

# Britannia Primary School and Nursery



## Forest School (Wonder Wood) Policy

**‘Developing responsible citizens, confident individuals, and independent learners’**

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<i>Committee</i>	<b>Full Governing Body</b>
<i>Signed by Chair of Committee</i>	<b>J Rogers</b>
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## Purpose and guiding principles

Forest School is a learning experience, originally developed in Scandinavia, which uses a woodland setting as a way to facilitate learning by exploring and experiencing the outdoor environment through practical tasks. The learning is child-led, and the ethos is to build self-esteem and confidence and to encourage the children to become independent learners by achieving small manageable tasks. At Britannia Primary School, we have a designated site called 'The Wonder Wood' situated at the end of the school field. To encompass the Forest School ethos these 10 concepts are shared with the children and identified during sessions.



A Forest School session **cannot** take place:

- Unless a Forest School Practitioner is present (where a session is led by a non-Forest School trained Class Teacher, this will be classed as Outdoor Learning, **not** Forest School).
- Unless age and task-appropriate supervision ratios can be met.
- If conditions on site are unsafe or increasing in danger.

## Code of Practice

- Children should be fully supervised at all times. High supervision ratios apply to tool use (please refer to tool use) and climbing trees. 1:1 assistants or individual children are **not** to be counted in the adult to child ratio.

## Site

- Daily site check to be completed before each session by the **class teacher** (e.g., boundaries are secure, animal mess or dangerous litter has been cleared) and a record kept. A paper copy will be completed upon pre-session check and information transferred to the online shared google document. Therefore, a clear record can be available to all staff. The online copy cannot be completed in the forest as the school WiFi is unavailable from the Wonder Wood.
- All safety breaches must be reported to the Premises team, ZS and the Principal.

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- Risk assessment completed prior to every session.
- Identify and avoid sensitive areas of habitat and return **all** areas, including animals, as closely as possible to their original state, at the end of each session.

### **Routines**

Safety at The Wonder Wood is created through the establishment of a clear and consistent framework of simple routines which underpin all activities and are repeated every session.

#### **Safety games: password and 1,2,3, come to me?**

Practise safety games regularly, ideally once or twice within each session, to reinforce their meaning.

Use a password (e.g., acorns where they return to the log circle and grow into an oak tree) or chant '1,2,3, come to me' to bring the group to an immediate stop, turn their attention to the person who issued the command and safely return to the log circle.

#### **Safety talk**

Should be at the start of each session, kept to a minimum with children contributing.

- Key site and activity hazards; boundary reminder and behaviour agreement (with reference to zones of regulation or traffic lights to keep consistency with high expectations, mobile traffic lights or feelings bears can be used in the forest.).
- Further task-specific safety advice should be given as necessary.

### **Practical activities**

It is important to ensure the children are well supervised, introduced gradually and safely to the equipment used and that tasks are appropriate for their age and ability.

- **Class Teacher** must assess the readiness of each individual child on each occasion.
- Tasks should only be undertaken if they are deemed to be appropriate to the abilities of all individuals within the group.
- **Class Teacher** is responsible for all equipment; ensuring tools are checked out and counted in at the start and finish (especially knives and fire-lighting items) and ensuring **all** equipment is left tidy and properly maintained at the end of every session.

#### **Shelter building**

Shelter building stimulates creativity and imagination and develops social and practical skills.

- Safety reminders are to be delivered at the start of the session – keeping a safe working distance; lifting and carrying procedure; selection of light-weight materials for structure in case of collapse.

### **Tool use**

- Tools should only be used if leading adult is trained and confident to use them.
- Supervise first new tool use 1:1 to ensure technique is practiced (e.g., taking turns in small groups). Continue to supervise closely to ensure correct use and carrying technique is maintained.
- Children should always receive permission from an adult before using any tool.

#### **Risks to children using tools include:**

- Careless use/misuse of tools

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- Poor technique in using or carrying tools.
- Fatigue
- Use of inappropriate tools e.g., tools which are too large or too heavy.
- Cutting edges of tools
- Lifting/carrying heavy tools
- Getting too close to other people working. (Not following the 'blood bubble' rule)

### **Tool use supervision ratios (taken from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Guidelines)**

- Children under 5 must be supervised initially 1:1 and then 1:2.
- Children under 8 must be supervised 1:2.
- Children over 8 must be supervised 1:6.

The level of experience should be taken into account when setting supervision ratios – the above is the minimum and may vary depending on the tools used.

### **Safe working with tools**

- Give clear instructions in tool use, lifting and carrying.
- Start each tool session with a tool use training session (including how to safely carry tools).
- Bowsaws should have blade guards; these are to be removed by the adult and not the children.
- Provide correctly sized tools and protective equipment, as necessary. **No** gloves to be worn on hand holding tools.

### **Fire Making**

Fires are a part of Forest School delivery in which all children can participate. **The adult leading the session must be trained in fire making, currently there is not a qualified Forest School Practitioner to lead fires.** They will always take the group through a gradual preparation process over several sessions before lighting fires with them, explaining how fire is made, what fires are used for and fire safety.

#### **Fire site**

- Use an area free of overhanging vegetation with a minimum of 5m radius.
- Always have a means of putting the fire out (water or earth bucket) immediately to hand.
- Area of fire should be kept to a minimum
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- **Trained adult** must be responsible for the fire at all times and ensure it is out and safe to leave at the end of the session.
- First aid kits to be carried and include burn gel and fire blanket.
- Children should be kept at a safe distance (minimum 1.5m) from the fire by a clearly defined barrier.
- Children can approach the fire inside the barrier only if invited by the trained **adult** to perform a specific task e.g., to add wood/cook food or assist.

### **Care of the Forest School site**

Forest School/Outdoor learning sessions will inevitably affect 'The Wonder Wood' environment. Impact will be determined by the number of people on site and the frequency of visits. The following may help to minimise effects:

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- Return the area to nature at the end of each session and remove all litter.
- Encourage nature-awareness and a caring outlook in the group.
- All waste water and waste food, if cooking, should be removed from the site and disposed of in school using the sinks and red bins.