



St Botolph's CE Primary School

Forest School Handbook



Contents

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Forest School Ethos and Vision	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality, Diversity and SEND	4
Forest School Provision at St Botolph's and Communication Strategy	5
Forest School Site and Facilities	8
Session Procedures – preparation routine, toilet facilities, handwashing, rubbish disposal	11
Equipment	12
Emergency procedure and first aid	13
Firepit procedure	14
Cooking on a camp fire	18
Tools – usage, storage and maintenance	19
Pre-session checks	22
Risk assessments and Risk Benefit Analysis	23
Three Year Sustainable Woodland Plan	32

The Forest School Ethos and Vision

Our Forest School vision is to provide a specialised learning approach that offers children regular learner-led exploration and discovery, nurturing meaningful experiences through hands-on learning in a natural environment with trees. Our Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved. We will give children the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves while supporting and fostering:

- Development of self- confidence, resilience and independence
- Improved mental health and emotional health
- Exposure to manageable risk
- Communication skills
- Self esteem
- How to care for others and the environment
- A sense of calmness, relaxation and heightened sense of wellbeing

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.

Forest School aims to provide a welcome and appropriate learning opportunity for all children providing an environment in which all children are supported to reach their full potential. We welcome children with special needs who can participate in Forest School, if appropriate, after consultation between all relevant parties. Changes and adaptations can be made to the programme of activities to meet children's specific needs. More specific details on our SEND policy can be found later in the handbook.

Over the next few years, we aim to promote Outdoor Learning across our whole school to also support the above areas throughout our curriculum. We have already renovated a garden area, acquired extra resources and applying to grants to help support this ongoing mission. We have also completed one full cycle of Forest School sessions with our 2022-23 Foundation Stage class. This has given us the practical experience to expand and develop our vision for Forest School at St Botolph's whilst also maintaining and developing the ecological health of our site. Details of how we intend to do this can be found in our three year Sustainable Woodland plan, at the end of the handbook.

Safeguarding

At St Botolph's we have a safeguarding policy which is supported by a number of linked policies, such as whistleblowing, SCR and Vetting Checks and Data Protection – the full documents of all policies can be found on our website, here: <https://www.stbotolphs.co.uk/key-information-2/safeguarding/>

The safeguarding policy states:

Everyone working in, or for our school, shares an objective to help keep children and young people safe by contributing to:

- *providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn and develop in our school setting, and*
- *identify children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both within and outside of our school setting'*
- *creating a whole school approach to safeguarding through a culture of care where children are listened to, and heard, with the knowledge that their concerns and worries will be taken seriously*

Our school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of all our children. Each child's welfare is of paramount importance. We recognise that some children may be especially vulnerable to abuse e.g. those that are less mobile or have difficulty communicating, and that their needs are unique to them and that no one size fits all. We recognise that children who are abused or neglected may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. We will ensure that no child will feel that what they have to say is a problem or carries any shame. As a school we are committed to putting the child at the heart of any procedures that operate. We recognise that, safeguarding concerns do not adhere to school/home boundaries and that what happens at home and within the wider school environment including on social media, is as relevant as what happens within the classroom. Behaviour may be challenging and we recognise that at times, this may impact on other children either directly or indirectly. We will always take a considered and sensitive approach in order that we can support all our children.

In the context of Forest School, any safeguarding issues will be dealt with in accordance with the policy. Any concerns should be brought to the attention of our Designated Safeguarding Lead or, in their absence, one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. These members of staff are currently:

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Debbie Wilson, Headteacher

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads -Mandy Wright, Deputy Headteacher

Clare Hewerdine, SENDCo

Claire Dunham

All concerns must also be logged on CPOMS, our central record keeping system. If you do not have access to CPOMS, please talk to one of the Forest School leaders who will help you to log and manage your concern.

Equality and Diversity

Our school statement on equality and diversity is as follows (also available at <https://www.stbotolphs.co.uk/key-information-2/equality-and-diversity/>):

St Botolph's is committed to creating and sustaining a positive and supportive working environment for our staff, and an excellent teaching and learning experience for our pupils. We aspire that staff are equally valued and respected, and pupils are encouraged to thrive academically. As a provider of employment and education, we value the diversity of our staff and pupils. We are committed to providing a fair, equitable and mutually supportive learning and working environment for our pupils and staff. This is reflected in the core values of the school, which state the importance of:

- *valuing, respecting and promoting the rights, responsibilities and dignity of individuals within all our professional activities and relationships.*
- *equality of educational opportunity based on merit, irrespective of background, beliefs and socio-economic context.*

In the context of Forest School, it is important to consider equality and diversity when preparing experiences for sessions, as there may be occasions where it is necessary to adapt provision in order to ensure that it is suitable for all learners to participate in. Equally, no child shall be excluded because their family is unable to provide the required equipment. The school will have a supply of extra clothing and footwear that can be loaned to children as needed, although the general expectation will be that children will provide their own.

SEND

St Botolph's CE Primary School's SEND statement is as follows:

At St Botolph's we strive to ensure that all pupils feel welcome, safe, valued and comfortable, no matter their needs. We focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning, aiming to make sure that every child is given the correct provision to help achieve their full potential.

Forest School is a place that welcomes all learners, regardless of their needs, and we will adapt to provide for the specific needs of individuals with SEND requirements. This is in line with our school SEND policy, which can be found at <https://www.stbotolphs.co.uk/key-information-2/send/>. Forest School leaders will work closely with class teachers, parents, carers, teaching assistants, the SENCo and any other relevant party to support children with SEND to provide the best possible experience and allow all children the opportunity to reach their full potential and gain the benefits that Forest School can offer them.

Forest School Provision at St Botolph's

Forest School provision at St Botolph's will be provided for every child in Foundation Stage and year 1. Each class will attend Forest School for three six-week blocks throughout the year. This enables children to attend Forest School throughout the seasons, and provides a long-term experience which is necessary for the children to benefit most.

