

St. Oswald's Church of England Primary School

Forest School Handbook



Date of Last Review: October 2024

Review date: October 2025

Vision

Our theologically rooted Christian vision guides the creation and implementation of this handbook:

‘One Body, Many Parts’ (1 Corinthians 12)

Each of us has a special talent and role we can use for God, like the different parts of a body working together.

At St. Oswald’s, we work together under God’s guidance to grow minds, spirits and bodies to learn, care and share together.

At St. Oswald’s, we want everyone to flourish. We cherish our values as we promote the flourishing of all.

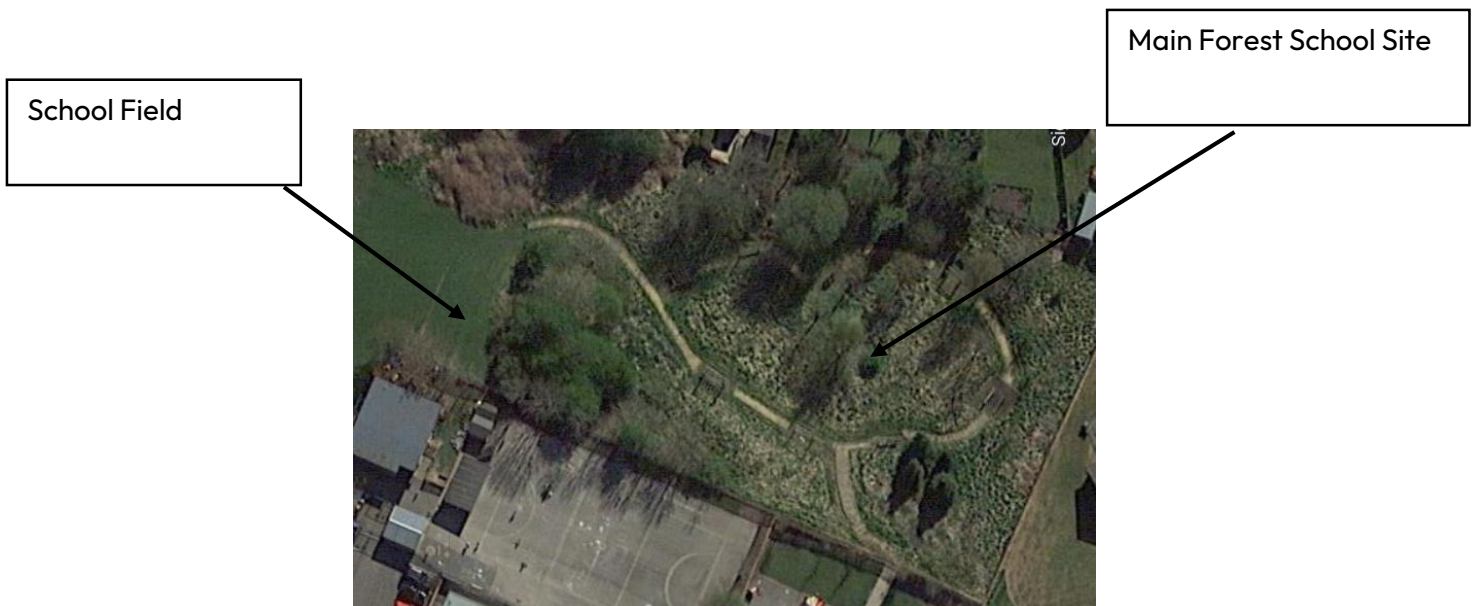
Welcome to Forest School

The Forest School Association defines Forest School as “an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.” (Forest School Association 2020).

