**Purley Pre-School Forest School Handbook**



**2019**

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# What is Forest School?

Forest School is a nature-based approach that has developed from the philosophies and educational theories from the past. Many early theorists such as Frederich Froebel, Margaret McMillan and Susan Isaacs were influenced by the outdoors being a space to learn and play.

Modern Forest School, in the UK, has developed from the Scandinavian approach to learning and is now becoming increasingly popular in the UK

Forest school is a holistic approach meaning it puts the learner at the heart of the learning experience. With its roots very firmly based in our understanding of how children learn, Forest school offers all learners opportunities for developing their self-confidence, self-esteem, physical skills and communication and language development.

# Forest School principles of practice

The Forest School ethos has 6 principles of good practice agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011.

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland environment or natural environment.
2. Forest School supports the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural environment.
3. Forest School promotes a holistic and individualised learning and development experience. It fosters resilience, confidence, independence and creativity.
4. Forest School offers learners the opportunities to take managed and supported risks.
5. Forest School is facilitated by qualified Forest School Practitioners.
6. Forest School uses a learner centred pedagogical approach to create a programme for learning and development.

# Our Forest School

Our Forest School site is in Pikeshaw Copse in Tilehurst. Our sessions take place during our morning sessions (with the exception of Monday). Children will have the opportunity to take part in Forest School sessions in the term following their third birthday.

Children are asked to arrive pre-school as usual. We will walk the children to the site in small groups. You will be advised in advance which group your child has been allocated to. We ask that children in the first group arrive dressed and ready for Forest School so we can leave promptly.

Forest School sessions are led by Alison Turner or Liza Severnini who are both Forest School Level 3 Practitioners

You will be asked to complete a consent form for your child prior to attendance at Forest School sessions.

# Our Forest School Rules

We expect all children (and grown-ups) to adhere to our rules to help us make Forest School an enjoyable experience for all.

* We listen to each other
* We try to be kind and gentle
* We care for our local community
* We care for plants and wildlife
* We don’t pick plants or flowers
* We don’t put anything in our mouths
* We wash our hands thoroughly when asked to
* we stay close to an adult and don’t wander off.
* We come back when we hear “1,2,3 – come back to me!”
* If we hear the whistle blow three times – we immediately stop what we are doing and stand with a group up member of our group.

# Forest School and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Forest School encourages learning across areas of the EYFS. Our sessions are flexible and planned to meet children’s needs.

Studies have shown that playing and learning outside is hugely beneficial to children’s physical and emotional well-being. Forest School offers children opportunities to take manageable risks and attempt new challenges, it can add a sense of excitement and adventure to their learning. Forest School can support children’s physical development, their communication and language skills, their personal, social and emotional development and can build positive attitudes toward learning.

Forest School also encourages a respect for our local community, the local woodland and its wildlife.

# Woodland Conservation

The impacts of the human race on our planet are very much a global concern with the impact of climate change and pollution on wildlife and the need for us all to take responsibility in looking after our natural world.

Forest School sessions encourage us to take responsibility for our natural spaces and to develop a respect for the natural world.

Our sessions should not have any negative impact on our site and we take responsibility as guardians of the wood to leave the site as others would wish to find it.

# Policies and Procedures

Purley Pre School has a full and comprehensive set of policies and procedures on the website. Please refer to these for information and advice. A summary of some of these policies is included below

# Safeguarding children and child protection

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

Regardless of whether disclosures are made or safeguarding concerns arise during Forest School or in our usual setting we continue to follow our settings standard safeguarding policies and procedures.

*Key commitment 1*

We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our delivery.

Designated safeguarding Officer: Alison Turner

Deputy safeguarding Officer: Kelly Matthews

* We ensure all staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too.
* All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues.
* We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
* We abide by Ofsted requirements in respect of references and Criminal Record Bureau/ Disclosure Barring Service checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children..
* Volunteers do not work unsupervised.

*Key commitment 2*

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused' (HMG 2006).

