



Sandbank Nursery School and Playcare Project Forest School Policy

Contents

Policy statement

- 1. Forest School Code of Conduct**
- 2. Using and storing tools**
- 3. Equipment and Forest School Emergency Bag**
- 4. Health and Safety and Forest School**
- 5. Food Hygiene**
- 6. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School**
- 7. Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School**
- 8. Risk assessment guidelines and forms**
- 9. Forest School Accident and Emergency Procedures**
- 10. Accident and Emergency Scenarios**

At Sandbank nursery and Playcare, we believe that children learn through hands on experiences, exploration, and at a pace that ensures they can build on their own skills, and knowledge.

Through regular planned Forest school activities children can become aware of an ever changing outdoor environment that allows them to take safe risks, build confidence, and develop a sense of responsibility, that reflects the values of themselves, others and their environment. Through this children become aware that they are a valued citizen in their community.

At Sandbank we value parents and invite them to participate in Forest school activities. They will be informed of planned visits in advance.

Before a Forest school session the forest school leader and a senior member of staff will assess the suitability of the session with regard to weather, activity and site. Forest school activities will be planned in the local area and will be accessible to parents and children having adequate toilet facilities.

All children are active learners and should be allowed to take risks. Forest school opportunities should;

- Encourage children to make choices
- Make children aware of the risks and assess them for themselves.
- Have the opportunity to keep themselves and others safe within acceptable boundaries
- Encourage parents to participate in activities
- Provide small achievable tasks

All activities will adhere to the relevant individual risk assessments and procedures.

1. Forest School Code of Conduct

Boundaries

Children should always be made aware before a session begins of how far they can explore.

- 1, 2, 3, game to be introduced at the start of the Forest school experience and used to locate children.

Picking up and playing with stones

Making patterns with pretty stones is fine but make sure children do not throw them.

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but staff should make sure

Sticks must not be thrown, nor should children be allowed to pull them from living trees.

Tree climbing

Adult: child ratio must be 1:1. Check ground cover for sharp objects and check 'climbing trees' for loose and rotten branches. Children are allowed to explore to their own limits but adults should be near enough to catch if one should fall but far enough away to not be invasive. Children should not be allowed to climb higher than adults reach or chest height. At King George's Playing Fields there are only a few climbable trees.

Rope and string use

Encourage connecting and transporting materials. Prevent children from tying rope/string around themselves or others. Brightly coloured rope/string must be used to aid visibility.

Carrying & transporting materials

The children should be encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by hand or using ropes. The safe way to lift is by bending at the knees and keeping a straight back should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects can be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Digging

Children love digging and this is fine in designated areas, however, making holes in the ground is to be discouraged as this could be a trip hazard

Toileting

Children are always invited to use the toilets before starting a session. Only sites with adequate toilet facilities shall be used for Forest school activities.

Eating and drinking

Children should be prevented from eating anything found in woods, such as berries or seeds. Keep reminding them about fingers and hands in mouths and noses. If we take drinks or snacks outside ensure children use wipes to clean their hands before eating their snack or drinking.

Around the fire area

When erecting a log fire area it should be treated as though it was going to be lit. A square shape made from logs should be erected and the fire lit within the square. Seating logs should be 2 metres from the 'fire'. There must be no walking around within the seating area. There must be no running near the fire area. If we are given permission to light a fire/Kelly Kettle the Forest School Leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before the start.

A bucket of water should always be used to extinguish the fire. When embers are cold the debris should be scattered within the fire area. Fire gloves must be used.

Leaving the site

King George's Playing Fields or any other site used must always be left as it was found. If artefacts are made using 'found' materials these may be taken off site. Shelters should normally be demolished and imported materials taken back to nursery at the end of each session. All waste materials should be collected in a bag and put into a bin.

Collecting wood

Wood should be collected in three thicknesses - matchstick size, pencil size and thumb thickness. This is a great sorting activity and children should be given a chance to do it even if a fire is not to be lit.

Water activities

Close supervision of children is paramount when accessing water activities. The Park ranger will assess the pond regularly for diseases.

Any future activities that are not in this policy will be assessed and this policy will be amended.