At St Oswald’s, Forest School provides learning opportunities for children to flourish through practical activities in the outdoor environment. Children enjoy the freedom to explore and experience the natural world, in all seasons and weathers. All learners are at the heart of everything that we do, and learning is initiated by the child. Forest School creates a world where children are believed to be competent to choose and drive their own learning and development at a pace which is appropriate and meaningful to them. It embraces an approach of nurturing, supporting, inspiring, and developing the self-esteem of the children. It is an ideal environment in which to develop innovation, problem solving, risk-taking, creativity and teamwork. As the children learn about the natural world and how to look after it, Forest School also promotes environmental awareness enabling the children to build a strong, positive relationship with their natural world helping them to make sense of the wider world.

Location

Most Forest School sessions will be held within our Forest School site, sometimes we will use the school field.



Our Forest School Code of Conduct

Our code of conduct is relevant to all participants, adults and children and is framed to create a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Boundaries

During their first Forest School session children will learn where the physical boundaries for activities are and any 'no go' zones. Each group will work together to generate some rules for a safe and happy learning environment, all children will understand these rules and are expected to follow them. This will include washing hands after every session and an agreed call back sign to enable a speedy return if needed or wanted by the Forest School Leader.

Entering the Forest School site

At Forest School we learn to respect the world around us. When we enter the site we will be aware that we share the space with plants, birds and animals and we need to work in a way that will not damage or harm anything.

Toileting

Children will be encouraged to use the toilets before a session starts. There will be a break mid-way through the session where children will have the opportunity to go back into school under adult supervision and use the school toilets. If a child needs the toilet during the session, they will be allowed to use the school toilets, but they must be supervised back up to the school grounds and on return to the Forest School site.

Collecting natural materials

Natural materials are collected for art, sculpture, and woodland craft. Children are encouraged to look for the materials themselves, but leaders will supervise to check that nothing harmful is gathered. Children are not allowed to eat anything gathered on foraging trips without adult supervision.

Carrying larger materials

Children will be taught how to lift, roll drag or pull heavier materials safely using hands or ropes, keeping a straight back and knees. Teamwork is encouraged.

Digging

When investigating the environment, children may carefully move logs or stones to look for insects, taking care not to harm the creatures or destroy their habitat. They can dig under soil using their fingers or small sticks. Deeper digging opportunities are including in planning activities where children can dig holes in the designated digging area using tools. Gloves are available for use when digging with hands.

Using tools

Children will be taught the correct way to use tools at Forest School. This will include the use of safety equipment, like gloves or goggles, posture and awareness of others around them. All tools will be used under strict adult supervision.

Tree climbing

Tree climbing is a brilliant opportunity for children to learn to manage their own risks. Children will be shown how to climb a tree safely, checking the ground below for sharp objects, looking for a safe path of ascent and descent, numbers in the same tree and which trees are suitable for climbing. Children are permitted to reach their own limits to a maximum of 1.5 metres. All tree climbing is conducted under strict adult supervision, a child must ask before climbing a tree. The Forest School leader will assess the trees to check for rotten or broken branches. Children should be in suitable footwear for climbing trees.

Sticks and stones

Throwing sticks and stones is not permitted at Forest School. Children may pick up sticks shorter than their arm to carry pointed down (like carrying scissors). Longer sticks must be dragged behind them. Stones can be dropped but children must check what is underneath before dropping them.

String, ropes and knots

Children will learn a useful selection of knots for different uses. Adults will supervise activities where ropes are tied to trees for tarps or shelters. Children will be shown how to use ropes and string to move or carry materials.

Eating and drinking

All children must bring their water bottle with them. Anti-bacterial hand wash, wipes or sanitiser gel will be provided for hand washing before eating or drinking any snacks during Forest School. This will

include food the children have cooked on the fire. Food allergies will be noted as part of the risk assessment for the cooking activity.

Daily Procedures

Before the session:

- The site will be checked for any hazards, and these will be removed.
- A session plan will be completed, considering observations, interests and learning points from previous sessions. See page 6 for example.
- Activity risk assessment forms to be completed/updated for each planned activity. All adults to have read and understood relevant forms.
- All staff to have read the latest Site Risk Assessment, which will be relevant to the current session.
- The Forest School Leader to check ratios and that the weather conditions allow the session to take place.
- The equipment required for the session will be assembled, checked and prepared ready for taking to the site.
- All children to be in appropriate clothing, registered and to have gone to the toilet.

