



# Stebbing Primary Forest School policy

Written/Updated: November 2020

Review Date: February 2023

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## What is Forest School?

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.

## Aims and objectives

During our Forest School sessions we aim to develop the child's:

- ❖ Confidence and self esteem.
- ❖ Communication and social skills.
- ❖ Physical skills.
- ❖ Greater understanding and awareness of the natural environment.
- ❖ Natural motivation and a positive attitude to learning.
- ❖ The ability to recognise and manage risk.
- ❖ Healthier lifestyles.

## Forest school objectives

- ❖ To provide an opportunity for individuals to develop, to learn and have fun.
- ❖ To meet the needs of a child's preferred learning technique.
- ❖ To develop self-esteem, confidence and positive disposition to learning through the completion of small, achievable tasks.
- ❖ To model positive learning habits- resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity.
- ❖ To provide a secure and enriching environment, where children are happy to take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning.
- ❖ To help children understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment.
- ❖ To provide tools and equipment to develop practical life skills in an outdoor environment.
- ❖ To develop social and team working skills.
- ❖ To enable children to be independent, self-motivated and considerate.
- ❖ To be true to the forest school ethos and approach.
- ❖ To help children build self-esteem, confidence, independence and self-control and interpersonal skills.

## Role of the Forest School leader and supporting staff

The level 3 Forest School Leader at Stebbing Primary is: Miss Rachel Alger

Regular supporting staff: Miss Alyssa Gypps, Mrs Casey Murphy, Mrs Emma Blackley, Mrs Marna Earle.

Miss Rachel Alger takes responsibility for facilitating and the running of the Forest School sessions, and holds a Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification, as a current 16 hour Forest School Paediatric

First Aid certificate and Level 2 Outdoor Food Safety certificate.

### **Roles and responsibilities of the Forest School Leaders**

- ❖ A Forest School Leader's role is that of a 'facilitator' not a 'teacher'.
- ❖ Adhere to own values, policies and procedures.
- ❖ To ensure a daily site check is carried out prior to a Forest School session.
- ❖ Undertake risk-benefit analyses and implement risk management systems.
- ❖ Ensure appropriate welfare requirements are in place for the group.
- ❖ Communicate with all stakeholders, including landowners, other staff, parents and SLT
- ❖ Ensure ratios are maintained and provide clear guidance and induction processes for helpers supporting their Forest School programme, to guarantee a consistent approach.
- ❖ Share planning and evaluations for each session with relevant staff.
- ❖ Record observations of individual learners' learning processes and share with relevant staff.
- ❖ Reflect on their own practice; undertake continued professional development and network with other local Forest School practitioners.
- ❖ Ensure that equipment, tools and outdoor clothing are fit for purpose and appropriately stored and implement maintenance schedules.

### **Policies statement**

Stebbing Primary School sets out clear and concise policy statements. These include discipline and behaviour, administering and managing medicines, inclusion and SEN, anti bullying, child protection. These cover the school as a whole and for further details on these policies please view them on:

<http://stebbingprimary.co.uk/policies-procedures-local-authorities/>

The statements that follow are additional areas to the school's policies that relate directly to our Forest School. These will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

### **Health & Safety**

Our Forest School programme may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for participants. At Stebbing School Forest School we consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits too. However, we seek to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires and by carrying out risk assessments covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session.

### **Risk/benefit analyses**

We believe that, while there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential risks that are an important part of learning and developing. We want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which children can learn about the risks, challenges and personal safety. Consequently, we will use a risk/benefit analysis in our assessment of our sites and all our activities.

### **On site risk assessment procedure**

Our Forest School site must be safe and easily accessible, so before each session the Forest School leader

will visit and assess before activities can take place. During the risk assessment, significant hazards will be identified and action taken or precautions put in place to reduce the risk to a safe level.

### **Off site- The meadow**

Agreements with the landowner over the use of the site is discussed and explored along with any other site issues. A thorough risk assessment takes place before each session. Whilst doing this the Forest School leader will identify any hazards and implement the necessary controls, check for mobile phone coverage and access in case of emergency and assess toilet facilities.

### **There are 5 steps to risk assessment**

1. Identify hazards, such as unsafe trees, toxic plants, hazardous litter.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
4. Record the findings.
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary.

### **Share information & responsibility**

The majority of the site based activities undertaken are carried out in the school. In these situations, the sharing of responsibility with respect to group safety and risk benefit analysis will be agreed in advance. Any special knowledge of the group - for example a participant may have a particular fear of dogs or a food allergy- can be useful when planning activities as the aim is to make every session as beneficial to participants as possible. The school provides information on behaviours that may present risk to individuals and/or the group and, if necessary, a separate risk assessment prepared.

### **Insurance policy**

At Stebbing Primary School we take risks very seriously and undertake regular and extensive risk management and assessment to ensure that we reduce as far as possible the danger hazards. However, accidents can happen and all the staff at Stebbing Primary are covered under the school's public liability insurance. A copy of the policy is in the school office.

### **Emergency & serious incident procedure**

The Forest School has an Emergency Procedure which is clearly displayed within the Forest School site. A copy of the procedure is given to all adult participants and there is also a copy in the school office. This is reviewed annually and in the event of an incident, revisited, reviewed and revised if necessary.

In the event of emergencies we ensure that all supporting adults are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures. The children practice the emergency 'come on in' signal at every session.

Most emergencies can be resolved on the spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services will be contacted and the following procedures followed:

1. In the event of a life threatening emergency, the Forest School Leader will call 999.
2. Secure safety of the whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities if safe. Call in and

locate the group promptly as agreed with the group in advance. If possible, remove the whole group from further danger or threat of danger.

3. First aider to attend to any casualties with adult helper and regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one first aider must be on site at all times.
4. The school office is made aware of the incident and a member of the senior leadership team with the designated first aider to attend the incident.
5. Emergency services must be contacted from the school office.