All sessions are led by a qualified level three Forest Schools leader, and supported by adults who understand the principles of Forest School provision. There is a qualified first aider present at each session as well. The current Forest School leaders are:



Mrs Main

Qualified Level Three Forest School Leader



Mrs Hallam

Qualified Level Three Forest School Leader



Mrs Thompson

Currently completing the training for Level Three Forest School Leader

The Forest School leaders are responsible for overseeing the smooth running of Forest School provision, with the support of all members of the school community. The following communication strategy explains how this will be achieved:

Forest School Communication Strategy

	BEFORE sessions begin	DURING sessions	AFTER sessions finish	Communication methods
Learners	-FS leaders to introduce themselves to all learners – either as group or individual, based upon need -FS leaders share what to expect of Forest School and how it will work, e.g. routines, clothing, wellies -FS leaders encourage children to share ideas and desires for FS experience, previous experiences with nature etc.	-FS leaders reinforce routines and expectations -FS leaders ensure they are listening to learners, providing opportunities for them to share ideas and questions -learners ask FS leaders if they need something or need support -learners engage in reflection opportunities each session, with support	-learners and FS leaders share achievements and reflections from throughout the year – supported by photograph certificate for each child.	-FS leaders to ensure that appropriate communication methods and opportunities are available for ALL learners, e.g. visual support, 1:1 opportunities to talk, investment in all relationships
Parents/carers	-FS leaders to send introduction sheet explaining the ethos and principles of Forest School, and how sessions will run – particularly including clothing requirements and weather expectations - reminders as groups change over	-FS leader to share updates via school communication method (Class Dojo/ParentMail) -Any incident or accident to be notified to parents as per school policy -Parents/carers can contact FS leaders via ClassDojo or via the class teacher with questions during the sessions	-FS leaders to send a final summary of the year at Forest School, to accompany the photo certificates that children will bring home. -Parents to receive a parent questionnaire to enable them to provide feedback	-Class Dojo/ParentMail -Incidents or accidents notified via accident form and/or phone call, as per school policy - online questionnaire (hard copy available if required) - website updated regularly, source of information for anyone interested and for parents/carers who are attending Forest School
Class teachers	-Discuss and decide session days and timetable -Discuss and decide groups -Share any medical needs of children -Share any SEND support needed -FS leaders to ensure CTs understand the principles and ethos of Forest School and how this can support the development of their children	-FS leaders to communicate any relevant observations -FS leader to communicate any incident or accident that occurs during session, including medical or behaviour -CT to communicate any changes or particular circumstances for individuals on a weekly basis	-FS leader to share progress and observations with CT for assessments as needed	-Meeting with class teachers at beginning and end of year -Verbal communication, supported by email. -Electronic copies of groups and timetables to be sent -Electronic copies of any medical needs and SEND support sent -CPOMS procedure to be followed for any incident, esp. safeguarding

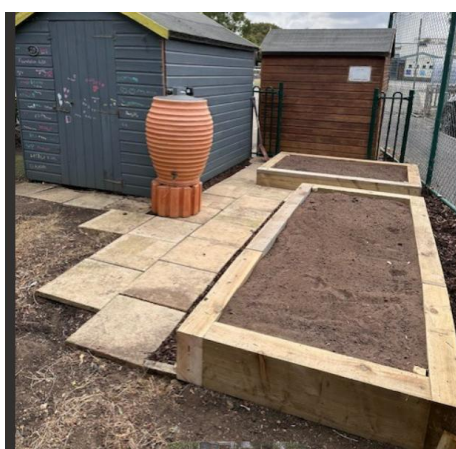
				-Floor book shows evidence of learning throughout the year
Assistants/ volunteers	- FS leaders to share ethos and principles of Forest School, routines and health and safety considerations (supported by handbook) - Assistants/volunteers to share any areas of knowledge or expertise they would like to use	-FS leaders to ensure any changes to session timings and/or requirements are shared -Volunteers to notify FS leaders if they are unavailable for a session with as much notice as possible - FS leader to ensure everyone is aware of the weekly plan, aims and needs of each child	-Assistants and volunteers to feedback on experience and share ideas/suggestions etc. - FS leader to share future opportunities to support, signpost to further learning etc.	-Discussion before sessions start, FS leader to provide copy of handbook - Brief weekly chats before each session to share plan and aims, and any concerns
Site manager	-FS leader to share expected impact of Forest School on the site, including any requirements e.g. storage, and activities -Site manager to share any rules to be followed, any concerns or limitations on activities allowed	- FS leader to notify site manager promptly of any issues with the site that need rectifying - Site manager to notify FS leader as soon as possible if any access to the site will be restricted for any reason.	-FS leaders and site manager to discuss any issues that need resolving before next group of sessions to take place	-face to face or email as appropriate
Headteacher	-FS leader to make them aware of the aims, ethos and principles of Forest School	-ongoing updates throughout	-FS leaders to update HT on progress and any issues, plans and requirements for going forward	-copies of paperwork and policies to be shared electronically -regular verbal feedback
Governors	-FS leader to make them aware of the aims, ethos and principles of Forest School -Governor to check	- FS leader to provide updates via governor's reports	-FS leaders to update governors on progress and any issues, plans and requirements for going forward	-governors' reports -meeting with governor responsible for Forest School

Forest School Site and Facilities

The Forest School site is located in the grounds of St Botolph's primary school. It is completely enclosed and can only be accessed via the school grounds. The site has recently been redeveloped and continues to grow. The main areas of the site are shown below:



Fire pit: This area is the heart of our garden. It is used at the beginning and end of each session as a gathering space. It is also used when lighting fires and cooking. Please see the section on fire-lighting for safe use of the fire pit area.



Plant bed: This area will be used to grow fruit and vegetables, giving children to experience the whole process of food production from seed to plate.

Wild flower bed: This bed will be planted with wild flowers in order to attract more fauna, in particular pollinators such as bees and butterflies. It is important that our children develop the knowledge and skills to contribute positively to the environment as they grow older and understanding what they can do to support wildlife is a vital part of that.



Mud pit and mud kitchen: This area is used for digging and imaginative play in the mud kitchen area. It promotes imaginative and creative play and provides opportunities to develop problem solving and social skills.



Storage shed: This is where the equipment is stored, including the first aid kit, tools, tarpaulin (for dens or wet weather).



Bug hotel: This is an excellent habitat and area for bug hunting and looking for minibeasts. There are also several other bug hotels and hedgehog hotels situated around the garden. These provide more opportunities for children to learn about the natural world and how to look after it, as well as creating lots of moments of wonder and excitement when interesting insects are discovered!



Den building/running/climbing/free space: This area is used for a wide variety of purposes, depending on the desires of the children. Freedom of choice is a key aspect of Forest School, and allows children to develop self-confidence and creativity.



Quiet space: This is a place for connecting with nature and taking a rest, reading a book, sitting quietly, cloud watching or just taking a moment to enjoy the surroundings. It is a good place for quiet reflection and



Tool Area: Children will have different skills and activities available here, such as conker drilling, hammering and screwing. The chance to use tools in a carefully managed situation gives children the opportunity to develop their motor skills, sense of responsibility and self-confidence. All tool use activities have been risk assessed and will be closely monitored by a designated adult.