*Contact details for the local child social services are available to all staff and kept in the safeguarding folder. Parents are notified of the details through the noticeboard.*

*Informing parents*

*Curriculum*

* We introduce key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and so that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe. We create within the setting a culture of value and respect for individuals, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
* We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.

*Confidentiality*

* All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

*Support to families*

* We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the group.
* We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, information sharing, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the local children’s social care team.
* We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
* We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child’s social care worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
* Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

# Missing Child

**Policy statement**

Children’s safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
* An adult will shout “1,2,3 come back to me!” while another staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
* An adult will blow the whistle three times.
* If a child is not found within 5 minutes the Forest School leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing and the child’s parents will be informed.
* Staff will stay with the remaining children to keep them safe and calm while the search takes place.

# Valuing Diversity and Equality

We aim to

* Provide a secure and accessible environment in which all of our children can flourish and in which all contributions are considered and valued;
* Include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity;
* Provide positive non-stereotyping information about gender roles, diverse family structures, diverse ethnic and cultural groups and disabled people;
* Improve our knowledge and understanding of issues of anti-discriminatory practice promoting equality and valuing diversity;
* Challenge and eliminate discriminatory actions;
* Make inclusion a thread that runs through all of the activities of the setting; and
* Foster good relationships between all communities.

# Health and Safety at Forest School

**Policy statement**

Purley Pre School believes that the health and safety of children is of paramount importance. We make our setting and Forest School visits a safe and healthy place for children, parents, staff and volunteers.

We aim to make children, parents, staff and volunteers aware of health and safety issues and to minimise the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

*Insurance cover*

We have public liability insurance and employers' liability insurance. The certificate for public liability insurance is displayed in: Pre School.

The Forest School Leader is the person responsible for Health and Safety during Forest School sessions.

All staff and adult helpers must read the Forest School handbook and relevant risks assessments prior to participating in Forest School sessions.

Essential equipment will be carried by a member of staff and will include:

A copy of the Handbook

First Aid kit

Burns Kit

List of children attending/register

List of children will allergies or medical needs and medication

Emergency contact list

Mobile phone

Spare clothes

Bottle of water

Wipes

Nappy bags

Forest School Accident Log book

# Emergency First Aid Procedure

All Purley Pre School staff are able to take action to apply first aid treatment in the event of an accident involving a child or adult. The first aid qualification includes first aid training for infants and young children. We aim to ensure that first aid training is local authority approved and is relevant to staff caring for young children. In addition the Forest School Leader holds a Forest Schools First Aid certificate which focus on administering first aid in the outdoors.

In the event of any illness or accident to a child or adult during a Forest School session, First Aid will be administered by a qualified first aider.

The Forest School Leader or member of staff will stay with the casualty and monitor their condition.

The children will be gathered together for a headcount and to keep them calm.

All accidents will be recorded in the Forest School Accident Log and parents/carers will be notified and asked to sign the record in the usual way.

If necessary the emergency services will be called, we will give an exact location and as much detail as possible. The child’s parents will also be called and updated to either meet us at the site or the hospital.

Reports of serious accident or injury will be made to RIDDOR and OFSTED.

*The first aid kit:*

A first aid kit will be carried at all times during Forest School sessions and complies with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. The First Aid kit contains the following items:

* Triangular bandages (ideally at least one should be sterile) x 4.
* Sterile dressings:
* Small x 3.
* Medium x 3.
* Large x 3.
* Composite pack containing 20 assorted (individually-wrapped) plasters x 1.
* Sterile eye pads (with bandage or attachment) e.g. No 16 dressing x 2.
* Container of 6 safety pins x 1.
* Guidance card as recommended by HSE x 1.

In addition to the first aid equipment, the following will also be carried:

* 2 pairs of disposable plastic (PVC or vinyl) gloves.
* 1 plastic disposable apron.
* A children’s forehead ‘strip’ thermometer.
* Burns Kit (if fires are planned)
* Anti-bacterial wipes
* Bottle of clean water
* Accident forms to be completed in the event of an accident

# Food and Hygiene

Anti-bacterial wipes and a limited supply of water will be available. Wipes will be disposed of in a bag and taken back to the setting for disposal.

