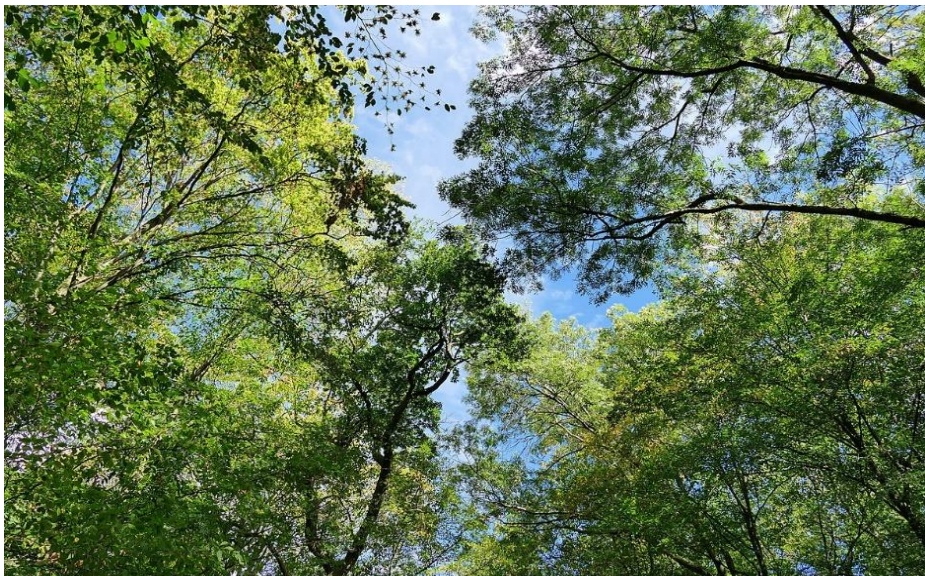




Forest School Handbook



Last Updated November 2020

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Introduction

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education and is the place where magic can start to happen. At Rose Green Infant School:

'Forest School will instil a love of the great outdoors and is a free and stimulating learning experience. It aids young children of all abilities in finding a love and appreciation for the natural world around them. It enables them to learn respect and care for their own local environment. Through hands on exploratory play we focus on providing a well-rounded outdoor learning experience, building independence, increasing social skills, fostering emotional regulation, freedom to experiment and push boundaries, and implementing problem solving skills in a variety of situations. The children will abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other. It will develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks. It allows all children to test themselves; build self-esteem and pride; develop new skills and learn the art of reflection.'

The children will feel successful and task will be achievable. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style, to complete their chosen tasks. The children are in a safe environment where they can succeed, create and use Maths and Literacy skills without them even realising it! Through exploration and discovery, the children are able to enjoy and self-initiate their own learning.

Purpose/Aims of Forest School

- To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children will learn to respect and develop responsibility for the world around them. The Forest School ethos inspires children to care for their own environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the area around them. The children will look after the Woodland Walk and try not to damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground.

Policies and Protocols

Schools Staff attending Forest School sessions and volunteers should be familiar with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Single Equalities Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Volunteer Booklet

They will be aware of all risk assessments and risk benefits.

Emergency Procedure Protocol

All participants will know in what to do in case of emergency. The whistle will blow as a signal to stop what you are doing. Children will gather with a member of staff at the log and wait silently. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and appropriately supervised. They will attend to the casualty, giving first aid of necessary. An incident report will be completed directly afterwards.

Routines and Procedures

Forest School Rules

At Forest School, all children will:

- Only take part in Forest School activities when wearing a Forest School lanyard.
- Treat each other and the adults at Forest School with respect
- Know the boundaries and only go outside them with an adult.
- Follow Forest School procedures and protocols.
- Put things back carefully as they found them.
- Respect their environment.
- Have fun!

At Forest School, all adults will:

- Treat all children and each other with respect.
- Model appropriate behaviour to the children.
- Encourage the children to challenge themselves as much as they can.
- Be enthusiastic about being outside and having fun in the Woodland Walk.

Dealing with behaviour issues: Please refer to Positive Behaviour Policy.

