

Appleton Wiske Community Primary School

Forest School Health & Safety Policy

Policy, procedure and active management practice is in place to ensure the health, safety and well being of participants at all times and comply with relevant regulations. Forest School leaders and staff are competent, appropriately trained and actively use health, safety and hygiene policies and procedures. All Forest School participants have an awareness of the appropriate health and safety elements.

Use of the Site

The site being used is the Woodland owned by the Elsdon family next to Planterna Farm. We have permission to use this site from Tony and Linda Elsdon. We have been on site and have discussed the activities that we will be allowed to carry out on this site. Risk assessments for the site and all activities including fire building have been agreed by the Elsdon family. We must leave no trace of having been on the site apart from the log circle and tent which we have permission to leave on the site.

Distance

The site is 1.3 miles from the school which we usually access by minibus which takes approximately 5 minutes but can be walked taking approximately 1 hour. The access road to the woods is on private land reached through a secure gate which is unlocked for each session. The minibus usually drops children at the stile which leads into the woodland and on occasions at the gate entrance where we walk along the private track towards the stile.

Boundaries

The boundaries within the woodland have secure fencing and children are taught not to go past the small ditches during sessions. On the first session the children are taken on a walk right round the site and shown where the boundary fences are. All adults are aware of the boundary and small ditches and are observant to make sure that children do not cross them.

Dead Wood and Fallen trees

When the site checks are done as part of the risk assessment the Forest School leader will scan the tree canopy for any dead wood and any branches that have snapped off and may cause a hazard from falling. If there is a potential danger, the area where dangerous trees are will not be used until the wood can be removed. Fallen trees need to be checked to make sure that they are resting on the ground and are stable and not likely to roll around.

Bees and Wasps

During Forest School sessions all adults should be vigilant for the presence of bee or wasp nests. Until the nest is removed Forest School sessions will not take place. All adults should be aware of any children with a known allergic reaction to stings and the trained first aider should be aware of emergency procedures to follow if anyone has been stung.

Nettles

As the site is covered in nettles in the summer months children are advised to wear long trousers and long sleeved tops to prevent nettle stings. Dock leaves will be used to treat nettle stings. Children are all shown what nettles look like before entering the site.

Poisonous plants

As part of the risk assessment the Forest School leader will be aware of any poisonous plants found on the site. All children are told not to put anything in their mouths unless told to do so by an adult. The trained first aider will be aware of emergency procedures should a child swallow something poisonous.

Rules in Forest School

The first session of Forest School attended by the children will involve a lot of listening to the Forest School leader. They will have to listen to and understand the rules that we all need to follow to keep us all safe while we are here. Children may be asked if there are any rules that they would like to add and helpers will also be asked if they think any rules should be added. The range of activities will bring their own sets of rules and these will be introduced at the beginning of the session while the children are sitting at the fire circle area.

Basic rules for Forest School are:

1. It is important to listen to the Forest School leader and to all adults
2. Everyone must do as they are told immediately (this may be for safety)
3. We treat each other with respect
4. We are aware of those around us
5. We never cross the boundary areas
6. We never walk inside the log circle (there may be a fire there)
7. We treat all plants and animals in the woods with respect
8. The Forest School leader always leads the activities in the woods
9. Never put anything in your mouth unless told to do so by an adult
10. Respond to the whistle – 3 short blasts return to camp, continuous blasts run to sound of whistle

Roles in Forest School

The children are led by the Forest School leader and supervised by teaching assistants, the Chair of Governors, and parents. Karen Hainsworth is the Qualified Level 3 Forest School leader and will be in charge of the Forest School sessions. Karen Hainsworth has an outdoor first aid certificate and will be the qualified first aider on Forest School sessions. A teaching assistant will help to supervise the sessions and will take over the role of leader if Karen Hainsworth is injured or is dealing with an emergency. Parent volunteers will be there to help and support the children. They will not be asked to do anything that they have not been trained to do or are uncomfortable with. The roles of the children are to listen to the adults, to help each other and to follow Forest School rules.

Risk Assessment

The Forest School leader will carry out a notification of visit form and risk assessments before the sessions begin. A copy of the risk assessments will be held in the school and the Forest School leader will carry a copy of the risk assessment. Risk assessments are completed for the site, for any children with specific behaviours and for the activities to be carried out such as tool use and fire lighting. Risk assessments are completed for travel to and from the site. Any accidents and near misses will be recorded and reported.

Lost person

A regular head count will be done by the forest school leader throughout the session. A class list will be carried to each session. If someone is found to be missing an adult will stay with the children and another adult will check round the woodland shouting the child's name and then return to the adult and group of children. Children are counted and names checked on and off the minibus both at school and on arrival in the woods for the outward journey and before leaving the woods to return to school. Depending on numbers of children the minibus may make multiple journeys to and from the woodland.

Bad Weather

If the weather conditions are considered to be too dangerous to go to Forest School, such as gale force winds or thunder and lightning, a decision will be made to cancel the session. It may be decided that it would be safe to conduct the session on the school field away from trees. If it is decided to cancel the session all volunteers will be informed. If conditions deteriorate while we are at Forest school a decision will be made to leave the woods and return to school.

Hygiene

Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before setting out for Forest School sessions. If needed during the session they may use a designated area of the woodland and hand gel will be used afterwards. When we go to whole school full day Forest sessions, we provide 2 portaloos for toileting. Children will wash hands with hand gel before drinks and snack time. Children will be encouraged to wash their hands on return to school.

