



Forest School Policy

Our vision, rooted in the words of Jesus (Matthew 19:14), “***Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these,***” is to provide a safe, happy and caring environment where all pupils are nurtured and valued within a Christian ethos.

To achieve our vision we:

- provide inspirational and enjoyable learning experiences through a curriculum that is broad, balanced and based on the needs of our children
- work hard to reach our full potential
- share each other's success
- promote a sense of belonging to our school, local and Church community
- foster high self-esteem and nurture high aspirations
- ensure pupils become more confident independent learners
- provide a safe, warm and welcoming Christian environment within which everyone feels valued and respected
- develop spirituality, a moral ethos and an appreciation for Christian values
- enable everyone to grow and blossom into responsible and successful citizens through the firm Christian foundations we provide and an appreciation of national and global communities.

We are a strong team of proud pupils, parents, staff, governors, the Church and the local community.

Our Christian faith gives rise to our service to God and to the community. Our core principles are friendship, forgiveness, hope, trust and courage. These give rise to justice, wisdom and thankfulness.

Status

Draft for Governors

17/10/26

Date for Review

Statement of Intent

Christ Church CE Academy 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 all six 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.

Forest School and its curriculum will follow the values and ethos of Christ Church CE Academy and will not will not operate as a separate entity. Forest School will therefore adhere to the Academy's policies and procedures during Forest School sessions within our woodland.

Legislation considered for policy

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Equality Act 2010

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Children Act 2004

Implementation

Risk assessments, good practice, Forest School activities, rules for tools and fire etc. can all be found within the Forest School guidebook which contains everything you need to know about our Forest School sessions, for example, procedures, risk assessments, environmental impacts etc. A laminated Forest School Handbook is taken into the woodland on each visit containing vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Equality and Diversity

All children will be included in 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. Christ Church CE Academy has an Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy and Equal opportunities policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

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. Children will wear fire gloves when working close to the fire e.g. roasting a marshmallow.

Ratios

The adult:child ratios for Forest Schools Early Years and Key Stage 1 will be at least 1:8. Certain activities will require higher ratios of adults to children. Where children are receiving specific or additional support for individual needs 1:1 support will be incorporated if necessary.

Risk assessments

Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. Dynamic risk assessments will be in place to cover other eventualities. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. The children will not be allowed in the Forest School surroundings if the wind is 30mph or higher. Also, the children will not be allowed outside if the temperature is below 0 degrees for over a hour in time. 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. The Academy has a Health and Safety Policy, Child Protection Safeguarding Policy etc. to enhance aspects of health and safety

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School and surrounding areas
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives)
- Open Fire
- Rope and string
- Shelter building
- Collecting natural materials

First Aid

The Forest School Leader and Forest School Assistant are qualified first aiders and will administer the care needed. The Forest School Leader has an enhanced first aid certificate to specifically cover outdoors while the Assistant is qualified to Level 3 in Paediatric First Aid care. The Leader and Assistant will ensure the safety of all other children within the group and the possible need to evacuate them indoors, seeking emergency help if needed. There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located in school. In the event of an accident, parents will be contacted and an accident report (where necessary) will be completed. In the event of a serious accident the HSE will be informed. Emergency procedures are within the Forest School Sessions handbook which will be taken into the woodland each session. The Forest School Leader will ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into woodland.

Use of Tools

Children and adults will be trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory. Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children. They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life; broken and damaged tools will not be used. Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and how to correct use before they use (tool safety talk). Tool use will be on a ratio of 1:1 dependent on severity. Smaller tools will be on a ratio 1:3 e.g. tent pegs and potato peelers.

Use of Fires

A Forest School 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.

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 log seat.
- Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
- Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).

Environment

Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. Christ Church CE Academy 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 fire wood. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them.

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leader: will have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification, DBS enhanced disclosure and an outdoor first aid qualification.

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 necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
- Administration of first aid and first aid kit.
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
- Organising emergency procedures.

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 and support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or before should any incidents arise or laws and policies change.