

Policy for:

Forest School Policy 2024 - 2026



Committee: Curriculum and Standards

Document Control

A. Confidentiality Notice

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1. Accident and Emergency Scenarios

FIRST AID

Following any accident or injury the following steps should be taken to ensure that the correct help is given as quickly as possible:

1. Ensure the rest of the group is safe – where appropriate delegate responsibility.
2. The injured person should not be moved if there is any suspicion that doing so could exacerbate their injuries. In cold or wet weather, it may be necessary to keep them warm and dry. If appropriate, remove the danger or people from the danger.
3. The First Aider or, if they are not available, the Appointed Person should examine the injured person and give such treatment as is appropriate or possible i.e. check A-B-C, administer First Aid
4. If hospital treatment is necessary an ambulance should be called. Staff should not use their own cars to take injured persons to hospital unless there is an exceptional reason for doing so
5. School Office informed immediately
6. Have Medical Form details available in Emergency Bag and call parent/guardian as appropriate,
7. Record full details through School Incident Procedure back at school.

LOST OR MISSING STUDENT

1. As soon as the young person is found to be missing, make the 1,2,3 call once again, make an immediate search of vicinity and use 1, 2, 3 procedure again.
2. Assemble rest of the group and ensure they are safe.
3. Headteacher informed immediately – who will initiate search of premises and grounds
4. After 5 minutes call Emergency Contact to alert.
5. Continue to search for lost or missing student with all available personnel.
6. Police informed

DEATH OR SERIOUS ACCIDENT

1. Follow First Aid procedure
2. Stay with casualty, but ensure rest of group is removed from the situation and is safe
3. Staff to call parent/guardian/next of kin ASAP.
4. Gain advice on follow up from police.
5. Prepare report, using guidance from RIDDOR.

IRREGULAR OCCURRENCE, UNINVITED PERSON/STRANGER

1. An 'INVACUATION' will occur when it is necessary for the school community to remain indoors or, if outdoors, to return indoors quickly.
2. The reason for the Invacuation Procedure existing is to cover extreme situations such as:

- Person(s) on or near the school site with an intention of causing harm to students and or staff
 - Dangerous animals loose on or near the school site
 - An industrial accident in the locality
 - A public order incident in the locality, which might endanger students and or staff.
3. The intruder will be challenged and asked to leave politely.
 4. If there is still potential danger, the decision to notify will be taken by The Headteacher (or senior BRT member on site) based on the likelihood that Invacuation will be less harmful than the alternative. The warning will be sounded by 'Personal Alarm sounder' on the Forest School Leader's lanyard
 5. Students who are involved in Forest School Activities need to return to the building immediately and go to their designated area (i.e. classroom) or if not safe to do so into the nearest securable room e.g. Hall.

POOR WEATHER CONDITIONS

1. If trees blowing more than 20 degrees, or if group leader feels uncomfortable, take emergency 'safe' route out ASAP.
2. Use indoor areas or shelter outdoors (away from trees) areas as alternative.

BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

1. Trained members of staff to use de-escalation strategies.
2. Remove other young people from area of risk (if deemed necessary).
3. Inform member of SLT
4. Individual's emergency contact should be called in order to remove them from site.
5. Subsequent meeting to discuss the individual's access to future sessions or how to integrate them back into sessions.

Please be aware than in cases of minor individual disruption or non-engagement, the session will not be stopped.

The Forest School Leader can decide to exclude a student, at any time, on the grounds of safety and behaviour.

2. Emergency Procedures

ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY

All members of staff and participants will be briefed on what to do in case of an emergency:

1. A verbal shout of 1,2,3 back to me is the signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff at our designated base and be silent and wait for instructions.
2. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident.
3. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised.
4. They will attend to any casualties, giving First Aid as necessary.
5. An Accident Form will be completed later by staff and reported to the Health and Safety Co-ordinator who will ensure that an Accident Investigation Report form is completed and returned to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service at STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL. Staff/visitor accidents: Accidents to adults must be reported in the statutory accident book AND on an Accident Investigation Report form as above. Appropriate Risk Assessments will be reviewed or instigated in light of any incidents occurring that require medical treatment.
6. If the Forest School Leader is injured or becomes ill, a supporting member of staff will take charge of the situation and will then follow the procedure below.

In the event of Serious Injury:

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by First Aid on-site and requires medical assistance:

1. In serious cases, the Emergency Services should be contacted giving the injury and site details (see below) using the Emergency Phone carried by the Forest School Leader, the parent or guardian must be contacted as quickly as possible and asked to join their child as soon as possible at the school or hospital, as appropriate. Schools should not wait for parents to arrive to take pupils to hospital unless it is certain that treatment is not urgently required.
2. There must be no delay to treatment or dispatch of the injured pupil to hospital while waiting for parents or guardians to arrive.
3. The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
4. A member of the school staff (teaching or non-teaching) must accompany the pupil to hospital if their parents have not arrived in time to do so, unless (exceptionally) the ambulance crew specifically request otherwise. The member of staff accompanying the pupil should normally wait at the hospital until the pupil's parent or guardian arrives, unless the nursing staff advise them not to do so. Ideally this should not be the teacher involved in the accident.
7. Staff accompanying a pupil to hospital should not normally give their consent to medical treatment unless it is specifically requested by a doctor, who should be asked to assume the responsibility for this decision. They will update the injured party's emergency contact about the situation.

