



St John's Stonefold CE Primary School, Rising Bridge

Whole School Forest School Policy	
Written By	P Burns
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Values:

Empathy Aspiration Generosity Love Endurance

Mission:

**Rooted and Established in God's Love: Nurture, Grow, Fly
(Ephesians 3:17)**

At St John's Stonefold, we are a close-knit church family rooted in God's love, nurturing every child to grow confidently and soar with ambition. Guided by our Christian values and a bespoke, innovative curriculum, we empower our children to embrace their individuality, develop life skills, and thrive as kind, confident, and driven members of our vibrant rural community. Together, we inspire limitless aspirations, preparing each child to flourish and follow their dreams with faith and purpose.

Our five Christian values spell out the word: EAGLE which is part of our school badge and the emblem of St. John. These values are woven into everyday school life and help our children to 'soar' here at St John's Stonefold and in their lives beyond.

"Rooted and Established in God's love: nurture, grow, fly" Ephesians 3:17

Introduction:

The Forest Schools Policy documents a range of policies and procedures that must be adhered to ensure that the learners can experience some risk based learning within a controlled environment. All leaders present during the sessions and parent helpers will be expected to read and follow the procedures and policies outlined in this document to minimise the risk from any potential hazards as outlined in the separate Forest Schools Risk Assessments found at the end of this document.

Mission statement

'Forest School is 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)

At St John's Stonefold Primary School, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child-centred approach.

At St John's Stonefold, Forest School forms an important part of our inclusive provision. We recognise that outdoor learning can provide opportunities for pupils with SEND, attendance barriers, social and emotional needs and other vulnerabilities to experience success, develop confidence and strengthen resilience.

ETHOS & FOREST SCHOOL PRINCIPLES AT STONEFOLD PRIMARY:

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions and aims for children to visit in blocks of at least six to eight weeks each season. Ideally Forest Schools should be offered over a longer period to truly see the developmental benefits.
2. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process. Planning is flexible and the learners take the direction for their learning and development.

3. It takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment – we are limited in this aspect but with careful tailoring and planning of the site and resources, this can be overcome.
4. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners who are emotionally literate.
5. We will offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves and encouraged risky play where appropriate.
6. It will be managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner. Further staff will be trained in the future to help plan and facilitate in the sessions.
7. We will use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-goodpractice/>

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session. We have Nurturing Nature Guidelines that the children are expected to remember and follow during the sessions. These include:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick.'
- Respect for plants, trees and animals.
- Staying in view of the Leader and supporting adults at all times.
- Always use walking feet around the site.
- When scavenging, only collect the natural debris on the floor.
- If you find anything you think could be dangerous, let the Leader or grown up know.
- Staying within the designated areas at all times.

Rationale/Aims:

The outdoors can provide space and freedom for a type of learning that is difficult to replicate within the confines of classroom walls. It provides an alternative context to apply knowledge and skills necessary to understand and appreciate the world we live in no matter the season or the weather. We strongly believe that all children have the right to be given the opportunities afforded by outdoor learning and the managed risks associated with it. It can provide relevant, engaging experiences that support learning in all areas of the curriculum. These can be presented as building on existing outdoor play, transferring activities normally carried out indoors, school garden projects, environmental education or off-site visits.

Providing positive opportunities for active learning, the outside environment can promote skills of enquiry, problem solving, communication, co-operation, creativity and evaluation, therefore we seek to offer outdoor experiences that allow children to:

- Find space to be alone or interact in social groups of different sizes.
- Plan, build, evaluate and sometimes demolish.
- Find similarities and differences, observe and classify.
- Be energetic, adventurous and assess risk.
- Make mark, use large scale media, be messy.
- Plant, grow and harvest.
- Hide, explore and discover.
- Investigate, make predictions and test theories.
- Imagine, pretend and reflect.
- Measure, locate, transport and record.

Forest School supports our vision of "Rooted and Established in God's Love: Nurture, Grow, Fly" by helping children develop stewardship of God's creation, resilience through challenge and appreciation for the natural world.

Forest School education at St John's Stonefold Primary will focus on the key principles behind emotional resilience. Groups of learners will be assessed on the resiliency framework prior and after the block of sessions to gauge their

strands of emotional need and the effectiveness of Forest Schools as an intervention.

Environmental Considerations:

One of the main principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. Each activity carried out as part of Forest School will have impact on the environment, some positive and some negative. We aim to keep the negative impact to a minimum by regularly inspecting the site as detailed in the Site Impact Matrix and Three Year Development Plan (which can be found in the appendices). All those involved in Forest School will be encouraged to learn greater awareness of the world around them and to show respect to the wildlife by 'nurturing nature'.

Site Policy

The site will be left in a safe and ordered manner at the end of each session.

The FS leader is responsible for the pre-session Site Risk Assessment by:

1. Completing a pre-session site risk assessment form, recording any necessary hazards in the log book (to be acted upon as soon as possible) and ensuring hazardous areas are cordoned off using the hazard tape.
2. Checking trip hazards and ensuring all safe storage of wood at the sides of fences or in the designated cordoned off area (pond area).
3. Fire area is safe, seating is 2 metres away from the fire pit and walkways around the pit circle are clear.

The FS leader is also responsible for ensuring a site risk assessment is completed after the session by:

1. The removal and disposal of all left over food.
2. The safe storage of non-perishable items.
3. Safely storing all wood to the sides of the fences and/or in the designated area (pond area).
4. Turning fire bowls so they do not collect water.
5. Leaving all areas clear of litter.

