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Forest School Policies and Procedures (Updated September 2021)

The Forest School Policies and Procedures are additional to Bradpole Preschools Policies and Procedures and are to be read alongside.

Code of Conduct

- All Forest School sessions will be led by a fully trained Level 3 Forest School Leader.
- The Forest School Leader holds a Paediatric First Aid qualification.
- Permission slips signed by parents/ carers must be obtained for each child that participates in Forest School sessions.
- This document and all associated policies will be updated when required and reviewed annually.
- In accordance with our policy, photographs of children will only be taken if there is written consent from parents.
- Strategies for behaviour management and anti-bullying procedures will be in accordance with our policies.

Forest School Ethos

Forest School is held outdoors sometimes in a woodland environment, it provides children with outdoor learning experiences which support all aspects of the curriculum and particularly strengthens children's social, emotional and physical development. Through careful observations and evaluations of the children the tasks and activities will be set with each individual in mind in order to progress them according to their own needs and interests. They will be provided with opportunities to explore, find their own limitations, and make sensible choices in relation to risk, in addition to developing practical skills such as knot tying, using tools, fire building and construction. Each activity will challenge the children but will set each of them up to succeed to raise their confidence and self-esteem. As a result the children will develop their independence and skills which will support them throughout their lives.

Child Lead Play

Our Forest School sessions provides a curriculum which is child led allowing the children to have the freedom to explore, play, build, create and use their senses to experience the outdoor environment promoting learning as they play, whilst engaging with others. By providing children with the right managed environment they are learning to manage the risks according to ability and confidence, they develop self-awareness in managing risks and having established boundaries that allow flexibility and freedom for child initiated learning by letting the child make choices whilst learning.



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Risk/ Benefits to Forest School

The benefits from engaging in forest school activities are numerous for the children and the staff working with the children, by providing safety procedures in place to manage the potential risk, making the risk level low for all activities the benefits.

The benefits of forest school activities not only helps build self-confidence and self-belief from having the freedom, space, time to learn and independence, it increases their social skills and the ability to work cooperatively with others. It helps communication and language whilst letting the children use their sensory experiences at forest school. The keenness to participate in exploring, learning and play activities helps build the ability to focus for tasks for longer periods of time. Forest school helps develop the gross motor skills through free and easy movements around the forest school site, it helps develops fine motor skills when making objects. Forest school helps show the children how to respect the environment and well as learning to identify flowers, insects and birds, Involve the children as much as possible in the consideration of risk and benefit as it is part of the forest school ethos that children learn to manage risks for themselves so involve them in the planning, we have clear guidelines on the use of tools and encourage them to look out for themselves, others and the environment.

The children will be introduced to tools and fire in a controlled and progressive way so that they learn about managing risk for themselves. They will learn to ensure the safety of both themselves and others by learning simple safety procedures under the close supervision of the forest school leader. They will benefit from improved fine and gross motor skills, confidence and achieving making something from using tools. It also builds teamwork, communication skills along with coordination.

When collecting natural item all children will wear gloves and our reminded and encouraged not to put their fingers in their mouths. We talk to the children and show them the objects that are safe and remind them each time we go out if there any potential hazards in the area we will be working in and we remind the children to respect the natural environment and ensure children wash their hands after the activity.

When looking or handling mini beast the children our instructed and encouraged not to put fingers in mouth, ears or nose and ensure the children wash hands after the activity, we also remind the children to respect nature.

When den building with sticks the children are taught to drag the sticks behind them like a tail, and not to carry large pieces of wood unless supervised and instructed in the safe way to transport and the safe way to erect the shelter. Children are encouraged to only build a den the size that is needed. Children are warned not to throw logs or sticks, all shelters are dismantled at the end of each session reminding the children that all logs are not to be thrown.

When using rope the children are always supervised by an adult and shown how to secure it to the tree to avoid trip hazards or hanging.

When playing in mud children are taught how to wait until it is safe to have a turn a bit like when going down a slide you wait for the other person to be off the bottom before it is safe for you go down children are shown a safe area to play in the mud and that they must have full wet weather clothing on before going in any mud including welly boots.



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Forest School Site

- The Forest School sessions will be held in the wooded area next to the green container or the pond area by the car park. Both are accessible from the preschool premises by foot.
- Boundaries will be clearly explained to all supporting staff and the children will be taken around the site discussing boundaries, the use of the red flag and safety.
- Children will always be in sight of an adult.
- Children will be taught to respect the woodland. At the end of each session the site will be returned to its original state.
 - All den building and constructions to be taken down.
 - All litter picked up
 - All items carried in for the session to be removed.
 - Children will be discouraged from removing sticks, leaves or any natural materials from the sites unless this is specified in the Forest School Leader plans and supervised by an adult.