All emergency procedures are found on the laminated card attached to the Emergency Red Bag.

3. Fire safety policy

St Modwen's Catholic Primary School aim to ensure that all young people and staff participating in Forest School sessions with fires - will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

LOCATION

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for fires. The same fire sites are always to be used.
- The Leader will assess the forest floor (re. dry/damp material) and general weather conditions for suitability for having a fire safely.
- Campfire areas are enclosed and defined by logs to contain the fire area and discourage any young person from accessing the fire directly.

Positioning of young people and members of staff

- Fire areas are surrounded by secure (i.e. wedged to prevent rolling) seating logs or stools, at least 2 metres from the fire pit – these are to be checked prior to fire lighting.
- When the campfire is in use, young people are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- When allowed to access the campfire, young people must walk around the outside of the seating logs/stools and wait for permission to step over. Once permission has been given, they must sit, ensuring legs are drawn into the log/stool and not outstretched.
- Once seated around the campfire, the young people must remain seated until directed by a member of staff to move.
- Young people will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- Any young person or member of staff with long hair should have it tied back (spare bands are in the Forest School kit bag).

- Young people are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire, but may add fuel under the direction of the Forest School Leader.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the young people - they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes or ask permission to move.
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.

Safety and Responsibility

Lighting and keeping fires burning

- The fire will be lit under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader.
- Other members of staff (who have been fully briefed and read the Risk Assessment) may supervise the fire area and attend/feed the fire.
- Fires are lit using a strike stick, natural tinder or cotton wool.
- No flammable liquids or firelighters are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- If sessions involve young people adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with 1:1 staff supervision and they are shown how to kneel safely (with one knee on the ground) and how to sideways feed the fire.
- Hands should never go over the fire.

Safety Equipment

The following kit will be taken out to Forest School when lighting fires:

- Fire blanket
- Bucket
- Fire gloves
- Jerrican containing drinkable water
- First aid kit (with burn gel, dressings)

Extinguishing fires

- 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.
- The Forest School Leader should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build-ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Reference Fire Safety Information Sheet

4. Health & Safety Policy

St Modwen's Catholic Primary School - School Health and Safety Policy - sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the School's approach to the Health and Safety of its students, staff and visitors to the School.

The following is a list of additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions:

1. However many members of staff accompany Forest School sessions, the person in charge is always the trained Forest School Leader.
2. The Forest School Leader has overall 'Duty of Care' for the children in his/her charge, but all members of staff are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.

3. All attending members of staff must sign and date a form to show they have read this Handbook and appropriate Risk Assessments and understand and agree to comply with the General Operating Procedures for Forest School.
4. Whenever sessions are being carried out, the Forest School Leader will inform class teachers of the group's intentions and for how long the sessions will last.
5. The Forest School Leader will be able to contact the office directly via WalkieTalkie.
6. The Forest School Leader or Assistant will carry the Emergency Bag and it is always positioned in an agreed location.
7. The Forest School Leader will ensure that the Emergency Bag contains all essential equipment.
8. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services.
9. The Forest School Leader will prepare and review the Risk Assessments before every session.
10. The Forest School Leader will ensure that any assisting members of staff are fully briefed regarding any planned activities available and relevant risks/hazards. All members of staff MUST read and understand the Risk Assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping
11. When tools are used, the staff/student ratio will always be 1:1 to begin with, until confident.
12. The Forest School Leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest School, prior to their use.
13. The Forest Leader is responsible in training students and staff in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
14. The Forest Leader will be responsible for the pre-visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

5. Inclusion policy Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

St Modwen's Catholic Primary School is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all our students, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We undertake steps to ensure that all our students:

- feel secure and know that their contributions are valued.
- appreciate and value the differences they see in others.
- take responsibility for their own actions.
- are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate for the task or connected to religious belief.
- are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success.
- have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles.
- are set challenging targets that enable them to succeed.
- participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

6. Learning and Development Learning and Development in Forest School

At the heart of our Forest School, is the ethos that we aim to develop the 'whole' student and that its very inclusive nature, means that young people of all abilities can gain a measure of success. Working with peers, we aim to develop self-confidence and reliance, development of language, decision-making, judgements and problem solving.