Small world and Drainpipe Area: Children will have a selection of natural small world objects which can be turned into a variety of worlds. The drainpipes can be used to explore natural objects or water. This will give the children chance to use their creativity, curiosity of nature and teamwork to build and develop their imaginative play.

Session Procedures and Routines

Before the Session

10

- A member of the Forest School team will carry out a visual inspection of the site, remove any hazards such as fallen branches or animal faeces.
- All medications and equipment that is needed but not kept in the storage shed will be collected.

Preparation Routine (for children, before going to Forest School site)

- Go to the toilet and collect water bottle.
- Place shoes by your peg, collect any extra protective clothing or equipment you need (e.g. gloves, sunhat or sun cream).
- Get changed into all appropriate clothing and collect your wellies.
- Put your wellies on and line up.

Adults to check that all children are wearing appropriate clothing for the weather

Toilet Facilities

- There are no toilets at our Forest School site, but there are toilets very close by in the main school building.
- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet as part of the preparation routine before going out to the Forest School site.
- If children need the toilet during a session, they must inform an adult. As we currently run sessions with our youngest children, an adult will accompany them to the nearest toilets, which are at the end of the key stage 2 corridor. This will be reviewed as and when we extend sessions to older year groups.

Handwashing

- There will be many times where it will be necessary to clean or wash hands during Forest School, including; snack time, cooking or after handling minibeasts
- An adult will decide what method of hand cleansing is most appropriate – using hand sanitiser, hand wipes, or washing at the hand wash station with soap and water.
- The hand washing station – every session, the Forest School leader will ensure that the water carrier is filled with fresh water and is available for use with soap as required. The plastic bowl on the hand washing station allows for minimal wastage and flooding of the washing area which could result in slippery and unsafe ground. At the end of the session, waste water will be distributed amongst the plants, out of walkways and spread out so that it can evaporate or be absorbed more quickly.

Rubbish disposal

- At the beginning of each session, a rubbish bag will be provided. Children are responsible for putting their own rubbish in the bin, for example after finishing their snack.
- At regular intervals across the year, members of the school community will conduct litter picks, to ensure that any rubbish that has not been placed in the bag, or that has blown into the Forest School area, is removed. Litter picks will also take place during Forest School sessions.
- All rubbish must be removed from the site and disposed of appropriately at the end of each session. This will be the Forest School leader's responsibility.

Equipment

Situation	Required Equipment
General/safety equipment	
Safety bag	Number for school office, emergency info (address and W3W), group list, medical information, any specific medication or equipment for the group
On person	Appropriate clothing – full length trouser, sturdy shoes or wellies, weather appropriate top, access to drink
Seasonal	
<i>Note: In all weathers, children and adults will need to wear long trousers and sturdy shoes or wellies that protect their feet. Unfortunately, if there are no long trousers available or appropriate shoes cannot be found, then it will not be possible to attend the Forest School session. To ensure that this does not happen, there will be a stock of spare clothes and wellies in the Forest School storage.</i>	
Spring	Weather variable, so needs will be judged on a week by week basis. For cooler weather, extra layer of clothing can be worn under waterproof trousers, along with gloves, hat and scarf. If weather is warmer, children may need sun hats or sun cream applied before going out to the session (they will apply this themselves). Layers of clothing are helpful, as this makes it easier to adjust to changing conditions. A waterproof coat is advisable whether the weather is warm or cool.
Summer	In extreme heat, children MUST wear a sun hat. If they choose to apply sun cream before coming outside, they are able to do so. Insect repellent can also be used if necessary. Tops should be loose and cool, with long sleeves if appropriate to protect from the sun, though short sleeves may also be worn to prevent overheating. It is ESSENTIAL that children and adults drink sufficient amounts during hot weather and regular drink breaks should be given during a session.
Autumn	In Autumn, the policy will be the same as Spring – judged on a daily basis.
Winter	A warm, waterproof coat is essential, along with hat, scarf and gloves. Extra clothes such as jogging bottoms or a second pair of socks can be worn under the waterproof trousers and over clothes if it is extremely cold.
Experience	
Clearing nettles and brambles	Sturdy shoes or wellies, long trousers and long-sleeved top, gardening gloves to protect hands.
Lighting fires	When lighting fires, there should be a fire first aid kit, fire blanket, appropriate amounts of water and a fire glove – make sure that learners understand that a fire glove is thermal resistant and that they must not put their own hands in the fire with their own gloves on. Foam pads will be available if required to facilitate the use of the respect position when tending the fire.
Cooking	Handwashing materials (see procedures), clean equipment and food preparation area,
Using tools: Bow saw Loppers Knife Billhook	Safe usage of tools is covered in the section, 'Tools – Usage, Storage and Maintenance'. This is a summary of additional PPE requirements for each tool, all users should be wearing suitable shoes, long trousers and a suitable top. - Bowsaw: glove on helper hand - Loppers: bare hands on handles - Knife: glove on helper hand - Billhook: bare hands on handle