Tool Use

The Forest School leader will have been fully trained in the use of all tools that are to be used in a Forest School session. Tool use should be appropriate to the age and abilities of the children attending Forest School. Children will be taught how the tool is to be used and the purpose for the use. Risk assessments are completed for any activities using tools. Adults should be aware of the risk assessment and be aware of the first aid emergency procedures in case it is the First Aider who is injured. All tools should be carried to the site by adults.

- Tools should be introduced by the Forest School leader
- A safety talk should be given by the Forest School leader
- All tools should be stored in a central tool area (they will be counted out and counted in)

- Children should be supervised at all times with tools
- All adults working with tools should be shown how to use them safely
- Procedures for care and cleaning of tools should be followed

Use of Personal Protective Equipment

The use of personal protective equipment is outlined in the risk assessments for each session. Adults will be made aware of these before each session. Children will be told about personal protective equipment in the safety talk at the beginning of the session when the activity is being introduced.

Shelter Building

The Forest School leader will produce risk assessments for the activities involved in shelter building. All adults on the session will have read the risk assessments and will be aware of emergency first aid procedures. Children will be given a safety talk before the activity begins. It will be explained to the children before they begin that they are not allowed to leave anything in the woods that was not already there such as sheets, rope, tape and that if they use these things to build their shelters they will have to take them down before we leave.

Fire Lighting

When a session of fire lighting is planned the Forest School leader will check that conditions are suitable for fire lighting. All adults should be aware of the risk assessment, the emergency procedures and aware of the emergency first aid in case it is the first aider who is burned. Fire safety equipment must be taken to the site. The fire pit should be set up on arrival at the site and the fire safely extinguished and fire pit removed at the end of the session.

Clothing

Waterproof jackets and trousers will be supplied by the school for all children attending Forest School. Children will be told to bring wellington boots for all sessions. Parents will be told that children's clothes may get wet and dirty so they will need to wear 'playing out' clothes. Long trousers and long sleeves will be needed all year round.

Essential Equipment

There are items of essential equipment that must be carried to Forest School every week. These can be distributed among the adults and carried in back packs. Other equipment that may be needed will be activity specific. Essential Equipment:

- First Aid kit
- Risk Assessment
- Lesson plan
- Mobile phone
- Whistle, hand gel, notebook, tissues, wipes
- Drinking water and cups
- Groundsheet
- Spare clothes
- Camera
- Class list

Communication with parents

At the beginning of the year parents are sent a letter which informs them that Forest School will be taking place this year. They will be told what children need to wear and what they will be doing. Parents of new starters will be provided with information during the new parents meeting.

Legislation

All current legislation that is held in school will be followed in forest school. This includes:

Equal opportunities and diversity policy	Health and Safety policy
Disability Discrimination Policy	Policy on checking criminal records
Teaching and Learning policy	Child Protection policy
Safeguarding policy	Behaviour policy
SEND policy	Accident procedures
Incidents and near misses	Forest School policy

Ratios

The legal ratios for school visits are:

Under 5s – more than 1 adult to 6 children

Years 1 to 3 – 1 adult to 6 children

Years 4 to 6 – 1 adult to 10-15 children

When doing Forest School sessions it is preferable to have high adult/child ratios as the children will get more from the experience with more individual support from adults. Adults are able to write down things that the children say that show they have acquired new skills and knowledge. They can also write down things that the children are interested in and would like to find out more about, allowing sessions to be more child-initiated and child-led. It is also important to have high adult/child ratios to ensure children's safety and to enable them to take risks with the support of an adult. When the Forest School leader is working 1:1 with a child with a tool or fire lighting it is important to have a teaching assistant to organise and supervise the rest of the children. It is the aim of Forest School at Appleton Wiske to be run by a teacher qualified as a Level 3 Forest School leader, supported by a teaching assistant and helped by the Chair of Governors and parent volunteers. The aim is to have a ratio of 1 adult to 5 children.

Insurance

Forest School at Appleton Wiske School is covered by the school's insurance.

Forest School Leader Agreement

The Forest School leader will hold a Level 3 Forest School leader qualification, will hold a current DBS check and will hold an Outdoor Paediatric first aid qualification. The planning, risk assessments, site checks and organisation of adults and children are the responsibility of the Forest School leader. The Forest School leader will ensure that all parent helpers have read the risk assessments and will be aware of their roles during the session. All objectives, aims and learning intentions for each lesson will be linked to the National Curriculum and to the Early Learning Foundation Stage goals. It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to promote emotional intelligence, self esteem and appropriate behaviour and learning. This will be done by including a variety of activities each week, by allowing the children to take risks and to revisit areas of interest on a regular basis. Where possible, learning will be child-led and child-initiated which will promote self esteem and confidence. Team work and group games will encourage good behaviour and cooperation. Praise and noticing good behaviour will be an aim of all adults at Forest School.

Consent Forms

At the beginning of each term a letter will be sent home to the class attending Forest School which will include a consent form for parents/carers to sign, giving permission for their child to attend Forest School sessions and permission for specific travel arrangements to and from the forest. For whole school Forest Day sessions a separate letter will be sent home.

Revised: June 2020

Reviewed date: June 2023

Appleton Wiske Community Primary School

Forest School Health & Safety Policy

Name	Position	Signature	Date
Neil Clark	Head Teacher		
Karen Hainsworth	Class Teacher		
Liz Atkinson	Class Teacher		
Bethany Rowling	Class Teacher		
Paula Gudger	HLTA		
Nicki Gyll	HLTA		
Helen Allen	GTA		
Jackie Loverock	GTA		
Sue Stainthorpe	GTA		
	Co-Chair Governors		