2. Using and storing tools

General notes

Tools should be counted in and out and are kept in suitable containers in one designated spot. Children must never be allowed to help themselves. Tools are given out for a purpose and all adults should model their correct use, storage and transportation at all times. Tools are used well away from other active children and only walking is permitted when carrying them. Gloves should be worn for the specific tools on the specific hand. See individual Risk assessments for clarification. All tools must be cleaned after each session, and sharpened if appropriate.

Potato peelers for peeling, and sharpening sticks

1:2 ratio, seated and always cutting away from the body. Ensure safe arm's length distance from other people. No walking with peelers.

Loppers - for cutting and pruning

1:1 ratio, ensure hands are clear from blades and only cut wood below head height. When carrying hold under fixed arm horizontal to ground on the lower handle. Ensure blade faces forward and points toward the floor.

Bow saws - for cross-cutting wood

Children may be taught how to use a saw with 1:1 supervision, or with a buddy helping in 'push, pull' fashion. Adults must ALWAYS supervise closely. Keep hands away from the blade, ensure the blade is covered with a sheath when not in use and carried pointing downwards.

Bill hook

Children can work with another child when using the bill hook. Children must always have an adult present. Assistance given if needed

Storage

When not in use all tools are kept in the designated secure place.

3. Equipment

In addition to tools suited to the planned activities staff will take out an **emergency bag** appropriate to the activity and weather.

The contents of the **emergency bag** will vary depending on the site location being used, the group, and the time of year and weather conditions. Contents of the bag may also vary as a result of risk assessments. However, there are some essential items that should be carried on every session.

Essential Items:

- First Aid Kit (appropriate for number of people out during sessions and remoteness of site; kit to be regularly checked and restocked as necessary)
- Emergency procedures
- Medical information of all in group
- Means of communication (mobile phone checked in working order and that receives signal)
- Clean water
- Medication for individuals (clearly labelled, staff trained to administer it and parental consent received)
- Note pad and pen to note accidents.

Other Possible Items:

Wet wipes, nappy sacks and toileting things, spare clothing; thermos of hot water; chocolate/sugary food; burns kit; fire blanket; emergency fire kit; knife; emergency shelter.

4. Health and Safety and Forest School

Sandbank Nursery's Health and Safety Policy sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School. The following is a list of additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions.

- The trained Forest School Leader will train school staff to lead all Forest School activities
- The senior staff member has overall duty of care for the children in his/her charge, but all Sandbank staff are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.

- All adult helpers must be made aware of the objectives of the session and comply with the procedures for Forest School (see section 1)
- Whenever the group is off Sandbank premises, the rangers will be informed of the group's whereabouts and the duration of the activity
- Sandbank staff will carry a First Aid kit
- Sandbank staff or assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag
- Staff will ensure that the Emergency Bag contains:
 - A list of children undertaking the activities, and;
 - The school's telephone number
- The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range
- The Leading staff member will review the risk assessments before every Forest Schools session - on or off premises

5. Food Hygiene - Cooking Food Outdoors

Sandbank Nursery will at times be cooking various foods using the fire pit.

Hands must be clean prior to preparing food and children encouraged to clean their hands prior to eating.

Care must be taken at all times when cooking food, especially foods such as raw meats.

Where raw meats will be cooked it is essential an adult has a Food Hygiene qualification level 2

Control measures must be implemented when transporting high risk foods

- Cool boxes must be used to transport raw food or food which requires refrigeration
- Cool boxes to be kept away from heat sources
- Keep food covered at all times
- Ensure food is cooked thoroughly prior to serving

6. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School

Sandbank Nursery fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection and for confidentiality. Our Child Protection Policy, which applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school, has six main elements:

- We practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and students who work with children.
- We continually raise awareness of child protection issues and equip children 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 children 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.
- We ensure that pupil and parental rights are respected and that vulnerable individuals are protected from risk or exploitation.

All adults must adhere to our mobile phone policy.

In addition, adults working within Forest School need to appreciate that when children 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 student or member of staff who finds that a child 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 child if appropriate.
- **Make** an accurate written record of the concern within 1 hour
- **Inform** the Child Protection Officer (the Headteacher), or in her absence, the Deputy Head, as soon as possible and ensure the written record of the concern is appropriately filed

7. Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

Sandbank Nursery 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 children, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We undertake to ensure that all our children:

- 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 to their religious beliefs.
- Use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds;
- 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.

Forest School at Sandbank Nursery means Forest School for all.