Eating and Drinking

- Prevent children eating anything that they find in the woodland by talking with them and warning them of the dangers.
- Remind children to avoid placing their hands in their mouths.
- When drinks and snacks are consumed during a Forest School session the children will clean their hands with antibacterial wipes or gel.
- Children will be able to use toasting sticks to cook over the fire.
- All other cooking will be done by an adult.

Toileting

- All children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before leaving the preschool room.
- A child may go outside if necessary in an area where an adult deems suitable, if the child feels comfortable to do so.
- If necessary an adult can take a child/children back to the preschool room.

Equal Opportunities

We at Bradpole Preschool believe that every child has the right to be included in Forest School, where a child has additional needs, these will be assessed and measures put in place for the child to be included.

Although children will need to come suitably dressed for the weather, Bradpole Preschool will provide waterproof trousers, coats and wellie boots, hats, gloves and sun hats in the summer.



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Daily Operating Procedure

Prior to the Session

- The Forest School Leader will carry out a site risk assessment.
- The Forest School Leader will brief all staff on the risk assessment and the lesson plan.
- Gather all equipment to be used in the session. Including first aid and the emergency bag.
- The Forest School Leader will take a register and do a head count before leaving the preschool garden.

During the Session

- All staff to continue to risk assess activities throughout the session.
- All staff will routinely count the children throughout the session.

After the Session

- The children will be encouraged to pack up the site, taking down any dens built, putting back into boxes any resources used and picking up litter.
- Before leaving the site the Forest School Leader will count the children.
- The adults will walk the children back to the preschool safely.
- When arriving back the Forest School Leader will count the children back through the gate.
- All adults will evaluate the session to discuss the individual children's needs for their next session.

Health and Safety

- Forest School sessions are always run by a Level 3 Forest School Leader who is responsible for leading every Forest School Session.
- The Forest school leader will carry the walkie talkie on them and be responsible for calling for help or assistance from the preschool if required.
- Every adult assisting the forest School Leader understands that they have a responsibility to take all reasonable measures to safeguard each child participating in Forest School activities.
- The Forest School Leader or assistant will always carry a First Aid Kit
- The leader or assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag which will contain all of the essential items listed in the Emergency Bag section of this document.
- The Forest School Leader will carry out a site risk assessment and activity risk assessments prior to each session. All staff will be responsible for conducting an ongoing visual risk assessment upon arrival and during each activity.
- Tools and equipment will only be used as listed in the Tools and Equipment section of this document.
- The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.
- All staff is responsible in teaching the children how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.



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Risk Assessment

The Forest School leader is responsible for carrying out a site risk assessment before each session. All activities that may hold risks will also be risk assessed. Risks are assessed using the following process:

- Look and identify potential hazards.
- Consider who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluate whether the existing safety precautions are suitable or whether additional measures need to be implemented.
- Record all findings on the Risk Assessment forms
- Review and update all risk assessments as necessary.
- Inform all assisting adults of the identified risks for each session.

Extreme Weather

Ensure all children are wearing appropriate clothing supply clothing if the child has not come dressed for forest school, full wet weather clothing including boots to be worn, in the winter months in cold weather hats and gloves are provided and extra socks, in the summer children wear long trousers, boots and jumpers and a sun hat if out walking in the open area.

In the event of extreme weather deemed to be unsafe - high winds or heavy rain the Forest school session will be postponed/or session moved to a different safe area, the children's safety is paramount.

Tools and Equipment

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked shed. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order.

Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group, in a 'blood bubble' and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool.

After use all tools must be checked for damage. If damage is found, then determine if item can be repaired or need to be replaced. All tools need to be cleaned before safely putting away in storage box and returning to locked shed.

All tools must be cleaned, sharpened and checked for damage termly.

Potato Peeler and Fixed Blade Knife

Potato peelers and knives are used to sharpen and whittle sticks.

Once a child is deemed to be competent by the forest leader they may be allowed to use a fixed blade knife.



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They should be used with a 1:2 ratio.