During the session:

- A headcount will be undertaken on arrival at Forest School and whenever the group is brought back together.
- Risks will be continually assessed, and appropriate action taken to reduce or remove any risks found.

After the session:

- Short time of reflection before the learners leave the site.
- A headcount to be taken at the end of the session.
- Any tools to be checked, no items to be missing.
- Forest School Leader and adults to clean, check and maintain tools, as required.
- A session evaluation to be completed by the Forest School Leader, along with any observational records that will be useful to the class teacher.

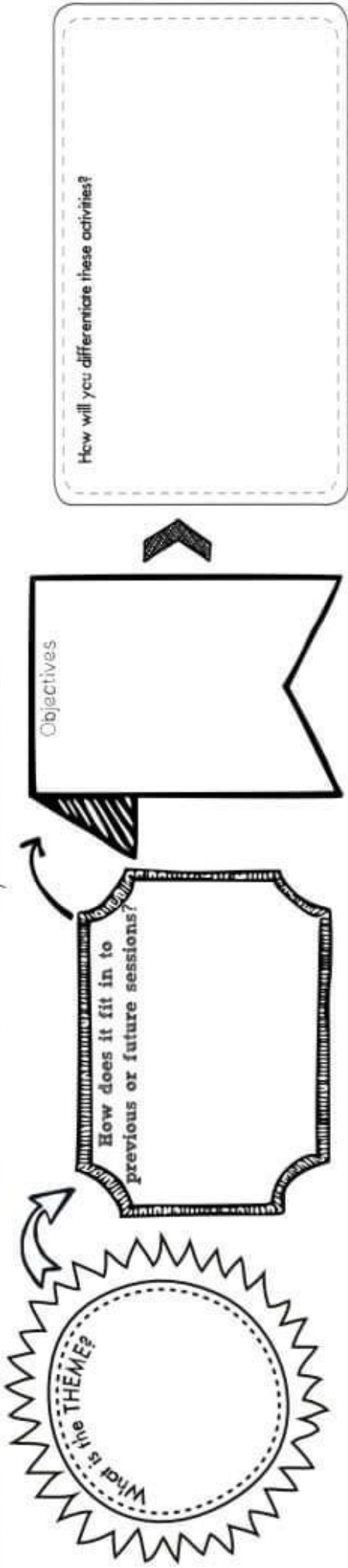
Date:

Group:

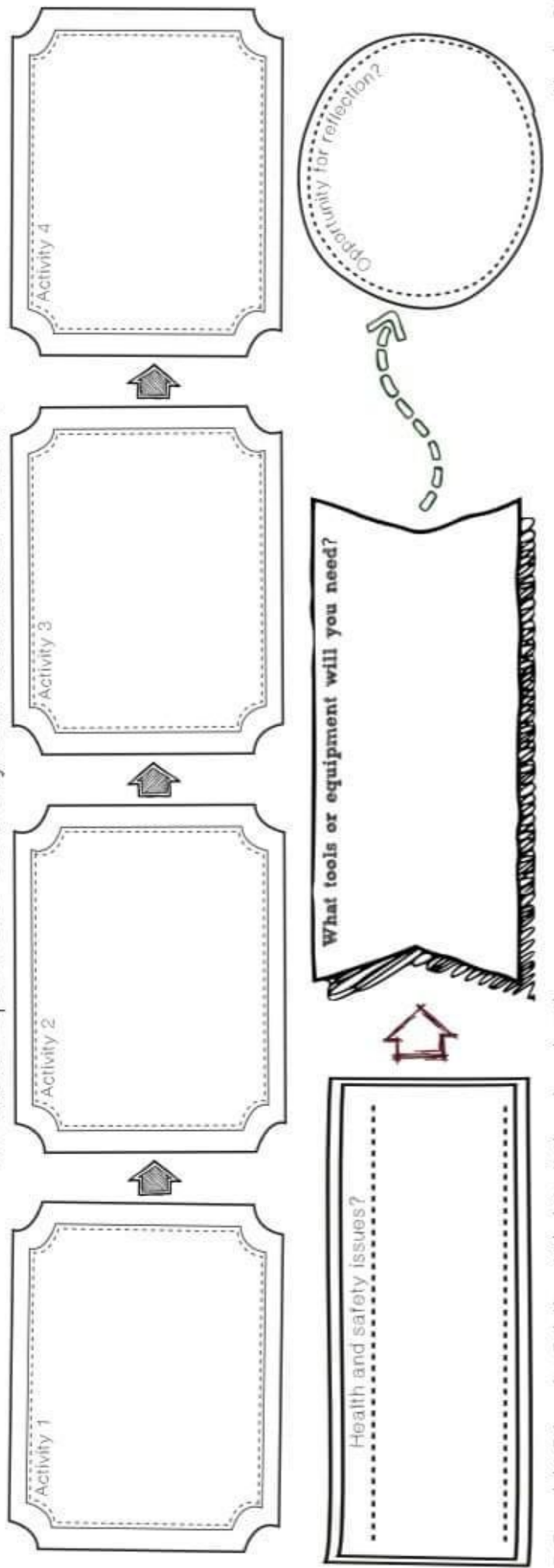
Location:

The 5 minute Forest School plan

...print and scribble away!



What sequence could your activities follow?



Our Equipment

The Forest School leader will organise an Emergency Bag and a Kit Bag for every session. The contents for each bag may vary depending on the group, activity, time of year and weather conditions.

Essential items that should be included in the Emergency Bag are:

- ✓ First Aid Kit (regularly checked and restocked as necessary)
- ✓ Burns kit
- ✓ Fire blanket
- ✓ Medical details of learners
- ✓ Walkie Talkie
- ✓ Mobile phone
- ✓ Emergency whistle
- ✓ Medication for individuals
- ✓ Drinking water

Other items which may be included in the Kit Bag could include:

- ✓ Wet wipes, hand gel
- ✓ Spare clothing
- ✓ Sun cream (parent consent)

The Forest School leader will organise the equipment and tools needed for each session including tools, ropes, tarps, food, kitchen implements and fire lighting kit.

Accident and Emergency First Aid







The Forest School Leader is first aid trained and holds the Emergency First Aid at Work Level 3 qualification and full Paediatric First Aid.


The Forest School Leader carries an Emergency Bag to all activities which includes an outdoor First Aid Kit and Burns Kit.

Using and storing tools

Using a range of tools in Forest School helps children to develop physical skills and how to manage risks safely. Tools may not be used at every session, and they will only be used for purposes appropriate to the age and level of skill of the child.

Tools used will include:

Tool	Image
Peeler	
Knife	
Secateurs	
Bow saw	
Palm drill	
Hand axe	

Mallet	
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The Forest School leader is responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools. A list of the items stored in the tool box is attached to the box and used as a check list to ensure that all items are returned safely at the end of each session.

The tool box is kept locked when not in use. The Forest School leader is responsible for the safe keeping of the key.

Tool Rules

Before and after a session the leader will check:

Are tools in good, working order? Tools will be checked for damage and durability.

How many? Tools will be counted and then counted back in.

Are the tools secure? Tools will be kept in suitable containers, peelers, knives, axes and secateurs in locked toolbox. Bow saws in kit bag, drills in a small container.

When tools are being used:

The Forest School leader will give a safety talk before tools are used. Children must never help themselves to the tools. All tool use, carrying and collecting will be under strict adult supervision. All learners need to be aware when tools are used. Learners must walk when carrying tools. A safety zone to be established around each used, at least one arm's length between users.