Emergency Procedure and First Aid

First Aid

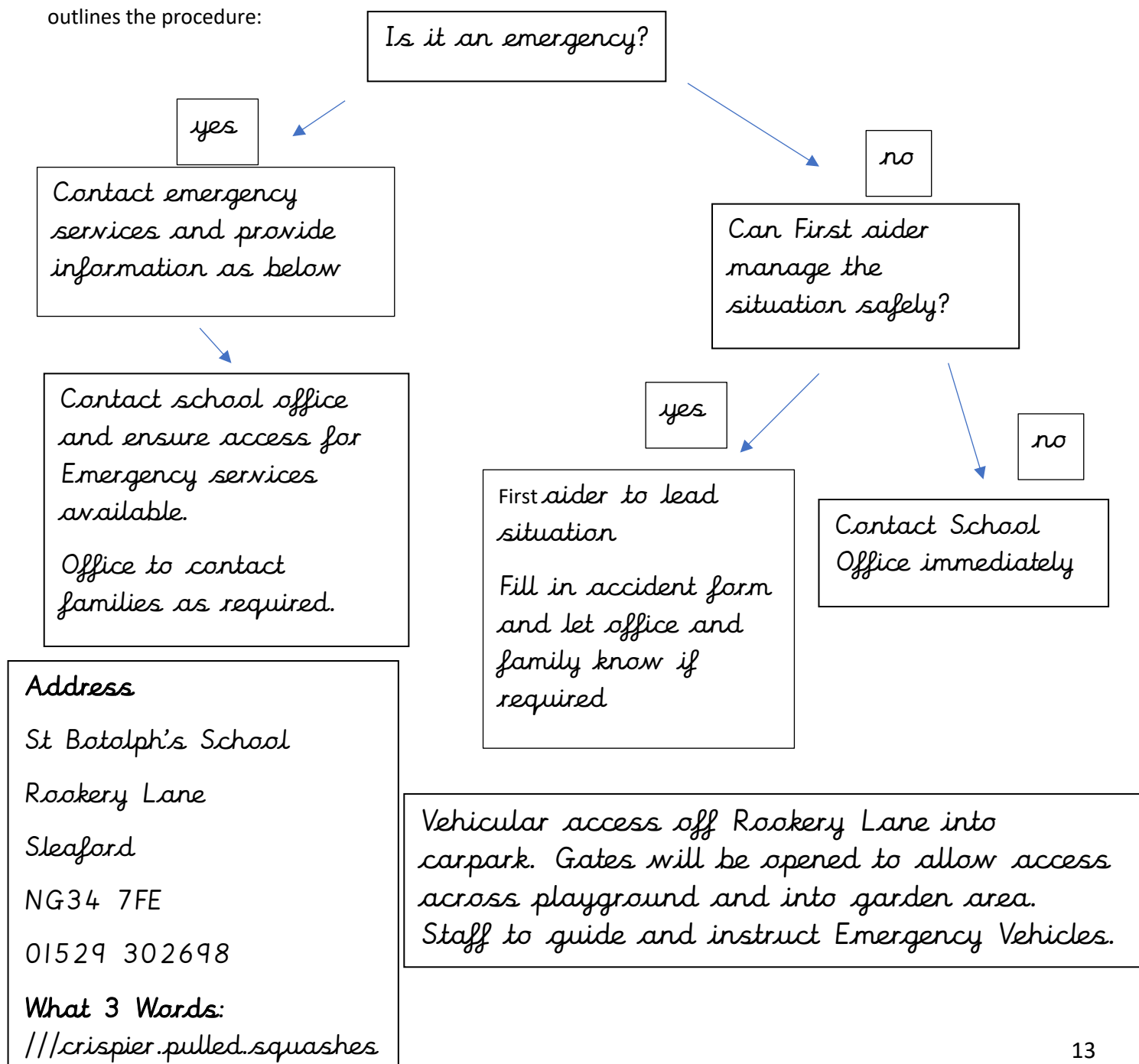
Forest School follows the St Botolph's first aid policy, which can be found at <https://www.stbotolphs.co.uk/key-information-2/policies/>

With reference to the policy, some areas require further clarification specific to the Forest School setting.

- **Medical Conditions:** Forest School leaders will be made aware of all and any medical conditions of the children who will attend Forest School. Training will be provided in the event that a specific condition may require administration of medication prior to the child attending Forest School. A first aid trained member of staff will be present at all Forest School sessions.
- **First Aid Kits:** There will be a first aid kit on the Forest School site at all times. It will be specifically suitable for the particular needs of Forest School, including fire and burns equipment. It will be the responsibility of Forest School leaders to ensure that the first aid kit is stocked with in-date and appropriate items, and that it is present at all sessions.

Emergency Procedures

The emergency procedure for injury or accident is outlined in the first aid policy detailed above. The flowchart below outlines the procedure:



Fire Pit Procedures and Fire Lighting

Lighting a Fire	
Preparing the area	
1. Before choosing a site you should consider the following: - Bedrock and soil type – assess whether the soil type is flammable, such as peat or woody soil, or less so like clay, stony or muddy soil. The latter is preferable for a fire site. - Wind direction – which way is the wind blowing? Is it likely to carry any flames towards flammable materials that are too close? - Are the learners ready to engage with fire lighting in a safe manner as a group? Have they demonstrated understanding of the fire safety rules and procedures? Do you have sufficient adult support to supervise the whole group whilst you focus on the fire? Are they wearing appropriate clothing? Is long hair secured? - Is there enough water available? If you are in an area that does not have a water supply nearby, it is advisable to have a large quantity of water with you when lighting fires so that there is enough to deal with any eventuality that may occur. - Be aware of how big your fire can grow without losing control. Make sure the surrounding area is clear of debris such as leaf litter which may ignite.	
2. Establish a fire circle – at least 1m in diameter.	
3. Gather equipment – this should include: - Water – more than enough to extinguish the fire and in case of burns - Fire first aid kit and burns kit - Fire blanket - Fire glove	
4. Follow procedures for moving around the fire circle: - Always walk in a clockwise direction - Only enter at the entrance - Only exit at the exit - Do not walk between benches - Do not move across the fire circle in any direction, walk around in specified direction	

5. If you are not managing the fire, only approach if you are invited to do so. If you have long hair, you must make sure that it is secured and not going to dangle into the fire. Forest School leaders should ensure that learners check their hair and clothing are safe and not hanging down towards the fire.	
6. Whenever you are near the fire, adopt the RESPECT position: • Kneel on one knee, keep the other knee up with foot flat on the floor <i>The respect position is important because your knee helps to prevent you from falling forward into the fire, and it is also easy to stand up and move backwards quickly and safely if needed.</i>	
Preparing and lighting the fire	
1. Cotton wool will be used as tinder. Pull apart the fibres of the cotton wool so that it is as fluffy as possible. This will encourage burning.	
2. Place some larger sticks at the bottom of the fire bowl to create a base, or use the base grill provided if using a fire bowl.	
3. Place cotton wool on the base and begin to build the waffle: - Take three small sticks and place across the cotton wool. - Add more fluffed cotton wool on top and then place three more small sticks at a right angle to the first three. - Repeat for several layers, leaving a tail of cotton wool poking out for ease of lighting if you wish.	 

4. Use the flint and steel to create a spark and light the fire.
- To use a flint and steel, place your thumb in the depression on the flint and hold the steel in your other hand.
 - Place the edge of the flint against the steel and strike downwards with a firm motion until you see sparks.



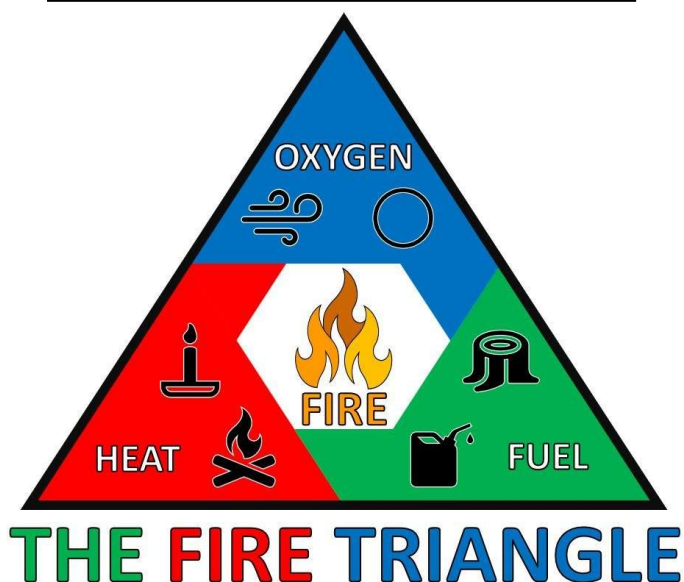
5. To maintain and build the fire, it is important to keep adding fuel, increasing stick size as the fire grows.



