

Forest School Health & Safety Document

Contents

1. 3 sites
2. Ground rules
3. Risk Assessments
4. Tool use
5. Building shelters
6. Resources
7. Communication with Parent/Guardian
8. Legislation
9. Children Act (1989/2004)
10. Staff child ratios
11. Insurance
12. Contact forms & emergency procedures
13. Transport to and from site
14. Equal opportunities
15. Responsibilities of designated person

Section 1 Sites

For a variety of reasons we have 3 very different sites where Forest School activities take place.

Hattersley (postcode) Though presently closed for renovation after serious vandalism made it unsafe, Hattersley was our first and best loved Forest School site. After initial training in Spring 2008 a number of school groups helped to establish a Forest School fire and seating area. Throughout the summer and autumn the site was used regularly for Forest School activities and games. Situated within a very neglected council estate but within a very rural setting, the site had been used for many outdoor learning projects. When appropriate visitors would visit a real woodland setting to enjoy or harvest materials, which were transported to our Forest School site.

Ashton Under Lyne Fire station (postcode) A new but poorly prepared compound designated as a (Nature area) was gratefully accepted as a temporary home. Again material was harvested locally and a willow coppice has been planted for future use. A modern classroom and toilets are a benefit of this site. But as with all our Forest School activities, refreshments and shelter revolve around tarps or parachute and real camp fire.

Jubilee Woods (grid ref) Discovered summer 2007, acquired for rent spring 2008 Jubilee Wood is our jewel. Partly ancient beechwood, partly plantation project in 1973 Jubilee Wood is a real treasure. There are no established paths through the woodland and impact in 2 forest school fire areas is and will be a real issue. Impact is carefully monitored.

All sites are away from main roads and access and parking are carefully controlled.

Hattersley and the Fire station are closed compounds and children and staff are in sight at all times. Jubilee Wood however does have natural boundaries but is not enclosed. Visitors must obey strict rules controlling location and recalling of individuals and groups. There is no open water on any of the sites. Jubilee Wood is situated on a sloping hill throughout requiring attention to trip and fall risks.

We have identified no poisonous plants or dangerous beasts on any of the sites. In all sites some background road noises affect listening games.

Section 2 Ground rules

Forest School learning is child centred learning and expression and play is encouraged. We do however for Health & Safety and Site Management issues impose ground rules. We usually make participants active contributors to establishing or agreeing these rules.

Basis rules: Boundaries.

Fire Safety Rules. Not to, when to, how to approach a fire. Etiquette.

Hygiene. Toilet, fingers in mouth etc. Food.

Tools. If, when and how to use.

Looking out for hazards above, below, around.

STOP! If asked, ask questions later.

Respect trees and living things.

Leave no trace.

Section 3 Risk Assessments

All staff are familiar with and regularly review our written risk assessments.

A daily sweep of the site before and after Forest School activities is mandatory to search for newly fallen hazards and state of ground.

Each visiting group will require a modified if dynamic risk assessment. Do they have learning difficulties, are they particularly boisterous etc?

A copy of child's consent forms to be with activity leader at all times. This contains contact numbers and medical information.

All sites have good cellular telephone signal.

Section 4 Tool Use

Dependent upon the age, ability and remit of the course tool use can vary from no tools to the use of sharp cutting tools. Tools are kept secure at all times and introduced with an appropriate tool talk when required.

Tools to be kept sharp, clean and dry.

Section 5 Shelter Building

Material for shelter building are imported to Hattersley and the Fire Station and are strong if not seasoned and so relatively safe. Jubilee Wood however does have wet and rotten wood. Here the use of prepared cut timber is encouraged so as to control indiscriminate harvesting of wood, but clear instructions are given as to how to test for strength or soundness of wood. The same rules apply for play dens as for adult survival shelters.

Relevant knots and tarp use are taught where appropriate.

Section 6 Essential Equipment

Parental Consent/Medical/Contact forms.

Mobile phone.

Accident book (desk diary)

Bin bags (for rubbish and warmth)

Water

Toilet talk for composting toilet at Jubilee Wood

Fire lighting kit

Tools

Spare clothing (Parent/Guardian see welcome pack)

First Aid Kit

Moist wipes

Section 7 Communication

Due to the diverse nature of our activities that may be delivered alongside Forest School we insist that visiting schools use our consent form in addition to their own.

Where requested schools are supplied with our Welcome Pack and our Risk Assessment and Health & Safety document. A brief description of the activity and outline of the clothing and refreshments required is the minimum that will be sent home for parental consideration alongside the consent form.

Section 8 Legislation

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. It is a criminal offense not to comply with this law and as an employer and activity provider we are duty bound to assess all risks and have an emergency procedure in place. We must also ensure that all tools and equipment are safe and in working order and to provide training in their use.

Section 9 Children's Act

We are affected in 4 key areas: ratios of staff to children for activities. Equal opportunities. Communication with parents and carers. The provision of Police checks (CRB forms for staff).

Section 10 Ratios

Each course is bespoke and so staff to pupil ratio are discussed in detail with schools and organisations. We generally follow outdoor activity governing body guidelines and the advice of the Institute of Outdoor Learning and so our staff to pupil ratios are rarely higher than 1:8 for the most able and often 1:1.

Section 11 Insurance

We are presently covered for Forest School activities along with Bushcraft and all our other outdoor activities with Perkins Slade.

Section 12 Contact forms and Emergency procedure

We have emergency procedure in place for the many activities we provide. For the Forest School this revolves around:

The deliverer of the session will have to hand a signed consent form containing emergency contact details and medical information. We have in place an emergency procedure and incident control policy see relevant Health & Safety document.

Section 13 Transportation

Schools are usually responsible for transporting children to site and therefore will have their own Risk Assessment and Health & Safety in place.

On the rare occasion where we may transport children, this is done free of charge and using properly insured road worthy vehicles driven by experienced and trained drivers, complying with our Risk Assessments for minibus travel. See Risk Assessment Document.

Section 14 Equal Opportunities

We are committed to a policy of Equal Opportunities for any staff employed or visiting and students or children engaged in courses. Please see Company Policy.

Section 15 Responsibilities of Designated Person

The Forest School leader will ensure:

Correct ratios of adults to children

A consent form exists for every attending child

A sweep of the site has been conducted

Any visiting adult has CRB clearance

All tools are kept secure at all times