Forest School Positive Behaviour Policy

The Forest School leader and other staff members have a responsibility to ensure the children's behaviour does not impact on their safety. In attempting to determine what is acceptable behaviour it is recognised that it is not simply a case of fulfilling expectations but working towards goals for some children and Forest school can help to contribute to their social and moral development.

St Oswald's Behaviour policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below:

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/stoswaldsleeds/UploadedDocument/95f0e5f3-aeb8-44ab-8b6b-5b78105020c9/behaviour-policy-2022.pdf>

In addition to ensuring continuity of the whole school policy, within Forest School sessions we encourage positive behaviour and aim to establish a positive environment which is supportive and emphasizes caring behaviour towards each other, the environment and any equipment.

When the children first start attending Forest School sessions, the Forest School leader talks with them about how to keep safe in the woods and will support them in creating a list of rules to keep them safe.

- Good behaviour is to be modelled by the Forest School leader and other staff members at all times. Children are shown respect and their individual personalities are valued.
- If children exhibit unsafe behaviours the Forest School leader may decide to stop them from using tools and other equipment.
- Children are praised and their positive actions and attitudes are acknowledged. This shows the children that we value and respect them.
- Children are encouraged to take appropriate risks in a safe way to develop their resilience, confidence and positive behaviour.
- Children are supported in developing a sense of the significance of their own behaviour, both on the environment and on others around them.

Fire safety & procedures

Staff and volunteers will ensure that participants at a Forest School at St Oswald's session as well any visitors are made aware of fire safety and fire emergency procedures which affect them. The Forest School team will regularly review existing fire safety procedures to ensure they reflect accepted best practice.

Campfires are a highlight of Forest School and will only be used once the children have been introduced to the safety procedures and the Forest School Leader is confident, they can participate with as little risk as possible to their health.

Location of Fire

The campfire will take place in the designated fire area (gravelled part) and is enclosed by a square of logs to prevent the spread of the fire.

Fire Safety Rules

- Ratio 1 adult:1 fire
- Fire area is surrounded by a boundary of at least 1.5m from the fire pit.
- Learners will sit on logs outside this boundary.
- Learners must walk around the outside of the seating logs, and step over them to sit down. A fire will not be lit with a group until all learners have demonstrated that they can always do this.

- When the fire is in use, learners are not permitted within the fire circle unless they are invited by the adult.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
- Ensure water is available for extinguishing.

Safety and Responsibility

- Only adults are permitted to light fires, unless learners are under the direct supervision of the Forest School leader.
- Fires are lit using cotton wool and a flint and steel.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- A fire blanket, fire kit and water must be on Forest School site.

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

Kelly Kettle Use

When the Kelly Kettle is used, it will be placed on flat ground and the cork will be removed. The Forest School leader will start the fire and place the kettle on top. The hole on the base should be facing downwind. Learners can help to feed the kettle with fuel with one-to-one supervision from the Forest School leader after being shown how to do so safely. Learners must be sat at a safe distance from the kettle, as told by the Forest School leader.

Weather Conditions

Assessment of weather conditions will be taken prior to a visit and if the weather is too extreme the session will be cancelled. Where possible, alternative indoor provision will be arranged. If the weather deteriorates suddenly during a session, the adults will decide whether to leave the site or use

alternative accommodation. When windy and there is a danger of falling branches, the children will be kept indoors, or the sessions will be cancelled.

Participants are asked to bring Wellington boots/waterproof shoes and suitable warm/waterproof clothing. If possible, we will provide the learners with any missing essential items.

Forest School Recommended Clothing List

“There’s no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing!”

As part of our Forest School experience, we will be visiting the woods in all weathers. It is important that children are dressed in suitable clothes to ensure that they are comfortable, dry, warm and ready for adventure. Please see a list of recommended clothing for the children below.