The Fire Triangle

The fire triangle explains the three elements that are essential for a fire to light and continue burning. It is helpful to remember the fire triangle because it can help you to diagnose any problems you have with lighting or maintaining your fire.

Oxygen reacts with the heat to light the fuel. If a fire is deprived of oxygen, it will not burn. Equally, if you blow gently (or increase the amount of oxygen) on a fire, the flames will increase.



Heat can come from a spark or heat source reacting with oxygen and igniting the fuel. As the fuel burns, it will produce heat and flames. These can then spread through the fuel, provided that the heat and oxygen supply are maintained.

Fuel can be a solid or liquid material such as coal, wood, gas or petrol, which will maintain the fire burning. The fuel is like food for the fire and if there is not enough fuel to burn then the fire will be extinguished.

Picture: <https://leakdetection.co.uk/information/fire-triangle/>

Cooking on a Campfire

Cooking on a campfire is a wonderful, collaborative experience and has proven to be very popular with the children who have experienced it at our school already. In order for this to be a wholly positive experience, it is vital to follow procedures to make sure that food is safely and hygienically prepared for all to enjoy.

Prior to the session

- Review any dietary needs of your learners and ensure that you have adequate provision for them to participate as well.
- Check use-by dates on food and ensure that all ingredients are still edible on the date of the session.
- If you have any learners with diabetes, make sure you have checked the carbohydrate content and know how to calculate the insulin needs of the individual.

Preparation

- Ensure hands are clean – follow hand washing procedure
- Ensure that you have the correct equipment for cooking and that it is clean and dry.
- Ensure food is prepared for cooking in a clean area. Any food that drops is rubbish and should be disposed of following the rubbish disposal procedure. If necessary, you can chop or otherwise prepare food prior to the session and bring it with you, but it must be stored adequately e.g. in a cool box, making sure that meat and vegetables are not mixed.

Cooking

- Light the fire, following the fire lighting procedure, and make sure that it is well established with the appropriate amount of fuel to maintain the fire long enough to cook without overwhelming or burning the food.
- Once the fire is lit, you can use a variety of methods to cook, including frying, boiling, roasting, steaming and smoking.
- Ensure that all food is thoroughly cooked through and safe to eat before serving. Anybody who is going to eat the food should also clean their hands before eating.

After eating the food, the procedures for extinguishing a fire and for rubbish disposal must be followed.

Tools

Storage

All tools must be stored in a safe, lockable place. In our Forest School, this is the shed. The tools are stored in a secure box in the shed, and will only be brought out to be used when a qualified level 3 practitioner is present to supervise. It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to count the tools out at the beginning of a session, and to count them back in when finished, ensuring that all tools are kept safe.

Cleaning and Maintenance of Tools

It is essential that tools are properly looked after. Not only are they expensive, but proper maintenance is also the best way to ensure that they are safe to use. Before using any tool, the Forest School leader should carry out a visual check to make sure the tool is in no way damaged, that the blade and handle are securely joined, and there are no nicks or notches in the blade. Cleaning should take place after every use – making sure that all elements of the tool are free from any residue and dry, to prevent rust - and more rigorous maintenance, such as sharpening, should also occur regularly.

Bowsaw	
1. Remove debris from the blade, wiping lightly with wire wool. Take care not to touch the cutting edge, instead wipe from the top along the length of the blade. If any material is stuck in the teeth, make sure to remove this.	
2. Use the wire wool more vigorously, to remove any rust or other blemishes.	
3. Sharpen the blade as needed (see 'Sharpening' for details).	
4. Oil the blade lightly, to prevent moisture or dirt accessing the blade and causing rust.	
5. Replace the blade cover and store safely in designated place.	
Billhook	<i>Photos to be added as we expand our tool collection to include a billhook!</i>
1. Remove debris from the blade, wiping lightly with wire wool. Take care not to touch the cutting edge, instead wipe along the top of the blade down towards the cutting edge.	
2. Use the wire wool more vigorously, to remove any rust or other blemishes.	
3. Sharpen the blade as needed (see 'Sharpening' for details).	
4. Oil the blade lightly, to prevent moisture or dirt accessing the blade and causing rust.	
5. Replace the blade cover and store safely in designated place.	

Knife	
1. Remove debris from the blade, wiping lightly with wire wool. Take care not to touch the cutting edge, instead wipe along the top of the blade down towards the cutting edge.	
2. Use the wire wool more vigorously, to remove any rust or other blemishes.	
3. Sharpen the blade as needed (see 'Sharpening' for details).	
4. Oil the blade lightly, to prevent moisture or dirt accessing the blade and causing rust.	
5. Replace the blade cover and store safely in designated place.	

Loppers	
1. Remove debris from the blade, wiping lightly with wire wool. Start with the loppers closed and clean the outside of the blade. Then, carefully open the loppers and clean towards the cutting edge, taking extra care and removing any debris.	
2. Use the wire wool more vigorously, to remove any rust or other blemishes.	
3. Sharpen the blade as needed (see 'Sharpening' for details).	
4. Oil the blade lightly, to prevent moisture or dirt accessing the blade and causing rust.	
5. Ensure the loppers are properly closed and store safely in designated place.	

