



Forest School Policy

Buckton Vale Primary School Sustainability Plan

It is important to bear in mind the ecological impact of running a Forest School in the woodland at Buckton Vale and with that in mind consideration will be given to the following:

- Any fire will be contained either within a Kelly kettle which uses very little fuel or within the fire pit which is situated within the centre of the fire circle
- There will be a maximum of one fire per week to reduce the impact of the smoke disturbing any nesting birds in the upper canopy of the forest
- The above actions will limit the amount of dead wood that is burnt as it is important for the soil layer of the forest
- Children will be educated not to pick up anything still growing

At Buckton Vale, the area that has been set aside for Forest School had become over run with brambles and rubbish such as wires, crisp packets and glass bottles. The area forms part of the school grounds and the perimeter fence has been extended to enclose the whole site including the areas used for Forest School activities, making it safer for our children.

The Forest School site has been cleared of debris and ground covering brambles, giving the area's trees and bushes the opportunity to recover and develop as a natural woodland area.

Introduction

It is the mission of Buckton Vale Primary School to develop the full human potential of everyone at our school in an environment guided by Aspiring to Achieve, Believe, Respect, Responsibility, Honesty and Happiness. To help fulfil our mission, we have introduced Forest School provision at our school in order to help educate the whole child.

This policy has been specifically written so that all parents, staff, volunteers and governors at Buckton Vale have a shared understanding of the Forest School ethos and its implementation at our school.

The contents of this policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Equality Scheme

Within this policy, the term 'Forest School Leader' refers to a member of staff, adult volunteer or bought in professional who holds a fully recognised Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School as operated at Buckton Vale. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risk, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

Our Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

- Develop self-esteem
- Develop self-confidence
- Form positive relationships with others
- Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others
- Learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults
- Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety. Learn specific skills which link into the curriculum
- Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a forest environment

Buckton Vale's Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will be worn. During high winds or lightening it will be considered unsafe to go into the Forest School sites.

The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development, all under the premise of 'play.'

Forest School works within three main rules which are displayed as symbols.

.... Listen to stay safe

..... Thumbs up – respect – for each other, plants, animals and our environment

..... Footprint – don't leave a negative footprint – keep the environment safe and clear of rubbish or anything that will damage it. Any projects must be of benefit to the environment.

These rules are reinforced throughout the school at the beginning of each session.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of our Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

We aim to promote respect for wildlife and our woodland environment. This will be achieved partly through detailed long-term, medium-term and lesson planning. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School Site.

Health and Safety Considerations

In the first instance please refer to Buckton Vale's Health and Safety Policy.

The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times throughout any Forest School activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders. The Forest School programme provides children with opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst being independent in their learning, they will develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their actions have consequences. In addition a weekly site sweep will be carried out by the Forest School leader to check that the site remains safe to learn in.

The Forest School Leaders will carry out risk assessments at the beginning of each term which will take account of seasonal changes.

The Forest School Leaders and other practitioners regard their duty of care when working with pupils as extremely important. For the safety and protection of all individuals – children, staff and volunteers - we ensure the following:

- Everyone involved in Forest School is briefed on health and safety and risk assessment of the site.
- Staff and volunteers are made aware of the Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding incorporating Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan. This is undertaken as part of induction and orientation of all staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers must undertake to adhere to the guidance contained within all these policies.
- All members of staff at Buckton Vale Primary School undertake Child Protection Training. Any concerns are reported to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher, the named Child Protection Officers, to ensure the school's child protection policy can then be followed.
- The Forest School Leaders and other school staff delivering sessions all have an enhanced level DBS check.
- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. During winter months pupils are expected to wear sturdy footwear or wellington boots, hats, gloves and waterproof outerwear. Sunscreen and hats should be worn in the summer months. It is part of school policy that staffs do not apply sunscreen to children, they must do this themselves.
- Long trousers must be worn at all times to protect from brambles/nettles or scratches from low branches.

Assessing and Reducing Risk at our Forest School

One of the reasons for introducing Forest School to Buckton Vale is a belief that children are sometimes overly and unnecessarily protected and cossetted from risks and that, ironically, this makes them less safe in the long run. At our Forest School we undertake a range of activities which contain a theoretical degree of risk. Through careful supervision, full training and good practice, we aim to ensure that accidents are avoided and that risks are reduced to manageable and acceptable levels. We have full written risk assessments in place for:

- Site
- Weather conditions and general welfare
- Group
- Individual
- Buildings and shelters
- Rope and String
- Fire
- Food Water
- Collecting natural materials
- Being off the ground
- Blindfolds Saws
- Penknives and Potato peelers
- Mallets

Written Risk Assessments are the starting point for our safe practice and procedures in Forest School.

They are constantly reviewed and regularly updated in order to reflect the safest practice possible at Buckton Vale.

