James Bateman Middle School

Forest Schools Policy

Policy owner	R Birtles
Approved by	Governing Board
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Linked policies and documents	• Health and Safety Policy • First Aid Policy • Risk Assessment Policy • Asthma Policy • Food Policy • Safeguarding Policy • Equality & Inclusion Policy • Behaviour Policy

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Introduction

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. The child is never put in a position where he/she will fail so success is attained. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

Purpose/Aims

- To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

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

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and Assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of our forest school area. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused and an alternative area will be found and risk assessed if necessary.

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools' adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out for the forest school are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff. The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures in the forest school area are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

James Bateman Middle School Policies and Forest School

Staff attending forest school sessions should be familiar with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Asthma Policy (if asthmatics are attending sessions)
- Food Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality & Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Health and Safety

The Forest School curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the coordinator's File in school.

The Forest School Leader has an up-to-date certificate in Advanced First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangement. All staff are First Aid trained. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and a mobile phone is carried. The school will contact the parents. Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

Safeguarding

Forest School sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by members of staff. Everyone involved is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them. All James Bateman Middle staff have current DBS checks. Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers and a MyConcern record will be completed as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the class teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Equality and Inclusion

During Forest School sessions all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued. Behaviour At

Forest School we operate within the Behaviour Policy of James Bateman Middle Primary School. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the wellbeing of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office.

Emergency Action Plan

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff would direct the emergency services to the casualty, Ryan Birtles, as Forest School First Aider, would attend to the casualty until the Emergency Services arrive. The casualty would be accompanied to hospital by a member of school staff. The Class teacher or Forest School Assistant would oversee the rest of the group are counted and prepared to return to school. The school office would be informed after dialling the Emergency Services and assistance to return back to school requested if necessary. The adult accompanying the casualty would return to school once the child was in the care of their parents/carers.

In the event of an adult needing emergency attention it must be judged whether they need to be accompanied or support may be required. Decisions taken must ensure the safety of the children within the group and accompanying adults. In the event of the Forest School Leader needing emergency assistance it would be expected for the Class teacher to return the children to school and another adult would stay with the casualty.

Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school.

Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest School Site Assessment
- Forest School sessions: including Sensory Activities, mini beasts and shelter building
- Tool use
- Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the in the Coordinator's File.

Safety Sweep and checklists

The Forest School leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at Forest School Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest School. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest School Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'.
- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Leaders at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Leader feels the children are ready.

- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- It is not expected for any other adult attending to use tools with children, only the Leader.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place: Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:

- **Stand behind the log**
- **Step over and sit down on log**
- **Stand up, turn around and step over log**

When lighting a fire:

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner (Ryan Birtles) will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle.
- The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.
- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee. While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating in forest school:

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the Leaders

- The Forest School Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising them planning and running all Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.

- The leader will carry an emergency pack at all times.
- The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The Forest School leader will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Designated Person Responsibility for each session

Overall responsibility for the session– Ryan Birtles
(Risk assessments, safety sweep, and essential equipment, planning, observations and next steps for learning).

Rules

- Keep your hands away from your mouth.
- Leave things to grow.
- Keep within the set boundaries.

Clothing Requirements for Forest School

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session:

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Waterproof trousers
- Stout shoes/wellies/boots

This Policy has been written in agreement with the Head Teacher, Staff and Governors of James Bateman Middle School.