Boundary setting

- In the first Forest School session, both physical and behavioural boundaries are agreed with the children. At each subsequent session, these boundaries are revisited and reinforced.
- Developing routines - Sessions 1 and 2
- When they arrive at the Forest School, children are shown how to sit round the Forest Circle area.
- The need for, and principles of, fire safety are explained. This will include the rule that when kelly kettles or a fire are being used in the centre of the circle, only one child at a time is permitted to approach the kelly kettle or fire, on instruction from the Forest School Leader or appropriate adult.
- The children are shown how to move around the circle and boundary
- Game can be played to reinforce this - Leaders call out different statements that will relate to certain children in the group. E.g. "Everyone who has brown hair step outside and move around the circle" and so on. In subsequent sessions, children will be asked to recall how they should behave at the Forest School boundary and circle.
- If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. If you lose sight of a child shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The children will be taught to respond '1, 2, 3, Here I am, or a call and response. This enables the leader to trace children who have strayed. Children who are known to need 1-1 support are given the support needed.

Depending on the behaviour and ability of the group, the use of kelly kettles and/or lit fires will usually be introduced in much later sessions.

Forest School Opportunities and Experience

Activities at Forest School are many and varied and could include the following

- Story telling
- Team games
- Mud kitchen
- Pond dipping
- Art activities using natural materials
- Bug hunts
- Bird spotting
- Tree identification
- Tool use
- Problem solving
- Construction games
- Fire lighting
- Campfire cooking
- Rope and knot skills

- Sensory activities
- Shelter building

What typically happens during the Forest school session?

Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs. Children will put wellies on the outside the classroom door. Children will be given a lanyard to wear.

Each session begins around the Fire Circle, where we talk through the Forest School safety rules and about respecting each other.

For every session we have a lesson plan which includes a variety of small group activities linked to the terms topic.

Finally, the class returns to the Fire Circle for the close of the session.

After the session, wellies will be removed outdoors before entering the classroom. The children will wash their hands. Equipment is washed, stored and locked away in the resources area.

Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at Forest School

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest School. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest School Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest School Leader feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- All tools will be kept in locked storage and removed, only when required. They will be counted out and counted back in again. This is the Forest School Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.
- The Forest School Leader also uses a penknife for cutting string and rope.
- Tools are used with adult 1:1 supervision only.

Bow Saws - use for cutting wood with a diameter greater than a 2 pence piece

- Wear a glove on the non-sawing (helping) hand, not on the tool.
- Use the saw to the side of you and not in front.
- Keep your non sawing hand away from the blade when sawing.
- Saw with easy relaxed strokes using the full length of the blade. Let the blade do the work -don't force it, especially if it sticks.

- Carry with the frame at your side with the blade facing down, like carrying a handbag.
- Keep the blade covered when not in use and especially when transporting.
- Ensure the item to be cut is firmly held.
- When using with children - Leader and child to kneel on floor with Leader on one side of saw and the child on the other, both in the 'respect position'. The Leader guides the saw and the child follows.

Knives - use to whittle small sticks, peel bark and cut string

- Never wear a glove on the hand holding the tool - it makes the handle hard to grip safely. Wear a safety glove on your other helper hand.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work. Stop if anyone comes too close and sheath your knife.
- Sit forward on your knees
- Hold the knife away from your body and cut away from yourself.

Potato Peelers - use to peel bark

- Rest the wood you are peeling on a tree stump or on a bench and not on your leg.
- Sit forward on your knees
- Hold the potato peeler away from your body and peel away from yourself towards the ground.
- Keep the hand not holding the tool away from sharp end of potato peeler.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work.
- Children only to use when sitting or kneeling - remind them not to move around when using the peeler.

Tent Pegs - (when used to hollow out elder piths)

- Rest the wood you are working with on the tree stump or on a bench and not on your leg.
- Poke out the piths away from your body towards the ground, and not towards you.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work.
- Children only to use when sitting or kneeling - remind them not to move around when using the tent pegs.

Palm drills

- Palm drills may be used with nursery aged children with a ratio of 1:1 and close supervision.
- Children must have a glove on their helper hand (non-writing hand) and the safe zone principle applies.
- Children must push and turn holding wood with their gloved hand.

Essential Equipment for Forest School

All Forest School equipment will be stored in a safe secure place - The Forest School shed.

- Fire lighting equipment will be kept in locked storage. It will be removed, only when required.
- Forest School leaders are responsible for the maintenance of equipment.