Fire at Forest School

If a fire is lit at our Forest School, it is always supervised by a Forest School Leader. Fires will never be left unattended. Safe fire practice is always adhered to. There will always be a water bucket, fire gloves and fire blanket next to the fire.

Children are taught and reminded of the fire circle rules from their first visit to Forest School. These are:

- Walk around the outside of the firepit area
- Find a gap in the log circle, enter and sit on the nearest log
- Keep feet flat and sit on the floor
- Only approach the fire when requested by the adult in charge
- Only work at the fire in the respect position (one knee up, one knee on the floor)

Cooking and Eating at Forest School

Forest School Leaders and other adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

- Open fire cooking is only permissible in the designated areas. The respect position should always be used when near the fire. Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink. All food is stored in appropriate containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Any dietary requirements are noted and catered for. Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

Tools

The safety of all participants is of paramount importance. Participants ensure that tools are used safely by adopting the following:

- Tools are stored correctly in school and checked after each session. Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of the tool use session. Leaders ensure that tool talks are given before any tools are used.
- Children are supervised at all times whilst using tools of any description.
- Inappropriate use of tools will not be tolerated and will result in immediate withdrawal from the task.

Activities involving fire and tool use will only take place when the children display safe and sensible behaviour. Anyone not displaying this behaviour will be excluded from these activities either by working in another classroom or taking part in a lower risk outdoor activity.

All groups will be reminded of the expectations of Forest School leaders prior to these activities being planned and will be given opportunities to improve their behaviour.

Dealing with strangers, members of the public and dogs

Buckton Vale Primary School incorporates the Forest School site. It is surrounded by a perimeter fence, keypad entry on gates and is secure by design. However, there is always the possibility of these measures being breached. The following procedures will be adopted:

- Children will be informed to never approach any person or animal (living or dead) within the forest or school grounds.
- Staff will look for dog/animal owner and ask for its removal. If the dog is stray, the situation will be risk assessed and it may be determined by staff that children should be taken indoors until the dog is under control.
- Children will be told to inform a member of staff who will challenge any stranger on the site.

First Aid

Level 3 Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid. A First Aid Kit is always available on the Forest School site. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that the First Aid Kit is brought onto the site at the commencement of the session and returned to school after each session.

In cases of minor injury, such as cuts and grazes the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and complete a first aid note for the injured person to take home.

Emergency Procedures

It is vital that emergency procedures are adhered to. These are in place to safeguard pupils and adults alike. If a serious incident takes place, it will be essential to carry out an investigation promptly.

Should a serious incident or accident occur, the Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of other participants by adopting the '1, 2, 3 - Come to me' call. Participants will be made aware of this procedure for calling everyone together in initial sessions of Forest School.

In cases of emergency the Forest School Leader or other trained adult will administer first aid to the casualty. They will inform the school office who will alert parents and/or emergency services if necessary. They will inform the head teacher if the incident requires further medical treatment.

If an accident occurs to a pupil, member of staff or visitor that requires help in addition to first aid e.g. Fire, Ambulance and Police then the LA must be informed of the circumstances as soon as possible. An accident form will be completed and a copy faxed to the LA.

In the event of serious injury (this includes amputation, serious burns, acute illness, fracture, loss of sight or consciousness, or if detained in hospital over 24 hours, or death); the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must be informed. These notifications are a legal requirement.

The 'Accident Report Form' requires a written statement to be made with reference to the sequence of events, actions taken and responses and times of these actions. Names of witnesses should be recorded. The statement should then be signed, dated and given to the Headteacher. A copy will then be sent to the LA. The original form will be kept in school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Forest School Leaders hold a fully recognised Level 3 Practitioners qualification; have fully enhanced CRB and outdoor first aid qualifications. Forest School Leaders have the overall responsibility for:

- Safety and risk assessment
- Planning of sessions, evaluation and feedback liaising with school staff and governors
Administration of first aid
- Responsibility for first aid kit, accident book, etc.
- Supervision of tool use
- Supervision of fires and cooking area Understanding the needs of children with

Volunteers and Trainees

With support from the Forest School Leaders volunteers and trainees are responsible for:

- Modelling good practice
- Supporting and talking to pupils to extend their learning as appropriate
- Additional support when Forest School leader is supervising tools or fire activities
- Additional delegated jobs

Insurance

Insurance for activities within Forest School are included within the school's insurance policy.

Equal Opportunities

In the first instance please refer to the school Equalities Policy and Scheme.

All people involved in Forest School sessions will be treated with respect and equality. Our priority is to ensure that children and adults have access to a safe and secure environment. We believe that any contributions made by staff, volunteers and participants in our sessions will be listened to and appreciated.

Evaluation Procedure

The Forest School Leaders have developed a long term progressive plan. They undertake to reflect and evaluate each session after its completion. At the end of each term the leaders meet to reflect on current activities, take into account feedback from all participants and then use this to inform future planning.

SignedDate (Chair of Governors)

SignedDate (Headteacher)