PLANNING AND OBSERVING

The sessions are very much guided by the desires and interests of the students themselves and skills are developed over a period of time, as Forest School is an on going and regular part of our curriculum. The Forest School Leader is very much a 'facilitator' as much as a teacher in a traditional sense.

A Session Plan is completed each week by the Forest School Leader and takes into account the feedback, desires and needs of the group as observed by themselves and staff during the session. The planning will also be guided by the time of year, staffing and the weather conditions etc. Observations are recorded after a session with annotated photos and written recordings.

Any learning needs or social issues are noted and certain students may be closely monitored, such as those with severe Special Educational Needs or low self-esteem. The Forest School leader briefs staff beforehand about the activities, their role and any Risk Assessments are noted.

A typical planned session will be structured as follows:

- Head count and familiarisation of the Forest School base.
- Safety revisions of our Forest School rules/boundaries and tool/fire use.
- A choice of planned activities available with the necessary resources/or free choice.
- A circle time with hot drinks and chat/feedback/comments.
- Head count/tool collection/walk back to classroom.

During the main session, staff are encouraged to work with the students and to initiate talk with questioning and encouragement. The Forest School Leader notes any feedback from the staff on the Weekly Observation Forms.

ON-GOING TRAINING

St Modwen's Catholic Primary School strives to give the best possible standard of delivery throughout the year and staff are encouraged to attend CPD Courses when and where possible, to enhance their own skills. St Modwen's staff also attend regular staff meetings, to ensure that best practice is spread throughout all staff, regardless of experience and position.

7. Risk Management Policy

St Modwen's Catholic Primary School aims to develop young people's self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. In order that these aims can be met, the Forest School Leader will:

1. Consistently apply the five-step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School activities:
 - Look for hazards.
 - Decide who may be harmed and how.
 - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done.
 - Record findings, including daily amendments to standing Risk Assessments, based on site visits or observations.
 - Review Risk Assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change, which may affect the rigour of the Assessment) and revise if necessary.
2. The Forest School Leader, prior to a day's activity, will carry out daily pre-activity checks – these must be done as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical. The findings will be recorded on the Daily Risk Assessment Form held in the school office.
3. Ensure all members of staff have read the relevant Site and Activity Risk Assessments prior to a session.
4. Move activities indoors if, in the opinion of the Forest School Leader, weather conditions such as high winds or the threat/occurrence of electrical storms, make work outdoors unsafe.
5. Inform members of staff and young people of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further.
6. Involve members of staff and young people in the Risk Assessment, as appropriate, as part of learning.
7. Ensure legal guidelines regarding off-site activities, such as adequate insurance and parental permission, are met.
8. Ensure that all members of staff and young people are aware of the Emergency Procedures for the Forest School site.
9. Be responsible for teaching young people adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.

10. Ensure a nil-by-mouth policy is adopted in all Forest School sessions, except for food cooked as part of a fully Risk-Assessed Forest School activity.

8. Safeguarding Policy

All staff are responsible for keeping children safe. A copy of the Safeguarding Policy is available to all St Modwen's Catholic Primary School staff at all times.

All young people have a safe environment at Forest School in which to learn and develop:

- We practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff who work with young people.
- We continually raise awareness of child protection issues and equip young people with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- We develop and implement procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.
- We support young people who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed Child Protection Plan.
- We establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

In addition, staff working within Forest School need to appreciate, that when young people feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may be moved to disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves. Any member of staff who finds that a young person is telling them something which concerns them, should follow these simple steps:

- Listen, but ask NO leading questions. Remember that you must not promise to 'keep a secret'. The general rule is that adults should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation.
- Comfort the young person if appropriate.
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Mrs Andrea Sherratt) as soon as possible and make a record for subsequent investigation by Social Services.

9. TOOL POLICY

St Modwen' uses the following tools with pupils:

- Sheath knife
- Secateurs
- Scissors

The Forest School Leader uses a sheath knife and axe for woodland tasks.

Tools are used with 1-1 supervision initially, until proved competent and confident in use.

All use of tools is to be at designated cutting stations

The Forest School Leader is responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools, providing Risk Assessments for tool usage and guiding any support staff in their usage.

All tools are kept in a lockable storage box that is kept in a central location within the woodland, in sight of leaders at all times. In addition sheath knives are kept in a separate lockable 'Pelicase', which is kept locked in accordance with the UK Knife Law.

All tools are transported in a lockable box, to and from site, on a daily basis.

Tools are counted out and then counted in at the end of a session to ensure that all items are returned safely.

The Forest School Leader supervises tool usage by all young people and supporting staff.

The Tool Box, which contains sharp tools such as knives and secateurs is kept locked with a combination lock at all times. The tools will be stored in the School office when sessions are not taking place.

Activity Risk/Benefit Assessments are completed for all activities involving the use of tools. These are held on file in the school office and are available online through IAM COMPLIANT

Reference Tool Safety Information Sheets and Risk Assessments