School will provide:

A waterproof kitbag - containing the following essential items will always accompany the group

Schools EP (Emergency Plan)

Risk assessments

Mobile phone

Medical Care Plans

Whistle

Matches / Fire Striker (Campfire sessions only)

Cotton wool/Vaseline

Wet wipes

Protective gloves

First Aid Kit

Inhalers

Carry bag for dirty / wet items

A tarpaulin and string to erect a shelter as needed

Clothing and Personal Equipment

Adults and children will only attend Forest School sessions wearing appropriate clothing. (This is appropriate clothing for the weather conditions and this will protect them from the cold, the wet or hot sun)

Parents are to provide the following kit for their children:

- waterproof trousers and jackets
- wellington boots
- warm boots and gloves in winter
- a hat in extremes of cold or sunshine along with suncream when appropriate

Spare clothing will be available if needed. Safety gloves will be worn by both children and adults, as required.

Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when children climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School

Seating is positioned around the fire pit at a safe distance from the fire. Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

Children must have a secure knowledge of Fire Circle safety:

- To access the seating, children and adults must walk around the outside of the logs.
- We do not run around the fire circle
- Stand behind the log /step over and sit down on log /stand up/ turn around and step over log.
- Children cannot cross the circle or step into the circle, even when the fire is not alight. 'Red dragons/Green dragons'
- We only enter the inner Fire Circle when instructed by the Forest School Leader or an appropriate adult.
- No loose clothing or loose hair in the Fire Circle.
- In addition to the other resources, we will take 2 buckets of water. One dirty and one clean.
- There will be 2 exits.

When lighting a fire:

Only a trained Forest School Practitioner will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it,

staffing it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session. All accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. The person in charge of the fire safety and management will wear a clear and high visual jacket as a visual cue to the children. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the Fire Circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material and checks made for low overhanging trees. Anyone tending to the fire must adopt the respect position: kneel with one knee on the floor, the other leg bent with the foot on the floor. The wind direction will be monitored by a Forest School Practitioner, to prevent smoke getting into eyes.

We will always have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns. The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee and whilst the fire is lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere. The fire will be allowed to burn down as much as possible before being extinguished. The fire will be extinguished carefully and slowly with water at the end of session.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers and only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash
- The Forest School Leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using logs, are separated from one another
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water using a watering can and rose and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered through the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Weather

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunder storms, or during periods of extreme cold. However, Forest School will be carried out in other weather conditions such as heavy rain and sunshine.

It is imperative that the children are dressed appropriately for these weather conditions. For example, all children should have waterproof clothing and footwear and should come in to school wearing sun cream on sunny days. When it is wet a shelter will be built immediately by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area that is available from the start that can be used if needed.

Food safety and cooking procedure

Food and drink preparation and sitting together whilst eating and drinking are important parts of Forest School. This procedure has been devised using advice in Preventing Food Poisoning - Good Hygiene at Home published by the Food Standards Agency and 10 Ways to Prevent Food Poisoning on the NHS Choices website.

We will provide hand washing facilities at each session where food and/or drink is prepared and will ensure that all staff, volunteers and participants follow the Forest School food hygiene rules. Forest School food hygiene rules. Everyone involved in Forest School should be involved in food safety and follow the food hygiene rules below. If you spot a problem, please point it out to the Forest School Leader. When involved in food and drink preparation you should:

- Wash hands before and during cooking.
- Not handle food if they are ill with stomach problems, such as diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Cover sores and cuts with a waterproof dressing.
- Avoid handling
- Tie hair back.
- Keep food that is waiting to be cooked separate from food that is ready to be eaten.
- Use separate chopping boards for preparing different foods, especially raw and ready-to-eat food.
- Prepare food on a suitable surface, e.g. chopping board, cup, saucepan and not on the ground.
- Ensure food is cooked thoroughly before serving. Food should be cooked right through and piping hot in the middle. • Not reheat food more than once.
- Keep utensils clean and regularly wash tea towels and cloths.
- Store food in clean plastic containers with non-leaking lids.
- Take all rubbish and food scraps away with them at the end of the session.

Eating and Drinking

Nil by mouth policy (No lick, no pick) for anything found in the area, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.

Parents

Parents receive a Forest School leaflet, timetable and kit list. Where new or different activities are being undertaken the parents will be asked for consent, or simply informed. Photos/videos can be used on website and further information about Forest School will be included in newsletters. A copy of the Rose Green Infant School Forest School Handbook will be available to view on the school website. Parents are welcome to attend Forest School as volunteers.

Risk Assessments

The Forest School Site and all activities have had full risk assessments.

The session risk assessments will be read by all adults taking part in the session and stored on site in the waterproof kit bag.

A group one - depending on different children taking out e.g. age/medical/behaviour. If an individual child, for medical or behaviour needs, requires an individual risk assessment, an additional will be completed before beginning the Forest School programme.

