



Health and Safety Policy

1. Purpose and Scope:

This policy outlines the procedures and precautions to ensure a safe learning environment for all students, staff, and visitors of the Forest School. A forest school provides unique learning opportunities and with it comes unique challenges related to health and safety.

2. Responsibility:

All staff, volunteers, students, and visitors are responsible for following the health and safety guidelines. The school's Health and Safety Officer (or equivalent role) is responsible for regular updates, training, and policy enforcement.

3. Risk Assessment:

Before any activity, an appropriately qualified team member should carry out a thorough risk assessment of the area and activity to identify potential hazards. Consideration should be given to:

- Weather conditions
- The condition of the forest floor and trees
- The proximity of water bodies
- The presence of wildlife
- The tools and equipment being used
- The age/ability of the group present

4. First Aid:

- A well-equipped first aid kit must be available during any forest school session.
- At least one staff member with an updated first aid certification should be present during any activity.

5. Clothing and Equipment:

- All participants should wear appropriate clothing, including waterproofs, long trousers, closed-toe shoes, and any other gear relevant to the weather or activity.
- Staff will ensure that tools, such as knives or saws, are used under close supervision and stored securely when not in use.

6. Fire Safety:

- Fires are only to be lit in designated areas and under strict supervision.
- Only those trained in fire safety should start fires.

- A water source or fire extinguisher should be easily accessible at all fire sites.

7. Wildlife Encounters:

- Participants should be educated on local wildlife and taught not to approach or feed any animals.
- Staff should be aware of potentially dangerous animals in the area and have procedures in place for encounters.

8. Hygiene and Food:

- Hand sanitizers and/or hand-washing stations should be accessible.
- If food is prepared on-site, ensure it is stored properly and cooking areas are kept clean.
- Use safe water sources or bring clean water for drinking and cooking.

9. Missing Persons Protocol:

- Staff should always have an updated list of participants and regularly take headcounts.
- In the event of a missing person, follow the Missing Person policy which has a clear procedure in place for searching and alerting local authorities.

10. Reporting and Review:

- All accidents, incidents, and near-misses should be recorded and reported to the appropriate team leader.
- The health and safety policy should be reviewed annually or after any significant incident.

11. Emergency Procedures:

- Emergency evacuation routes should be established and communicated to all participants.
- Staff should have access to communication devices like mobile phones or radios during all sessions.

12. Training:

- All staff and volunteers should undergo regular training on health and safety protocols.
- New staff should be oriented on safety procedures before starting.

13. Visitor Protocol:

- All visitors should sign in and be informed of basic safety guidelines.
- Visitors should always be accompanied by trained staff.

14. Child Protection:

- Ensure that all activities prioritize the well-being of the children.
- All staff and volunteers should undergo background checks and receive training in child protection.

15. Environmental Respect:

- Activities should be designed to have minimal environmental impact.
- Participants should be educated on leave-no-trace principles.

By adhering to this policy, the Forest School aims to provide a safe and enriching environment for all participants. Any questions or concerns related to health and safety should be directed to the school's Health and Safety Officer or the relevant authority.

Policy date June 2023

Policy review date May 2024