Cold/Wet Weather	Hot Weather
Warm, waterproof coat or all in one	Lightweight waterproof coat
Lots of layer including a long-sleeved top and jumper	Long sleeved top
Long trousers or leggings (waterproof if possible)	Long trousers or leggings (no bare legs)
Hat, scarf, gloves	Trainers or walking boots (no open toed shoes)
Walking boots or wellies	Sun hat and sun cream

Forest School Food Hygiene

St Oswald’s Forest School maintains high food hygiene standards in relation to the purchase, storage, preparation and serving of food.

A full activity risk assessment will be completed for any activity involving the preparation and/or consuming of food items. This will include attention to the purchase, storage, preparation and serving of any food items to prevent growth of bacteria and food contamination.

Food/ingredients will be stored at correct temperature prior to the session and checked to ensure they are in date and not subject to contamination by pests, mould etc. A cool box will be used to transport and store any ingredients requiring refrigeration prior to use at the Forest School site. All such ingredients must be used within 2 hours.

Un-refrigerated food will be served to children within 4 hours of preparation.

Waste food will be disposed of promptly and correctly.

When food items are to be consumed during a Forest School session, warm water with anti-bacterial soap in a bowl will be provided for hand washing together with anti-bacterial hand sanitiser. Learners are adults will be required to wash their hands immediately prior to preparing any food items and or/eating.

All medical records must be checked to ensure that no food item or ingredient is given to a child or adult with an allergy to it.

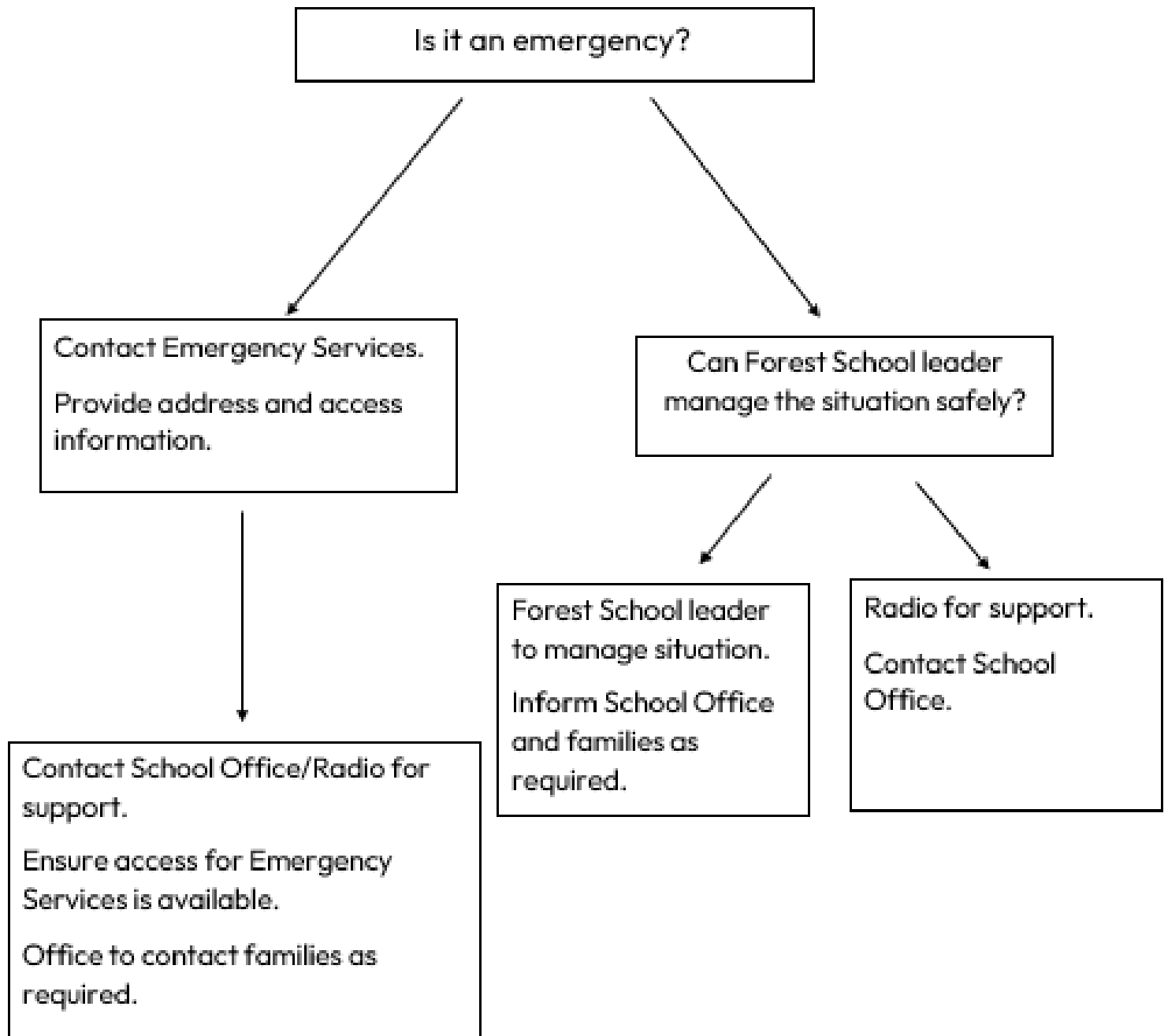
Cooked food must not be reheated.