Sharpening

Tool	Sharpening tool	Method
Bow saw	Replace blade	-The blades on bow saws are removeable, and once they are no longer sharp it is best to replace them. It is still important to follow a good cleaning routine after every use, to give the blade maximum life, but eventually it will become dull and will need replacing. -Make sure you dispose of the used blade appropriately, and do not leave it anywhere it could be accessed by the children or members of the public.
Billhook	Cigar stone	-Place the handle of the billhook in the crook of your shoulder (where your arm meets your body). The curve of the blade should be curving upwards, with the cutting edge pointing up. Hold the rounded, blunt edge of the blade with one hand. -In the other hand, pick up the cigar stone and place it on the cutting edge of the blade. -Move it in small circular motions, listening for a higher pitch sound being produced which signifies that the blade is being sharpened.
Loppers	Cigar stone	-Hold the loppers with the blades open, propped with one handle under your arm and the other in one hand. - Take the cigar stone in your other hand and gently move it across the cutting edge in small and gentle circular motions. -Turn the loppers over and repeat the sharpening with the cigar stone on the other side of the cutting edge. -Remove and filings or debris from the blade, and store safely in the designated place.
Sheath knife	Whet stone or sharpening stone	- Lay the knife down on the top of the stone. Hold the handle and have the cutting edge of the blade facing away from you. - Tilt the blade slightly, so that the sharpest part of the cutting edge is touching the sharpening stone. - Move the knife away from you, applying some pressure. Repeat this, 5 times in total. - In order to sharpen the other side of the blade, turn the knife over – the cutting edge will now be facing you. Tilt it so the very edge of the blade is touching the sharpening stone, and move away from you 5 times. -Remove any fillings or residue from the blade and test the sharpness by holding up a piece of paper and cutting it from top to bottom. If further sharpening is required, repeat the process – remembering to do both sides of the blade. - When it is sharp and has been cleaned, replace the blade into its sheath and store safely.

Pre-Session Checklist

The Forest School site must be checked by the Forest School leader before every session. The checklist below should be used each week, to ensure that all equipment is safe and ready for use and the site is prepared and any hazards have been removed.

Date:						
Equipment						
Safety bag – check contents						
Tools – check and maintain						
Medicines for group						
Water filled						
Equipment for the session e.g. firepit – is it ready? Is it safe to use?						
First aid kit – does anything need replacing?						
Phone charged and working?						
Site						
Trees – low, broken or fallen branches						
Stinging plants, thorns						
Muddy or otherwise slippery areas						
Standing water						
Effects from weather – wind or rain damage, ice patches etc.						
Boundaries – are they secure? Any evidence of intruders or damage?						
Rubbish – particularly broken glass, metal or other objects that could cause harm						
Animal faeces or remains – removed?						

Risk Assessment

Location:		St Botolph's CE Primary School, Sleaford, Lincolnshire	Name:		C Hallam	Date:	26/8/2023			
Description of site / activity / tools: The Forest School area is situated within the main primary school site. It has some well-established trees and bushes and a large space that can be used for den building and exploring, as well as a seating area, a mud kitchen and mud pit, planting areas, bug hotels and storage sheds.										
	Hazard	Harm	People at Risk	Existing Preventative Measures	Probability (P) 1 - 5	Severity (S) 1 - 5	Rating (P x S) 1 – 25	New Preventative Measures	Who? When?	Benefits
SITE										
1	Falling branches	Head injury, concussion, cuts	Children, adults	-Weekly site inspections prior to beginning of sessions -communication with site management to facilitate safe removal of unsafe branches as needed -FS leaders first aid trained -appropriate first aid kit always available at FS site	2	4	8	Continue existing measures	FS leader – weekly Site management – as required All – continued awareness when on site	Through teaching awareness, children begin to self-assess for risk and develop knowledge of their surroundings
2	Natural material on ground e.g. fallen branches, roots, slippery leaves etc. leading to trips and falls	Bumps, cuts, grazes, head injuries	Children, adults	-Weekly site inspections prior to beginning of sessions -learners made aware of areas of risk and how to negotiate the area -FS leaders first aid trained -appropriate first aid kit always available at FS site -appropriate footwear and clothing to be worn at all times	3	2	6	Continue existing measures	FS leader – weekly All – continued awareness when on site	Physical and motor skills development, spatial awareness, awareness of self and environment
3	Animal faeces/animal remains	Disease	Children, adults	-Weekly site inspections prior to beginning of sessions -safe removal and disposal of any hazards	1	3	4	Continue existing measures	FS leader – weekly	Understanding of health and safety, importance of cleanliness

									All – continued awareness when on site	
4	Bites/stings – insect or plant	-minor stings – pain, rash, swelling -potential allergic reaction, with risk of anaphylaxis	Children, adults	-Appropriate first aid kit available at all times -FS leader first aid trained	2	2	4	Continue existing measures	All adults – whenever on FS site	Children can learn about the flora and fauna around them, and how to interact in a manner that keeps them and the environment healthy
				-Anaphylaxis training, equipment and procedures compliant with Benedict’s Law	1	5	5			
Weather										
5	Adverse weather	A-extreme heat – sunburn, heatstroke B-extreme cold – slips on ice, hypothermia, frostbite C-extreme wind – harm associated with falling branches (see above) D-lightning storms – lightning strike to person or trees causing falling branches	Children, adults	A – appropriate clothing, hat and use of suncream, ensure appropriate liquid intake, provide adequate shaded areas, monitor wellbeing of learners and adapt as needed B-appropriate clothing, gloves, hat and footwear, provide adequate shelter from rain or snow, monitor wellbeing of learners and adapt as needed C – Forest School will not take place during high winds D – Forest School will not take place during electrical storms	1	4	4	Continue existing measures	All adults to check every child is appropriately dressed before going to the site, every session. During sessions, all adults to monitor wellbeing of children and ensure appropriate actions are taken e.g. drinking plenty	Experiencing Forest School in all weathers builds resilience and

Activities										
6	Collecting materials	Cuts, grazes, splinters	Children, adults	-knowledge of safe and unsafe materials to gather is taught -knowledge of safe movement with objects (e.g. sticks) is taught -appropriate equipment is available e.g. tubs or gardening gloves -first aid kit is available	2	2	4	Continue existing measures	-individuals to be aware of risks and follow safe collection and movement procedures -all adults to monitor when on site	Children get the opportunity to explore their surroundings and experience with all senses the natural world. Collaborative learning is also developed, as children work together to collect materials for a common aim.
7	Organised games	Cuts, grazes, scratches, trips and falls	Children, adults	-children aware of rules of games, and their environment and how to move safely around it -	2	2	4	Continue existing measures	-Adults to reinforce safety rules before game begins -children to follow safety rules during playing	Social play and communication skills, as well as physical body and space awareness in games such as hide and seek
8	Tree climbing	Falls from height	Children, adults	-tree climbing is appropriately supervised and supported by an adult -first aid trained adults are always present	2	4	8	Continue existing measures	-adults to ensure appropriate supervision whenever tree climbing takes place	Confidence and resilience building, problem solving
9	Den building	Cuts, scratches, splinters, head injuries from falling objects	Children, adults	-children taught safe methods for den building, including building techniques, appropriate materials, safe movement of objects, and behaviour expectations. Understanding is checked and monitored by adults, and teaching is repeated regularly.	2	2	4	Continue existing measures	-adults to ensure teaching takes place and is reinforced as needed -children responsible for following	Teamwork, problem solving, sense of joy and achievement