Waterproofs and wellingtons are available for the children to use in Forest School sessions. All safety equipment such as work gloves will be provided for the children's and adults to use.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware that they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session at nursery.

The forest environment is one to which we all have an entitlement and we believe the happy experiences we have there will linger in the memory for years to come.

8. Risk Assessment Guidelines and Forms

The Forest School leader carries out a site risk assessment before every visit to King George's Playing Field or other external site.

The risk assessment process is as follows:

- We look for the hazards
- We decide who might be harmed and how this might happen.
- We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
- We record our findings
- We review our assessments and revise them if necessary.

- We inform all adults accompanying the group.

In addition, an activity risk assessment will be in place for any activity that may require it, such as stick whittling, wood cutting, shelter-building, and fire-lighting. Additional risk assessments will be carried out for individual children who have specific needs.

9. Forest School Accident and Emergency Procedures offsite

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the group leader should maintain or resume control of the group overall.

He/she will, however, delegate responsibility when necessary. Sandbank Nursery emergency plan to be carried out.

In the event of a child being injured during a Forest school session, trained staff are to assess, and attend to the injury if possible. Ensure the rest of the group is safe. If a major injury or death occurs, an ambulance should be rung. Nursery should be informed so parents/carers can be notified if necessary. A member of staff will accompany the child to hospital if a parent is not available. Accidents should be recorded in a note book and transferred to the accident book back at nursery.

In the event of an adult having a major injury or death during a Forest School session, trained staff are to ring an ambulance. Nursery must be informed to notify next of kin and arrange alternative contact to fetch the child if necessary. An accurate account of the accident should be recorded by staff. An accident form should be completed by the injured adult.

In the event of a member staff being injured or dying, the nursery should be informed so another member of staff can come and assist. All staff should have some first aid training and are aware of emergency treatments and procedures. Sandbank Emergency plan carried out for all scenarios.

Any near miss accidents should be reported to the head teacher when back at nursery and a near miss form completed.

No-one in the group should speak to the media.

The names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families.

Any enquiries from journalists must be referred to the head teacher.

No-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties, nor sign anything relating to accident liability without clear advice from the LA.

Bad weather

In the event of extreme bad weather after a Forest school session as begun, the session should be stopped for safety purposes. Parents who have accompanied their child can take them either home or back to nursery. A register should be completed. Children not accompanied by parents should return to nursery with staff.

It should be noted that it is inappropriate to continue such activities in a wooded area in windy weather

Fire

In the event of an uncontrolled fire in the woods, children, parents and staff will;

- Evacuate the woods and assemble by the toilets in King George's park.
- Register to be checked.
- Fire brigade called, and the park ranger notified if not accompanying the session.
- Parents who have accompanied their child can take their child either home or back to nursery having informed staff.
- Children not accompanied by parents should return to nursery with staff

Lost or missing child

In the event of a lost child, the missing child should be identified and other children assembled to ensure they are safe.

- An immediate search of vicinity. (Forest School children will be aware of the 1,2,3 game)
- A member of staff will inform the school, who will then inform the parents/carers of the child and the police.
- Park ranger will be notified to provide extra persons with knowledge of the area to aid with the search. Follow Emergency plan

Transport Accident

Children are to meet at King George's playing fields. However there may be occasions where some children are either walked back to nursery or transported in staff cars. Only staff who have insurance to transport children will be allowed to do this. In the case of an accident the emergency services should be called and nursery notified. Nursery will inform parents/carers. Ensure safety of passengers/children by removing from danger if appropriate. Give first aid as appropriate. A member of staff must accompany child, if going to hospital. All accident forms should be completed as soon as possible.

Irregular Occurrence, Uninvited Person/Stranger

The intruder will be challenged and asked to leave politely. If a child is involved then the police should be called and the child/children involved should be removed from the situation and made to feel safe. Nursery should be notified and the emergency plan followed.

Irregular Occurrence, Loose dogs

If a loose dog comes to approach the children staff should discourage children from attempting to touch it. The children should remain calm as not to excite. Staff should place themselves in front of the dog to protect the children. Park ranger notified to arrange removal

Behaviour Problems

Staff to use de-escalation strategies. Remove other children from area of risk (if deemed necessary). If thought necessary, staff to use appropriate restraint technique. Log incident as soon as possible. Report to the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher on return to school.

Reviewed: March 2021

Next review date: March 2022

Passed by: _____

Date: _____