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# Forest School/outdoor learning Policy

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## Statement of Intent

Weald Community Primary School aims 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.

Weald C P School has many additional policies which will be adhered to alongside this policy during Forest School sessions within our woodland:

* Behaviour Policy
* Safeguarding Policy
* SEND Policy
* Health and Safety Policy

Legislation considered for policy:

* Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
* Children Act 2004 RIDDOR (Accident Reporting)

## Implementation

Our Forest School sessions will be delivered by our teaching staff but with the support of the Level 3 Forest School leaders. They deliver this programme following the guidance set out in this document - a copy of policies and procedures is kept in the outdoor classroom of forest school.

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child’s ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc.

## Roles and Responsibilities:

Class teacher will have the overall responsibility for:

* + Be aware of and have read the risk assessments for activities and continuous safety monitoring.
  + Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children’s needs.
  + Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
  + Administration of first aid and checking first aid kit.
  + Supervision of fire use, following procedures set out.
  + Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
  + Ensure site is left as it was found after every session

## 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.

## Health and Safety Policy:

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.

The class teacher will assess weather conditions regularly and will make a decision on safety to go out on that day. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions.

## Open Fire:

An open fire risk assessment will be read an adhered to before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A class teacher will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice.

## Equipment and Activities

An Individual Risk Assessment for use of tools (silky saw, bow saw, mallets, potato peelers, fork and spades) should be followed and can be found in the outdoor classroom.

## Emergency Procedure:

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.
  + 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 kit will be taken to all sessions and will be checked regularly
  + Whilst dealing with a first aid incident, the leader will ensure the safety of all other children within the group by advising other adults present of the situation and ask them to monitor the other children, if alone children will be call to the area that the leader is in and if necessary all children will be taken indoors.
  + Seek emergency help if needed.
  + There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the outdoor classroom.
  + Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms
  + Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into woodland.

## Behaviour Procedure

The Forest School leader will follow the school’s Behaviour Policy, however if the behaviour of an individual, or group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others safety at risk then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the class leader. Weather conditions following the Forest Schools ethos of......‘there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!’ Children are advised to dress warmly and wear waterproofs if necessary. However, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather such as;

* high winds of 25mph or more determined by the met office online.
* Extreme temperature determined by a met office amber weather warning
* extreme cold of below ‘0’ a session will be cancelled, if it is near to this we will ensure children are appropriately dressed, sessions will be made shorter and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

## Food safety and Hygiene Procedures:

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready, they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows and making s’mores.

* + Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner (plaster or ideally gloves) before handling and preparing food.
  + Any food needing preparation will be prepared in the school e.g. bread dough
  + Food will be stored in clean containers and transported in a cool bag to and from the site, with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.
  + Raw meats will be stored separately to any other foods.
  + All ‘use by’ dates will be checked on foods before eating.
  + Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage container.

## Handling, cooking and eating food;

* + Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire procedure. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.
  + Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

## Use of Fires procedure

* + A class leader must always be present when a fire is lit and must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire.
  + Fires will be built in a designated fire area: if a tarpaulin is placed above the fire it should be approximately 8 foot above the fire and seating will be at a distance of 1.5 meters.
  + Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.
    - Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log.
    - Step over and sit down on the seat.
    - Stand up, turn around and step over the seat.
    - Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).
* The fire box containing fire retardant gloves, first aid kit and fire blanket should be placed close to the fire circle along with a covered bucket of clean cold water.

## Environment:

Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. Weald Community Primary School will promote environmental awareness and care for our environment. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported. The woodland will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. We will remove all litter and debris we take into the woodland and have regular litter picks to remove other refuse which is in the area. We will be caring towards our neighbours and try to minimise the amount of smoke and noise produced. Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas of the woodland. Branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries for people entering the woodland unsupervised (without the Forest School Leader), they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored in the log store and used as firewood. During the winter months, large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wildflowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them. The hedgerow around the edge of the woodland will be maintained to encourage small wildlife to live in the woods. The forest school area is at the back of the field.

## Impact

Forest school at Weald supports the schools character education programme in developing a wide range of interpersonal qualities. Through independence, risk taking and teamwork children develop as individuals which can then be brought back into the respective classrooms.

Monitoring of policy:

Monitoring of the policy is the responsibility of the forest school leader and will be monitored each year,