				-first aid kit and first aid trained staff available					behaviour expectations and building techniques etc.	
10	Using ropes	Trips, falls, getting tangled (especially dangerous around neck), rope burn	Children, adults	-safety measures are taught to children, including importance of being aware of environment and hazards -placement of ropes is carefully considered so that it is not placed at neck height -excess rope is stored so that it is not creating a hazard, children know to do this -first aid kit and first aid trained adults available	1	2	2	Continue existing measures	-adults to monitor rope placement and storage -children to follow safety protocols	Practical skills gained, problem solving, resilience, confidence
11	Using tools	Improper use of tools such as: A.Billhook B.Bow saw C.Loppers D.Knife E.Mallets F. Hammer, nails G.Hand drill Resulting in: Cuts, bruises, amputations, fractures, wounds	Children, adults	-Tool talks given, specific to each tool, detailing: - parts of tool -safe handling - how to carry and pass the tool - all other relevant safety information -Appropriate PPE is worn at all times -children always use tools under the supervision of an adult, and with limited numbers -specific tool storage area -tools are maintained so that they are safe to use and checked before each use -tools are counted in and out -appropriate first aid kit and first aid trained adult are always present	2	4	8	Continue existing measures	-FS leader to supervise tool use and maintenance -all to follow safety rules	Self-awareness, responsibility, practical skills, communication skills, fine and gross motor skills

12	Fire pit usage, fire lighting	Burns, scalds, unwanted spread of fire	Children, adults	-all adults and children know the fire safety procedures and follow them at all times -appropriate fire safety equipment is always present when the fire is lit – water, fire gloves, fire blanket -firepit area kept clear and organised and everyone to follow entry, exit and safe movement procedures -an adult supervises the fire closely at all times, until it has cooled and been extinguished	2	4	8	Continue existing measures	-FS leader to supervise fire at all times from lighting to being extinguished -everyone to follow safety procedures at all times when fires are lit	Practical fire lighting skills, responsibility, managing personal risk, sense of achievement, self-awareness and awareness of others and environment
13	Cooking on fire	Burns, scalds, unwanted spread of fire, risk of disease from lack of cleanliness	Children, adults	-all adults and children know the fire safety procedures and follow them at all times -appropriate fire safety equipment is always present when the fire is lit – water, fire gloves, fire blanket -firepit area kept clear and organised and everyone to follow entry, exit and safe movement procedures -an adult supervises the fire closely at all times, until it has cooled and been extinguished -handwashing and safe food preparation procedures are followed at all times	2	4	8	Continue existing measures	-FS leader to supervise fire at all times from lighting to being extinguished -everyone to follow safety procedures at all times when fires are lit -everyone to follow handwashing and food prep procedures -adults to ensure adequate hygiene facilities are available	Practical fire lighting skills, responsibility, managing personal risk, sense of achievement, self-awareness and awareness of others and environment
14	Mud pit	Risk of disease from buried faeces or ingestion of mud, cut or	Children, adults	-site checks take place before every session -mud pit covered when not in use	2	2	4	Continue existing measures	-pre-session site check -end of session children replace cover	Opportunities for collaborative, imaginative play, development of

		stab injury from tools used to dig		-children made aware of the importance to clean hands and not put fingers in mouth or eyes -children taught about safe tool use and monitored by adults					-adults to monitor mud pit and mud kitchen area	physical motor skills
15	Planting and maintenance of garden beds	Cuts, scrapes, bruises or injury from tools used, sickness caused by ingesting seeds or plants, allergy caused by contact with seeds or plants – risk of anaphylaxis	Children, adults	-children taught safe tool usage and monitored whilst using equipment to plant or maintain garden -children taught the importance of not eating plants, seeds or leaves unless an adult has explicitly said they can -adults monitor children at all times whilst gardening	2	2	4	Continue existing measures	All adults and children whilst on site	Hands on experience of growing, development of responsibility and nurturing
				-Anaphylaxis training, equipment and procedures compliant with Benedict’s Law	1	5	5			
Your comments: Your main concerns: Maintaining safety whilst still utilising the whole area to its fullest potential Your main positive features: The procedures and precautions in place have worked well over the past year and levels of safety have been high.					Your recommendation:					
					Maintain regular risk assessments (prior to each use of site), and amend as necessary. Revisit this risk assessment and amend as necessary in six months.					

Risk Benefits Analysis Process

Link to RA	Areas of Emotional intelligence				
	Intra Personal Skills			Interpersonal Skills	
Identified Hazard	Consciousness	Control	Catalyst	Compassion	Community & Companionship
Falling branches	A branch could fall on me – I must be aware of my surroundings.			I can care for others if they get hurt.	I can let others know if there is an area to avoid.
Natural material on ground e.g. fallen branches, roots, slippery leaves etc. leading to trips and falls	I could trip or fall.	I will move around the site safely.		I can care for others if they get hurt.	I can let others know if there is an area to avoid.
Animal faeces/animal remains	Animal poo can be dangerous, I mustn't touch it.	I will tell a grown-up if I find anything.			I can let others know if there is an area to avoid.
Bites/stings – insect or plant		I will treat all flora and fauna with respect to minimise the chance of getting hurt.		I can care for others if they get bitten or stung.	I can let others know if there is an area to avoid.
Adverse weather	If it's really hot, I could get sunburnt or ill. If it's really cold, I could get ill.	I will make sure I am wearing appropriate clothing.	I don't want to miss out on Forest School.	I can remind others to take care of themselves.	

Collecting materials	I know which materials are safe to collect and which are not.	If I am unsure whether something is safe, I will ask an adult.		I can help others to search for what they want/need	I can contribute to a group collection with my items.
Organised games			Playing games is really fun.	I can let other people have a turn.	I can lead, follow and work in a group.
Tree climbing	I could fall and hurt myself.		I want to push myself and achieve this challenge.	I can support and praise people who are feeling nervous or unsure.	
Den building	I know safe building methods and materials.	I will follow safe building		I will take turns. I will think of others when I am collecting and moving materials for my den (e.g. not take things that others are using and move objects safely around the site).	I can work in a team, collaboratively to solve problems. I can be flexible and listen to other people's ideas.
Using ropes	I know how to tie knots, and how	I can carry and store ropes safely.	I want to participate in the experience.		I can work with others, build confidence, perseverance and problem-solving skills. I can learn from others and share my own knowledge.
Using tools A. Bowsaw B. Loppers C. Billhook D. Sheath knife	All – I know that tools can hurt me if I don't use them properly	I can listen carefully to tool talks and follow safety procedures.	I want to learn a new skill. I need to use the tool to achieve my aim (e.g. the branch I want for making	I can model appropriate behaviour, I can support others to use the tools safely.	A and C. I can give and listen to instructions, and work with a partner to use a tool safely.

