Forest School Policy

Version	Date	Purpose	Author
1.0	27/02/23	New Policy	**M. Silverman**

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Statement of Intent

The Meadows Primary School intends to use the natural outdoor woodland area to offer the children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover many areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity.

This policy should be a working document that is fit for purpose, represents the school ethos, enables consistency and quality across the school. This policy works alongside many of the school's existing policies including:

Behaviour Policy
Safeguarding Policy
SEND Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Legislation considered for policy
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Children Act 2004

Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Work in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- Ensure risk assessments are:
    - in place and cover all aspects of this policy;
    - accurate and suitable;
    - reviewed annually;
    - easily available for all school personnel;
- Ensure good practice is shared throughout the school;
- Provide leadership and vision in respect of equality;
- Celebrate the effort, success and achievements of pupils and school personnel.

Role of the Forest School Leader

Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring;
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs;
- Ensuring that once on site rules are followed and continue to risk assess during the session;
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland;
- Administration of first aid and checking first aid kit;
- Supervision of fire use, following procedures set out in this document;
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing;
- Organising emergency procedures;
- Develop a timetable so that all year groups are able to access the outdoor area regularly;
- Make effective use of relevant research and information to improve this policy;
- Provide guidance, support and training to all staff.

Staff/ students / volunteers: will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times, support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

Role of School Personnel

School personnel will:

- Comply with all aspects of this policy;
- Be trained in first aid and health and safety procedures;
- Assist with planning the programme for outdoor learning and for the Forest Schools experience;
- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing;
- Take an active role in all activities delegated to them by the Forest School leader;
- Assist with any behavioural issues;
- Ensure all equipment is safe to use;
- Ensure site is left as it was found after every session
- Train children in health and safety procedures;
- Train children in security issues;
- Be aware of all associated risk assessments;
- Report any accidents or hazards;
- Be aware of all other linked policies;
- Maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside school and not to undermine fundamental British values;
- Implement the school's equalities policy and schemes;
- Report and deal with all incidents of discrimination;

- Attend appropriate training sessions on equality;
- Report any concerns they have on any aspect of the school community.

Health and Safety

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play if they are considered too dangerous. At least two adults will be present every Forest School session. More adults may be required depending on nature of activities. All staff and helpers will be DBS checked. Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School Leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice.

Risk Assessments

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- all risk assessments have been undertaken and are up to date.

Site Security

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- That the outdoor learning area / Forest School area is checked before each session;
- All boundaries and fences are secure;
- Children are told never to approach an unknown person or animal in the outdoor learning area / Forest School.

Emergency Procedures

The Forest School leader will:

- Deal with all emergencies;

In the event of an emergency the following will happen;

- Emergency Whistle blown;
- Children advised to put tools down by other adults in surrounding areas and to await further instructions;
- Forest School Leader to assess situation and remove any hazards;
- Once any hazard has been removed the leader will deal with the incident or follow the first aid procedures in the case of an accident.

First Aid

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- First aid equipment is always present at all sessions;
- First aid equipment is in good supply and checked before each session.

Toilet Facilities

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- All children use the bathroom before beginning any outdoor session;
- No child is denied the use of the toilet;
- A member of staff will take children inside to use the toilet and bring them back to the Forest School site;
- Hand washing takes place after each session.

Fire Safety

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- All campfires are lit in fire pits in designated areas;
- All campfires are not left unattended; all Forest School personnel are aware of this;
- All campfires are enclosed within fire it;
- Forest School personnel are only permitted to light fires;
- Fires are lit only using cotton wool, petroleum jelly and a strike stick;
- Flammable liquids are not used in the fire lighting process;
- All sticks and logs must be placed and not thrown onto the fire;
- A fire bucket containing at least five litres of water and a damp cloth must be at hand during all fire lighting sessions;
- All fires are be extinguished with water at the end of an activity session;
- That when a campfire is in use children must have permission from an adult to gain access to the area;
- Seating logs are placed at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit;
- Children walk to their seating positions;
- Children sit on the logs when permission has been given;
- Children sit with their legs drawn into the log and not outstretched;
- Children remain seated until directed by an adult to move;
- Children never cross the inner fire area but will leave by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area;
- That when dealing with too much smoke everyone is advised to turn their head to one side, to place their hands across their face and close their eyes.

Eating and Drinking

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- Children do not eat any fruit or berries found on site;
- Children only eat or drink foods linked directly with a topic and prepared by school personnel;
- The dietary needs and allergies of children are known by all school personnel.

Cooking

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- All equipment is thoroughly clean before all sessions;
- All food is kept in air tight containers;
- The dietary needs and allergies of children are known by all school personnel;
- Children must wash their hands before handling food and drink;
- All equipment is washed at the end of a session;
- Waste food is disposed of correctly.

Hand Tool Safety

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- All hand tools (bow saws, bill hooks and penknives) are well maintained;
- All hand tools are securely stored;
- All hand tools are inspected before each session;
- All Forest School personnel are trained to use hand tools;
- All children are trained to use them;
- Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of each session;
- An adult to child ratio 1:2 is in place when using hand tools;
- An inventory is kept and all tools are checked after each session.

Outdoor Equipment

The Forest School leader will ensure:

- All outdoor equipment is checked before each session;
- Repairs are carried out immediately;
- Any equipment not deemed safe to use will be taken out of use until repaired;
- All outdoor equipment is annually maintained.