- Check that the blade is held firmly onto the handle.
- Check that the blade is clean and free from rust and debris.
- Sit on a suitable log or seat at a safe distance from other people, with your legs apart and elbows resting on your knees. Or
- Kneel on one knee supporting the arm holding the wood on the bent upright knee and holding the tool in the dominant hand.
- Then take hold of the potato peeler in one hand and the stick they are working on in the other.
- Peel away from the body at all times.
- Potato peelers should be carried blade down with the arm held to the side.
- Knives must always be closed before carrying.

Bow Saw/Hand Saw

Bow saws are used to cut wood larger than a 3cm in diameter.

They should be used on a 1:1 ratio in a buddy pair with an adult.

- Visually check the saw for damage
- Check that the blade is firmly attached to the saw.
- Carefully remove the blade cover.
- Use either an A-Frame or a suitable log to support the wood.
- Wearing gloves place the non-dominant hand on to the wood.
- Using the saw in the dominant hand pull the saw along the wood towards the body to create an indent into the wood.
- Adult must always be in control of the saw.
- When finished carefully put blade cover back on.

Small Hand Axes

Axes are used to split wood for fires and shaping wood to a point for pegs and poles.

They should be used with a 1:1 ratio

- Put gloves on
- Remove the axe carefully from the bag.
- Carefully remove the axe cover and visually check the blade for damage or debris
- Use a sturdy tree stump as a chopping block.
- Check that you are at a safe distance from other people and objects.
- Kneel with the chopping block in front of you.
- Place the log to be chopped on its end on the chopping block. If it will not stand without help, then hold it in place with a stick.
- The safest option for first time students is to place the axe on the log to be chopped and use the plastic mallet to strike the back of the axe to split the log.
- Always ensure that the axe blade is firmly embedded in the chopping block when not in use.
- After use make sure the axe head is clean and free from debris. Place the axe cover over the head and return to storage box.



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- Axes should be carried with the cover on, axe handle in the hand close to the head and the arm held to the side.

Hand Drill

Hand drills are used to drill small holes into wood

They should be used on a 1:1 ratio

- The piece of wood to be drilled is held firmly in place by either the other students, the practitioner or in a vice or G clamp.
- Either the student or the practitioner makes a small hole with a bradawl.
- The drill is then taken by the student and the handle turned to start the drilling. If necessary, the practitioner helps hold the drill in place.
- Staff must supervise the use of the drill at all times.
- Do not carry the drill with the drill bit in place
- Hold the drill securely around the middle when carrying.
- Pack away safely

Loppers/Secateurs

Loppers/ Secateurs are to be used to cut down or off small branches or twigs.

They should be used on a 1:1 ratio

- Gloves to be worn when using these tools.
- Adults to hold loppers standing behind the child and will be in control of the loppers at all times, the child will place their hands behind the adults on the handle.
- Secateurs the child can hold with the adult standing directly behind child.
- Cuts should be simple and easy to perform. If a branch is too thick it will be difficult to cut resulting in damaging the tool and the branch
- Keep body behind the loppers handles.
- Make sure they are clean and dry and that the blade is not damaged.
- If they become blunt do not use take them to be sharpened,
- Do a full safety check on them before using the next time.
- When not in use make sure the safety bar/ lock in on.

Fire Lighting and Fire Safety

Fires will only be lit when the Forest School Leader deems it is safe to do so.

The children will collect and prepare the materials for fire building before moving into the fire site.

- Fires will only be lit in a fire pit bowl or a bbq type drum.
- Seating logs will be placed no closer than 1.5m around the fire.
- Buckets of water and sand are placed nearby in case of need.
- First Aid equipment including a fire blanket and burns gel is also placed in the area.
- Staff must stay by the fire at all times once it has been lit.
- There is strictly no moving within the fire circle unless the children are invited by a member of staff to come closer to the fire.



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- Wearing gloves the children when invited could put more fuel on the fire or cook marshmallows and other things.
- The fire will be put out by the Forest School Leader pouring water over the embers, making sure children are well back, so that they do not risk being burnt by the steam.

Emergency Bag

The Forest School Leader or assistant will be responsible for ensuring that all essential items are kept safely in an Emergency Bag which is taken to every Forest School session.

- First Aid Kit
- Emergency Whistle
- Medical information for all children attending
- Any medication for individuals
- Accident forms
- Fresh water
- Hand wipes/Hand gel
- Nappy sacks and tissues
- Spare clothing

This forms the basis of the emergency bag, depending on the activity and weather other items will be added.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of: The Committee of Bradpole Preschool

Held during the Autumn Term 2021

Date to be reviewed: Autumn Term 2022