An activity risk assessment- depending on what activities we will be taking part in that session.

If a situation occurs during a Forest School session that has not been risk assessed, a verbal risk assessment will be done with all adults and children.

Our risk assessments for Forest School will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. All risk assessments are available in school and can be viewed at any time.

- A daily site is check is completed before every session; any additional hazards and these will then be assessed or removed as appropriate. This will be completed daily by the Premises Officer, FS leader or TA. A copy will be given to the Forest School leader and the original handed to the School Business Manager. These will be shared with appropriate adults.

See Appendix A

See Appendix B

Appendix A

Rose Green Infant School Forest School

| Daily site Risk Assessment | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Leaders Nikki Prosser/TA | | | | | |
| <p>Site check prompt list</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kit bag• boundaries• canopy, shrub, field and ground layers• weather• fire surround and seats• shelters and other structures• people and other wild factors e.g. foxes• First aid• Washing/cleaning area• pond and surrounding area | | | | | |
| Date | R.A. read by adults in group | Site area | Issue | Action taken | Signature |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------|--------------|
| Date | | | |
| Completed By | | | |
| Area- Woodland Walk/Field/Forest School area and Pond | Observed and checked- risk level Low to High | Problems | Action taken |
| General site condition Litter/animal faeces | | | |
| Canopy layer-risk of falling trees/branches | | | |
| Shrub layer- risk of eye hazards | | | |
| Ground layer Trip and slip hazards Poisonous plants/fungi | | | |
| Any other hazards identified | | | |

Appendix B

Rose Green Infant School Forest School

Generic Risk Assessment Form for Forest School Site

Description of the site: Area is part of Rose Green Infants and is within their school grounds surrounded by high fences and gates. Large fauna cannot access the area, however smaller fauna such as cats, hedgehogs, foxes and rabbits can enter. The site is a small broadleaved/coniferous woodland with a mixture of flora including ferns, bramble and nettles. There is no access for vehicles into the woodland area. The area has no running, still or boggy water sections. Debris occasionally comes into the area from the road side. There is a fire pit area within the woodland

| | Hazard | Harm | People at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? when? |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1 | nettles and brambles | stinging | all | make children aware, clear pathways and main play areas. Children to wear long trousers. | FSL - prior to visit |
| 2 | berried flora | poisoning | children | inform all children not to pick or eat berries. Wash hands before eating. | FSL - on visit |
| 3 | tree roots and stumps | tripping | all | inform all to take care in woods, clear walkways of bramble roots. | All - on visit |
| 4 | tree branches | branches falling, children falling. | all | pre-visit & continuous risk check, remove hanging dead wood. Remind children of risks. | FSL - prior to & on visit. |
| 5 | sticks | hitting | children | inform children of rules, use a stick no longer than your arm, no hitting. | FSL - on visit |

| | Hazard | Harm | People at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? when? |
|----|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--|----------------------------|
| 6 | faeces | contamination | all | pre-visit & continuous risk check, remove and discard safely. | FSL - prior to & on visit. |
| 7 | debris / rubbish | glass, drug use, metals. | all | pre-visit & continuous risk check, ask children not to pick up rubbish, inform an adult if they find something, adult to remove safely. | FSL - prior to & on visit. |
| 8 | fire | burns, out of control. | all | <i>*separate risk assessment for activity is available in handbook</i> , trained staff present at all times, safety procedures followed. | FSL - prior to & on visit. |
| 9 | perimeter fence & gates | escape of children | children | ensure all gates are closed and main gates are locked. | all - on visit |
| 10 | Mushrooms and fungi | poisoning | all | inform all children and adults to look only, no touching. | all - on visit |
| 11 | bees, wasps, adders. | stings and bites | all | check area for nests, avoid contact, first aider always on site, seek medical aid (999) if anaphylactic shock or adder bite are present. | all - on visit |

| | Hazard | Harm | People at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? when? |
|----|------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---|--------------------------|
| 12 | tools | cuts, grazes, amputation. | all | tools stored away from premises, used on a one to one basis, <i>*separate risk assessment for each tool available in Forest School handbook</i> , strict supervision, correct use of tools. | All - on visit |
| 13 | boundaries | escapees | children | children informed of boundaries, staff supervise the boundary. | All - on visit |
| 14 | ropes and swings | falls | children | check quality of ropes & knots. first aider on site at all times. | All - on visit |
| 15 | trees | falls | children | first aider on site at all times, support children to manage their own risks. | All - on visit |