St Oswald's Policies & Procedures

All St Oswald's policies and procedures will be followed at the Forest School site.

- Health & Safety Policy
- Keeping children safe in education
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy

St Oswald's Forest School – Emergency Action Plan



St Oswald's C of E Primary School
The Green
Guiselley
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS20 9BT
01943 873570

Vehicular access off The Green into carpark. Gates will be opened to allow access across playground and onto school field to Forest School area. Staff to guide and instruct Emergency Vehicles.

Risk Assessment for Forest School Site

October 2024

Carried out by: J.Adamson

<u>Hazard</u>	<u>Harm</u>	<u>Existing control measures</u>	<u>Measures to be taken</u>	<u>Probability (1-5)</u>	<u>Severity (1-5)</u>	<u>Rating (PxS)</u>	<u>By who/confirmation of understanding of completion</u>
Exposure to extreme weather	Cold injury, heat injury, over exposure to sun	Consider the possible weather conditions and plan appropriately, adjusting existing plans depending on the daily forecast. Prior to the trip, ask parents to bring children into school in suitable clothing for the forest environment and climate. Always take a form of shelter to escape from the weather for periods of time.	Provide children with waterproof trousers/wellington boots/sun cream/sun hats where necessary. Ensure children are aware of why they need to wear suitable clothing at the forest. Pack spare clothing in case there is a need to change.	4	3	12	Forest School Leader
Waste/litter	Trips and falls Possible injury Hygiene issues	Remove before session – pre-site check by Forest Leader. Adults to ensure that children note where there is litter but do not touch it under any circumstances.	Adults to look out for and warn children of hazards as they become evident. Gloves worn by adults when removing litter	2	2	4	Forest School Leader and staff
Animals e.g. foxes, badgers, cats, dogs etc	Fear/phobia Bites/scratches Allergies	Ensure any animals encountered are given a wide berth Adults to stop group and allow/encourage the animal to leave the area. Warn children not to approach or touch any animals	Adults to remain vigilant and to look out for animals approaching.	1	3	3	Forest School Leader and staff
Animal droppings	Contamination and disease	Pre site check by Forest Leader and continuous monitoring.	Adults to look out for and warn children of hazards as they become evident. Remove and dispose of safely.	2	3	6	Forest School Leader and staff