Children may be offered or bring their snack to a Forest School Sessions. Our normal food hygiene rules and standards apply when preparing for serving food during Forest School. This includes any cooking done over an open fire.

# Toileting

Children will be encouraged to use the loo before we leave Pre-School for a Forest School session. We will ensure that those in nappies are wearing clean nappies before we depart. We ask that parents take children to the loo when they arrive in the morning.

There are no toileting facilities in Pikeshaw Woods. We will ensure we carry a small supply of spare clothes and nappies in case of accidents.

# Adverse Weather Conditions

Forest School sessions take place in all seasons. Forest School sessions will be cancelled in extremes of weather such as Thunderstorms or strong winds.

In cold weather, we will plan activities that keep children warm and erect a shelter.

# Clothing

To ensure that children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the woodland environment it is important children wear the appropriate clothing and footwear. Clothing will get muddy so we recommend wearing old clothes.

Children need to wear long sleeves and trousers during ALL Forest School sessions. This is particularly important to protect them from stings, thorns, burns, bites and ticks.

We recommend the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Winter | Summer |
| Warm hat  Gloves  Vest  Long sleeved t-shirt  Jumper or fleece  Waterproof coat  Waterproof trousers  Walking boots or wellingtons with warm socks  Thermal underwear | Sun hat  Sun lotion applied before session  Long sleeved t-shirt  Lightweight long trousers  Enclosed Walking boots or wellingtons (no sandals) |

Forest School staff will ensure children are appropriately dressed before leaving for Forest School but we ask that children arrive ready in the morning to save time.

# Risk-Benefit Management

Risk Management is an important part of Forest School and is a life skill needed for our safety and well-being. Risk Management in Forest School is concerned with the identification of significant risks of harm and is based on the likelihood of an incident occurring and the severity of harm if it did. However, this does not mean not trying something new. We have the responsibility to keep young people safe but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves.

At Forest School we conduct four types of risk assessment

*Site Assessment*

This assesses the risks associated with the Forest School site that we use. Each layer within the woodland area is assessed at least once every half term – more often following adverse weather conditions.

*Daily Assessment*

This is carried out before each Forest School session and will take into consideration factors such as weather conditions and a review of the site.

*Activity Assessment*

An assessment of each planned activity will be carried out before each activity takes place. This is particularly important for activities that include the use of tools or fire making.

*Ongoing Assessment*

These are assessments carried out continually during each session and involve leaders judgement in response to changing situations such as weather conditions or a change in planned activities.

All risks assessments are recorded and carried in the Happy Bag.

# Using and Storing Tools

The Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessments in place must be given due regard before tools can be used at Forest School

To enable Purely Pre School to carry out Forest School sessions it will be essential to use real hand tools. This allows children to develop new skills and maintain the woodland.

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.

A demonstration of safe use of each tool must be given to each child or adult who is new to the tool. Tool safety will be taught throughout the sessions, before tools are used and each child will be judged individually on their ability to use tools safely before working with them, Tool use for individual items are found within the Forest School Handbook.

Procedures must be followed at all times, this includes the position of the adult or child’s body when they are using the tool.

Tools will be stored safely in a designated took box when not in use.

Tools will only be removed by the Forest School Leader and used under adult supervision.

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.

Permission to use tools can only be given by the Forest School Leader.

Permission may be withdrawn at the Forest School Leader’s discretion if the rules are not followed.

Tools will require one to one supervision with children from the Early Years sector, bow saws may require two children to use the tool to work in teamwork. Children must not be left alone with tools.

All tools will be inspected 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

# Tool Talk – Bowsaw

* This is a bowsaw.
* This is the handle.
* This is the cover.
* I take the cover off like this.
* This is the blade.
* This is the cutting edge.
* When I have finished with the bowsaw I put the cover back on like this.
* I stand with the bowsaw like this.
* I walk with the bowsaw like this.
* I pass the bowsaw like this.
* When I use the bowsaw I use it two arms and a tools length away from anyone except my partner like this.
* I use the bowsaw to cut wood bigger than a two pence piece.
* I have bare hands on the tool.
* I have a glove on my helper hand.
* When I am not using the bowsaw I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing inwards.
* When I have finished with the bowsaw I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided.