Play Risk Assessment

Not every element of play can be covered by a risk assessment so we have dynamic risk assessment procedures in place and have only covered those elements which we think may happen.

rope and string

| Hazard | Harm | at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? When? |
|--------------------|---|----------|---|------------------------|
| string rope | rope burns to hands wrapped round neck | children | Use climbing rope for swings and den building as it is less likely to cause harm. Adult supervision for children using string for tying knots. | all staff - continuous |

Collecting natural materials

| Hazard | Harm | at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? When? |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--|------------------------|
| berries plants stones | poisoning choking stings | children | Supervision of children's play. Advise children of plants that sting. Ask children not to pick berries or eat anything. Encourage all children not to put things into mouth and supervise those who may be prone to it. | all staff - continuous |

Sticks

| Hazard | Harm | at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? When? |
|-------------|------------------------------|---------|---|------------------------|
| long sticks | harm from others with sticks | all | <p>children are asked to measure the stick by putting it under their arm pit, if its longer than their arm they cant play with it. It can be snapped to make it the right length. Sticks must be the same length or shorter than their arm.</p> <p>When moving larger branches they must be dragged along the ground behind them.</p> | all staff - continuous |

Den Building

| Hazard | Harm | at risk | existing measures / new measures | who will do it? When? |
|------------------|------------------|---------|--|------------------------|
| long branches | hit by branches | all | <p>Den building is supervised by adults to ensure it is a reasonably safe den that is being constructed. Larger branches that may fall dangerously must be removed. Larger branches must be dragged along the floor behind children till they reach the den.</p> | all staff - continuous |
| falling branches | falling branches | | | |

| Emergency Arrangements |
|---|
| <p>Serious Accident: School Emergency Plan Seek additional adult help, provide first aid, call ambulance 999, inform parents/carer (next of kin). Return all other children into the classroom, keep them calm, read stories, sing songs etc. Write up accident report form, inform HSE, assess risk assessment and make new adjustments for future.</p> <p>Minor Accident: Provide first aid, complete accident report form, inform parents / carer, assess risk assessment and make adjustments for future.</p> <p>Weather change: Make dynamic risk assessment, seek shelter or return to classroom.</p> |
| Safety Advice |
| <p>Clothing: long trousers and long sleeves, warm clothing in cold weather, waterproof clothing in wet weather. Safety gauntlets at fire, work wear gloves for using tools and collecting rubbish. Spare clothing available in the classroom for emergencies.</p> <p>Communications: Mobile phone and member of staff to use land line in office.</p> <p>First Aid: woodland first aid kit to be taken for each visit. <i>*See handbook for full list of what is needed.</i></p> <p>Food and Drink: wash hands before eating, sit for eating and drinking, take snack and drink for full sessions, take cups, wet wipes and kitchen roll. <i>*See handbook for full list of what is needed.</i></p> <p>Children's safety advice: remind children of rules being outside. <i>*See handbook for full list.</i></p> <p>Staff safety advice: Staff to discuss any worries before entering the site before each session and decide if it is safe to enter as a team. Consider weather, environment, state of site etc.</p> |
| Further Comments |
| <p>The overall hazard rating for the site is low as long as health and safety guidelines are followed.</p> <p><i>*Forest School Handbook contains the operational plan for Forest School sessions.</i></p> |

*Review site assessment form and update annually or before should incidents or changes occur.

| Signature | Role | Date |
|-----------|-------------------------|------|
| | Forest School Leader | |
| | Health & Safety Officer | |

In order to assess risk effectively we follow the equation below:

$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard Severity} \times \text{Likelihood of Occurrence}$

Risk factors: 1-3= low, improve where possible 4-9=medium, improve as soon as possible, 10+ = high,

unacceptable, reduce risk before work carried out

The Likelihood of occurrences should be assessed on a scale of five:

5 likely- an injury is probably going to occur

4 common- an injury is likely to occur more than three times in a working year (doing this activity everyday)

3 occasional - an injury is likely to occur two or three time in a working year (doing this activity every

2 possible - an injury may occur once in a working year (doing this activity every day)

1 not likely- an injury may occur less than once in a life time through this activity

The hazard severity should similarly be assessed on a scale of five:

5 very high- multiple deaths

4 high- death to an individual

3 moderate- injury or disease capable of keeping more than one person off work for 3 or more days

2 slight- injury or disease capable of keeping one person off work for 3 or more days

1 low- minor injury to one individual