Boundaries	Escaping children Public entry	Ensure both staff and children are clear of the rules and routines when in the forest. Discuss the children's boundaries in the woods. Plan and use suitable group control measures for planned activities. Brief children with a plan of what to do if they get lost.	Ensure the gates are closed when on site. Head counts by adults throughout the day – particularly on arrival and departure. Always have one member of staff free from activities to keep watch over the safety of the whole group.	2	5	10	Forest School Leader and staff
Fences	Broken fence falling on person	Check fences are intact and safe during pre-site check.	Replace fencing if necessary.	2	2	4	Forest School Leader and staff
Fallen Trees	Injury through falling or slipping	The fallen tree has been secured to the grassed area for sitting and climbing	Adult supervision when climbing. Make children aware of risks of climbing in wet weather.	2	3	6	Forest School Leader and staff
Twigs, branches etc. overhanging walkways or hanging at eye level	Risk of injury to eyes, faces, hands – children and adults	Pre site check and continuous risk check to look for dead wood hanging in trees, dead branches and damage to trees. Remove any hanging dead wood. Ensure children are aware of where they are walking and brief them on the importance of taking care to avoid branches that could hurt them.	Branches cut back if they pose too great a hazard. Regular site maintenance.	3	2	6	Forest School Leader and staff
Slippery surfaces underfoot due to wet weather, dead leaves, animal excrement.	Slipping, falling	Adults to ensure that children are made aware of any such hazards and are reminded to check where they are walking.	Adults to look out for and warn children of hazards as they become evident – lead children past hazard by the hand where possible.	3	2	6	Forest School Leader and staff
Foreign bodies in the soil, glass,	Risk of cuts and scratches to hands	Children are very closely supervised when using gardening tools.	Ensure the children also wear gardening gloves and remind them not to remove any glass or	2	3	6	Forest School Leader and staff

sharp stones etc.			objects from the soil themselves.				
Trip hazards	Injury	Plants such as brambles and exposed roots create significant trip hazards. Area to be checked before use.	Adults to look out for and warn children of hazards, as they become evident – guide children past where possible.	2	2	5	Forest School Leader and staff
Nettles, brambles and holly	Stinging Allergic reaction	Warn children of the dangers of touching some plants eg: stings/poisons/allergies Teach the children to identify these plants so that they can avoid them. Appropriate clothing – arms and legs covered in line with clothing policy	Monitor the forest growth Regular maintenance of site	2	2	4	Forest School Leader and staff
Berries and other seeds on flora	Possible poisoning	Inform children not to pick and eat any berries without adult present. Remind children not to put anything in mouths.	Hand washing at key points during the session	2	5	15	Forest School Leader and staff
Insect bites	Risk of children being bitten while in the outdoors – reaction to a bite.	Checked with parents whether anyone had known allergy to bites or stings.	Permission to apply sting relief spray.	2	3	6	Forest School Leader
Asthma attack	Risks of an induced asthma attack with increased exercise.	Ensure that inhalers are taken for children with severe asthma	Inhalers to be transported with first aid kit.	2	5	10	Forest School Leader
Allergies Eg. hayfever, stings etc	Anaphylactic shock	All parents to complete registration forms, including medical conditions. Parents to sign consent form to administer medicine (if required)	All registration/medical forms to be taken to each forest school visit.	4	5	20	Forest School Leader
Illness or injury	Illness, injury	At least one member of staff on the visit must be first aid trained. Take suitable first aid kit on the trip, including burn first aid kit.	All adults must be aware of the emergency action plan	3	5	15	Forest School Leader and staff

(away from immediate help)		If any children have any medication, ensure it is taken with us (including inhalers).	and what to do in the case of an emergency. Forest School Leader to carry walkie talkie and mobile phone.				
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All activities are risk assessed online through Leeds City Council Evolve Risk Assessment and agreed by the Head Teacher (Mr J Davies).