will be disposed of safely or repaired. Tools will be cleaned, repaired and maintained on a regular basis. Wooden handles will be checked for cracks and splintering. Metal heads will be checked that they are not moving and are firmly in place. Blades will be checked for chips, dents, cracks or rust. Sheaths and guards will be kept clean, oils and waxes will be used to maintain handles. Oil such as WD40 will be used for moving mechanisms. Rust can be sanded off and blades sharpened by an adult using a sharpening stone.

Asterdale Primary School

Forest School Fire Policy

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

Location

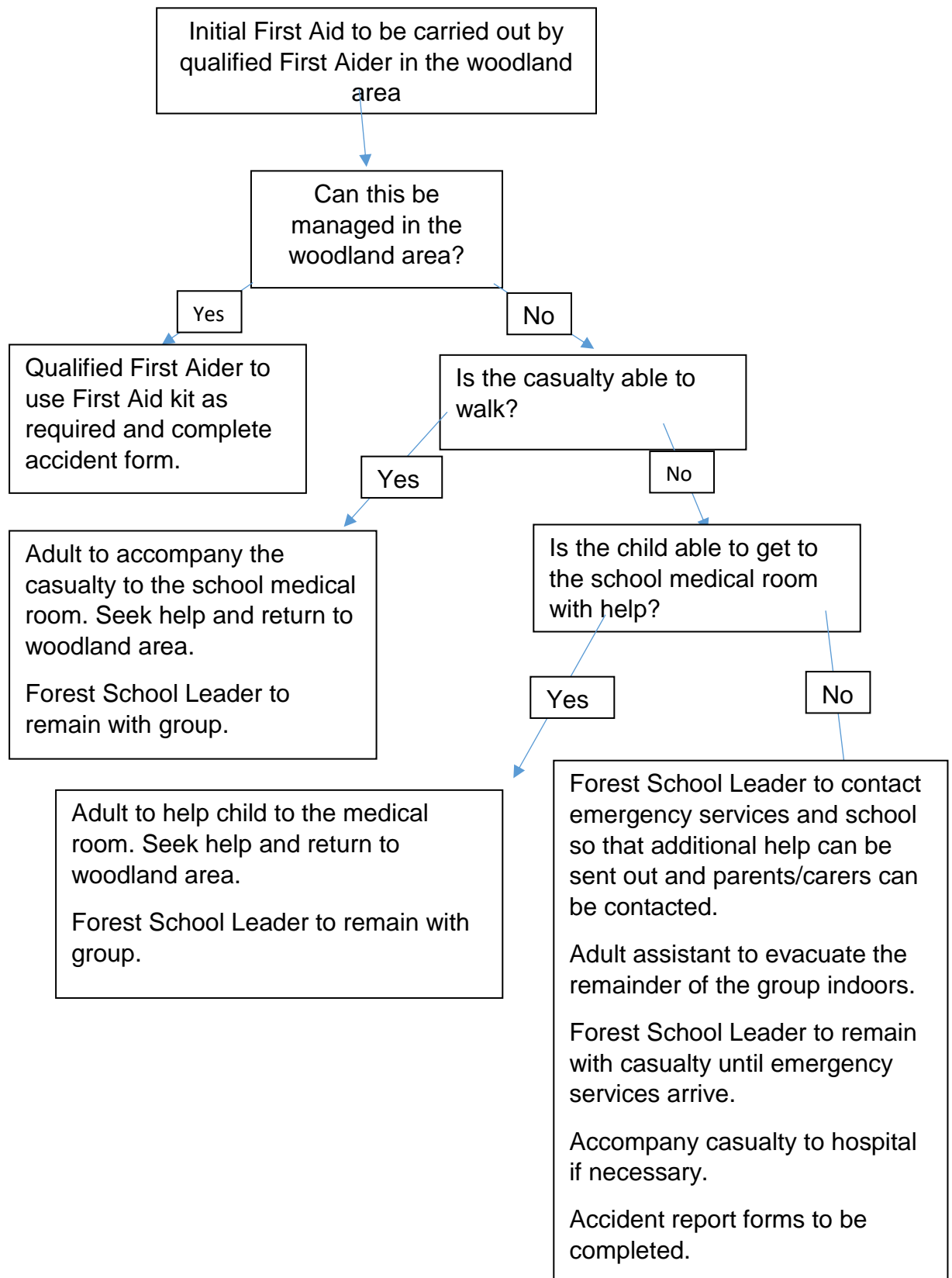
- Fire pit area at the bottom end of the site in the clearing area.
- Campfire areas are enclosed by logs or large stones to prevent the spread of fire. Fire pit surrounded by railway sleepers showing the fire square where children do not enter.
- Storm kettles are only used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit.
- Children must be supervised whilst around the campfire at all times and the fire should never be left unattended.
- When accessing or moving around the campfire, children must walk around the outside of the log circle, then remain sitting on the logs whilst they are around the fire.
- Long trousers and shoes must always be worn.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Fires will not be lit in strong winds. Only adults are permitted to light fires, unless children are under the direct supervision of a member of staff.
- No flammable liquids or plastics are to be used on the fire.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions – a large bucket of clean, fresh water to immerse hand or body part in if a burn occurs.
 - At the end of the session, the fire must be extinguished with water until all smoke and steam has been put out. Leader to be responsible for checking the fire is extinguished and the permanent fire site is safe or evidence removed from a temporary site.