E. Mallet			a picture frame is too long, so I need to make it shorter)		All – I can take turns and wait for my turn to use a tool.
Fire pit usage, fire lighting	I know that fire can hurt me. I know how important it is to extinguish a fire properly.	I can control my behaviour and follow safety procedures to keep myself and everyone else safe and well.	I am excited to make fire. I don't want to damage the environment.	I can model appropriate behaviour.	I can share the communal experience of sitting around a fire, I can work in a team and take turns to build and light the fire, I develop a sense of community and caring for the environment when following safe extinguishing procedures.
Cooking on a fire	Fire has been used to cook food since prehistoric times.	I can control my behaviour and follow safety procedures to keep myself and everyone else safe and well.	I am excited to eat food that I have cooked myself on a fire I made myself.	Some people may feel nervous around fire – I will offer comfort to them, if appropriate.	I can share the communal experience of cooking and eating together, and work in a team.
Mud pit	I know that mud can be slippery or could contain minibeasts.	I can control my use of tools and be careful		Some people do not like to get dirty – I will take care when digging. I will be careful when handling minibeasts I might find.	I can work with others to build and create. I can take turns with equipment.
Planting	I know that some food comes from plants, but you cannot eat all plants and must be careful.		I am excited to eat food that I have helped to grow.	I can take care of the environment and encourages others too.	I can work with others to look after our plants and keep them healthy.

**A Three Year Sustainable Woodland Plan:
Created by Combining the Sustainability Matrix of Ecological Effects of Forest School Activities
and Sustainable Management Plans**

Name of wood:

St Botolph's C of E School

Factor	Area	Current Situation	What we want it to look like?	What actions will you take?	Any Ecological Considerations?	Checked by/ Managed by:	Timescale
1. Fire pit usage	Fire pit in Forest School area	The firepit is established with circular seating placed around a central area, where the fire bowl sits when in use.	Maintain current appearance and set up	- Check and varnish benches so as to maintain them over winter months - Ensure that fire pit area remains clear from hazards and debris	Use of fire bowl to minimise damage to ground layers, strategic placement of area to minimise chance of damage to shrub and canopies, fires never left lit or unattended, always properly extinguished to ensure no danger of fire spread and damage to flora and fauna.	FS leaders	Year 1 – ensure maintenance, particularly benches takes place for winter months Year 2 – maintain Year 3 - maintain
2. Collecting materials	Across site and beyond	During the previous years of Forest School running on this site, we asked for children to bring in sticks from home, to mitigate the fact that there is not a huge amount of deadwood and other items in our area.	Continue with school-wide collections to maintain stock of deadwood for sessions, increase opportunities for all children to participate in collecting,	- Publicise collections at different times of year – increase knowledge of what is available when and safe collection - Create opportunities within other school areas and across school	Damage to our area from over-collection, damage to areas outside of school due to families not knowing safe collection methods (e.g. pulling branches directly from trees)	FS leaders	Year 1 – publicise collections, seasonally for wood and other items. Include safe collection methods, explore possibility of collections around school site

		This was a great success.	expand the collections to different items	groups to collect materials (e.g. at lunch on school field)			Year 2 – Continue collections, amending process as necessary. Continue to monitor growth of new trees. Year 3 – Continue to expand collections as possible and needed. Monitor growth of new trees and explore further opportunities to expand.
3. Creation of habitats to increase fauna	Forest School area and through out whole school site	In the recent redevelopment of the Forest School space, several habitat opportunities were created including hedgehog homes and an area for a bug hotel. There is also a wild flower bed which will create habitats for pollinators.	Continue to maintain and expand habitat building in Forest School area, and create more habitats across the whole school site.	- Assess areas around school site for further habitat development - Identify target fauna and how to best create habitats for them – match to school opportunities, as well as native species - Participate in wildlife surveys to assess fauna present on site	Consideration given to existing fauna and impact on them. When encouraging new species, consider what is native and appropriate to the setting. Overall impact to be positive, as there will be increased biodiversity.	FS leaders, school leadership	Year 1 – provide opportunities to continue building and maintaining existing bug hotels and other habitats, identify opportunities for further expansion throughout the school. Year 2 – create new habitat spaces across school site, based on previous research, continue to monitor and maintain existing habitats, identify further opportunities for habitat expansion Year 3 – continue to monitor and develop habitats across the

							school site, identify further opportunities
4. Introduce more flora	Forest School area and throughout whole school site	During the previous years of Forest School, the children prepared and planted a variety of flora in the area, including a wildflower bed, strawberries, pumpkins, sunflowers and beans. The children were extremely excited to see the seed grow and eventually blossom and - in the case of the strawberries – produce fruit. There was also an opportunity to involve more students than just the Foundation Stage children attending Forest School, as year 5 took on the responsibility of maintaining the plants during the week when Forest	Continue to increase the number of species and green spaces throughout the garden and whole school site – providing opportunities for all children to get involved in planting, growing and maintaining plants around the school. Increase range of planting to maintain garden throughout the year	- Research suitable species for creating green spaces throughout school - Identify areas and how the whole school can be involved – areas for each class? - Share importance of biodiversity with all staff and children to gain their investment	Increase in green spaces around the school site, combined with greater biodiversity, will have a positive ecological impact.	FS leaders, school leadership	Year 1 – children plant beds in the Forest School, and create new planting areas throughout school Year 2 – maintain previous progress, and continue to create new green spaces and opportunities to grow Year 3 – as year 2, continuing to consider diversity and suitability of species

		School was not using the area. Following the redevelopment of the space, there is still a wildflower bed and vegetable patch to allow these opportunities to grow to continue.					
5. Tool usage and maintenance	Forest School area	Tool usage in session has previously taken place and the children have enjoyed it very much, but it could be developed more with more concrete outcomes. The storage area for our tools has been sufficient, and maintenance has been completed by Forest School leaders. Moving into year 1 of our new plan, we will start with tool usage opportunities as part of our plan.	Possibly extend range of tools, maintain storage and maintenance routines, continue to develop projects with tool usage for the children, encourage children to share responsibility of tool maintenance where safe and practical	- Explore and gather ideas for further tool usage opportunities - Explore opportunities to extend range of tools available	Excessive tool usage could damage flora and habitats (e.g. over-pruning just to use tools), and should be avoided	FS leader	Year 1 – maintain shed and storage, complete regular maintenance of tools Year 2 – continue as above, extend range of tools if possible Year 3 – as above