# Bow saw rules

* Bow saws must have a guard blade on when on in use
* Supervision ratios are 1:2
* Bow saws are used to cut anything larger than a 2 pence piece
* A glove must be worn on the helping hand
* Wood being sawn must be secured on a safe cutting bench
* The crossed hands method must be used to start sawing

# Tool Talk – Loppers

* These are loppers.
* This is the handle.
* I take the cover off like this.
* This is the blade.
* This is the cutting edge.
* When I have finished with the loppers I put the cover back on like this.
* I stand with the loppers like this.
* I walk with the loppers like this.
* I pass the loppers like this.
* When I use the loppers I use them two arms and a tools length away from anyone else.
* I use the loppers to cut wood thinner than a two pence piece.
* I have bare hands on the tool.
* When I am not using the loppers I put them down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing behind me.
* When I have finished with the loppers I put them in the designated place or in the toolbox provided.

# Lopper rules

Supervision ratios are 1:1

Loppers are used to cut anything smaller in diameter than a 2 pence piece.

Loppers are used with bare hands

# Tool Talk – Knife

* This is a fixed blade knife.
* This is the handle.
* This is the cover.
* I take the cover off like this.
* This is the blade.
* This is the cutting edge.
* When I have finished with the knife I put the cover back on like this.
* I stand with the knife like this.
* I walk with the knife like this.
* I pass the knife like this.
* When I use the knife I use it two arms and a tools length away from anyone except my partner like this.
* I use the knife to cut cord and to whittle.
* I have bare hands on the tool.
* I have a glove on my helper hand.
* When I am not using the knife I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing inwards.
* When I have finished with the knife I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided.

# Knife rules

* Knives must have a sheath on when not in use
* Supervision ratios are 1:1
* Knives are always used on the outside of the body and away from the body
* A glove must be worn on the helping hand

# Tool Talk – Bill Hook

* This is a bill hook.
* This is the handle.
* This is the cover.
* I take the cover off like this.
* This is the blade.
* This is the cutting edge.
* When I have finished with the bill hook I put the cover back on like this.
* I stand with the bill hook like this.
* I walk with the bill hook like this.
* I pass the bill hook like this.
* When I use the bill hook I use it two arms and a tools length away from anyone except my partner like this.
* I use the bill hook to cleave (split) wood.
* I have bare hands on the tool.
* When I am not using the bill hook I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the hook and blade facing inwards.
* When I have finished with the bill hook I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided.

# Billhook rules

* Billhooks must have a sheath on when not in use
* Supervision ratios are 1:1
* Billhooks are used to split wood
* Billhooks are used with bare hands

# Fires

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

* Fires can only be used with the permission of the landowner
* Fires will only be used within previously agreed locations
* Fires will be contained within a square of logs
* Seating logs are positioned a safe distance away from the fire pit.
* The seating area will have a clear entrance and exit
* When the fire pit is in use children are not permitted to access the area without position.
* Children must sit with legs tucked into the log and not outstretched. If kneeling, children must kneel in the “respect position”.
* Water must be available to put the fire out.
* A fire glove must be available
* Fires will be lit with a fire steel
* The fire will never be left unattended
* A burns kit is available
* A fire blanket is available
* Fires will be extinguished at the end of the session this will be done by dousing the fire with water and stirring to cool.
* Wherever possible all fuels should be burnt off to ash . The ask will be scattered around the woodland to decompose.
* There should be no trace of fire left behind

# Use of Kelly Kettle

* The Kelly kettle must be placed on flat clear ground
* The Kelly kettle will be removed from the fire pan by the Forest School Leader
* The Kelly kettle must never be heated with the cork in

# Insurance

Details to be advised..