Asterdale Primary School

Forest School Emergency Procedure



Asterdale Primary School Forest School 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.

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
- Thin, light long sleeved top if the session may include coming into contact with nettles, brambles.
- Light long trousers
- Enclosed shoes/boots (no sandals). Possibly wellies depending on the session.

Forest School Leaders and staff will ensure all the children are appropriately dressed before leaving for our Forest School session. We have spare winter and summer clothes in school, sun cream dispensers and sunhats. We also have a full class set of waterproof jackets and trousers.

Asterdale Primary School Forest School Weather Policy

Asterdale Forest School believes

'There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing'

The management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999 requires employers to assess the risks of activities; introduce measures to control these risks and to tell their employees about these measures.

So far as reasonably practicable the Forest School Leaders will take all reasonable steps to identify and reduce hazards to a minimum.

Forest School is outdoors! And as such, weather can be the most influential element in what and how things happen.

Procedures

The Forest Leader is responsible for checking local weather conditions on the morning of a Forest School session

Wind can be a dangerous element in a woodland due to potential falling trees and branches. Therefore, if there are strong winds (measuring over 5 on the Beaufort Scale or above 19-24 mph) or thunder and lightning the session will not take place.

Particular attention to the canopy layer of the woodland area should be paid at the first dynamic risk assessment after strong winds to check for hung up trees/branches and fallen/damaged trees.

All children will wear appropriate clothing before leaving the main school building, this may be; fleece, gloves, wellies, waterproof jacket and coats, sunhats.

Adult helpers are advised to be appropriately dressed and where possible wellies/hats/gloves/spare socks and additional coats will be taken if necessary.

Planned themes and activities need to be very flexible and able to be adapted due to weather conditions. In cold weather children will be encouraged to be more active. More sedentary activities will take place in warmer conditions. Snacks and drinks will always be provided to suit the conditions.

Asterdale Primary School Forest School Travelling Policy

Walking to the Forest School Site

The Forest School site is within the secure boundaries and fencing of Asterdale Primary School.

We will walk to the Forest School site by following these procedures:

- The group will be given a safety reminder before leaving school and before leaving the Forest School site.
- An appropriate adult to child ratio will apply.
- The Forest School Leader and other adults will assume positions along the line of children to be able to constantly assess the route and also check that all children are following.
- Children will be encouraged to take note of their surroundings on the walk to the site and collect fallen dry twigs for kindling.
- The group will stay together so that the Forest School Leader at the rear can always see the adult at the front of the line.
- The group will stop immediately on the signal of “stop” from the Forest School Leader.

Asterdale Primary School Forest School Building and Shelter Policy

We have no permanent shelters on the Forest School site for children to sit under.

There is an outside classroom between the school building and Forest School site, which is covered should we need to use it for any reason.

The site itself has a canopy of trees, so provides shelter from the sun in summer months.

If the session includes building a temporary shelter then the risk assessment for this will be followed, taking into consideration weather, the group of children, time etc. All shelters and ropes to be taken down after being used.

There are three sheds on the site. One to store wood, one for Forest School equipment and one for general gardening equipment. Children are not to enter the sheds unless accompanied by an adult and taught the reasons why and the potential risks, should they not follow the adults lead.

These conversations are built in during every session, building on the mutual respect for all equipment.

Procedure for disposal of food, litter and waste water

When in Forest School it is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners to demonstrate the correct way to dispose of litter and waste to children. The children should be taught and encouraged to clear up after themselves and be made aware of why it is important to do so, encouraging children to care for their own environment.

Items that are suitable to compost will be placed in the compost bin within Forest School. It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to maintain the compost area, along with the children and rest of the school.

Food that can't be composted will be taken back into the school building and disposed of by following the procedures of Derby City Council waste and disposal.

The Forest School Leader will provide waste containers, for waste to either be composted, recycled or which needs to be generally disposed of.

Fresh water should be used to put the fire out, if one has been lit during the session. If the clean water hasn't been used for this purpose, then it can be used to water plants in the school garden or poly tunnel. As long as there are no chemicals the water can be disposed of in the forest area. Any water that is contaminated should be placed in a container and disposed of appropriately and following Derby City Council guidelines.