Emergency Action Plan

In the event of an Emergency ring the Emergency Services on 999 stating your name and the following location details:

St John's Stonefold CE Primary School
Rising Bridge Road
Rising Bridge
Accrington
BB5 2SW

Site Entrance What 3 Words Ref: [///chair.instincts.uptown](http://chair.instincts.uptown)

The nearest hospital is Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital, Haslingden Road, Blackburn, BB2 3HH

Accident & Emergency Procedure:

An emergency bag will be accessible at all times during sessions (see following page for First aid & emergency equipment available). All minor accidents and incidents will be reported within the accident book inline with school policy.

Procedures in event of a serious accident or incident:

1. Assessment of the situation
2. Radio call "PLEASE COME TO FOREST AREA EMERGENCY!"
3. All participants unaffected will be moved or protected from further injury or danger.
4. 1st Aid administered as appropriate and following the First Aid Policy and Procedure document.
5. Non-affected members may go into shock –appropriate action/1st aid given as required.
6. Call emergency services on 999 and provide details of condition of patient(s) after doing the ABC first aid check and have medical details available.
7. Contact parent/cares)of those needing medical treatment.
8. Phone site management contact as soon as possible.
9. Remove the remainder of the group to a secure location and protect from the attention of the media. (If young people involved, ensure adequate supervision ratios or return to an indoor environment if possible.
10. Retain all equipment involved in an unaltered condition.
11. Do not make statements to the media or allow anyone else to make statements where at all possible.
12. Keep a log of all people contacted/involved in the management of the incident as possible and the timing of actions taken in relation to the

incident. Report all information to the Head teacher who will complete an accident report form.

Reporting procedure for Accidents & emergencies:

Contact the Health & Safety Executive as soon as reasonably possible. In accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), an accident report must be made where required by law.

This can be done online at www.hse.gov.uk.

It should be investigated why the incident occurred. It may be necessary for those involved in any traumatic event to seek counselling and support. Failure to report a death, serious injury or occurrence is an offence punishable by law.

In the Event of a Missing Child:

- On discovery of missing child use 'STOP, LOOK and LISTEN' procedure and recall rest of the group and ensure they are moved to a safe location with a suitable designated adult.
- Commence immediate search of the vicinity.
- Immediately notify school office.
- Office manager will notify the Headteacher, and a decision will be made on whether to notify the police, then the parent or guardian.

Stranger or Uninvited Person

- Challenge intruder, asking them to leave immediately.
- Ensure the group are assembled and taken to a safe location by a suitable designated adult.
- Escort them from the site.
- Inform the School's Office and Child Protection Liaison Officer.
- If a child is involved the police must be called, and the child/children involved are to be removed from situation and made to feel safe.

Parents/guardian should be briefed by Forest School Leader ASAP or in accordance with advice of the Police, ASAP.

Links with Existing School Policies

Please refer to other policies produced by school in relation to forest school activities, namely:

- Health & Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- SEND Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Restrictive Physical Intervention/Team Teach Policy

Essential Equipment

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag with them. The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment. There are of course also essential items that should be carried out for every session.

Essential Equipment:

- First Aid Kit
- Emergency Procedures
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Devices (mobile phone and/or walkie talkie – checked for working order and signal strength)
- Clean Water
- Emergency whistle
- Accident forms
- Medication for individuals will be kept in school in the designated area as usual and a FS Assistant (with the appropriate First Aid training) will retrieve and administer this if/when necessary
- Appropriate spare clothing
- Wet wipes, hand sanitiser
- Sun cream (parental permission required)
- Plastic bag
- Fire blanket

- Torch
- Burns Kit

Poor Weather

Forest School sessions will go ahead in all weather conditions with only a few exceptions (in accordance with the General Welfare and Weather Risk Assessment):

- Strong winds that make woodland areas hazardous for use due to falling debris.
- When it is dangerous to get around the site by foot due to snow, flooding or ice etc.
- Very wet cold conditions where hypothermia is a real possibility.

Exposure to the elements is part of the magic of nature and therefore an integral part of forest school. In more adverse weather we will review the planned activities and site areas and may change plans and in some cases, may complete some of the session indoors or within the shelters. In the summer the trees in the woodland area and our shelters will provide good sun cover. Please remember to apply sun cream to your child and/or supply it so that they can put it on. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions. Ultimately, our Head teacher and Forest School Leader will make the decision deeming if the weather is unsuitable for Forest School. Any session that is cancelled will be, wherever possible, rescheduled.

Clothing and Toileting

To ensure that the children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the forest environment we require children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Clothing will get muddy so old home clothes are required. Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy ground (The General Welfare and Weather Risk Assessment will be consulted).

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad planning.’

The general rule is to wear lots of layers which keep in the heat and can be removed if needed. Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating.

In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved t-shirt, even in warm weather to help protect against bites, stings and scratches.
- Trousers will be worn to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches.
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and a waterproof jacket (really important when wet to prevent under clothing getting wet/damp as we have no-where to dry clothing between sessions).
- Long socks, wellies, walking boots or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc are required.

Children should bring in and leave their Forest School clothes in a bag (clearly marked with their name) in their classroom. All Forest School Kit should be taken home throughout the year (once a half term or term) to be washed and brought back in.

Toileting:

We will ask the children to use the toilet before leaving the setting. If the children need to go to the toilet during the session, they are to alert their class teacher, who will allow them to go back into school to use the toilet. It will be the class teacher's responsibility to ensure the children leave and come back to the session safely by following the procedure. With really young children and depending on where we are working on the site, it may be necessary to release a participating adult to go with the child (ren) (TA or teacher) to escort them to and from the toilet.

Tools and Tool Use

We are committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development, both indoors and outdoors. Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence.

To enable that this is safely carried out, hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader.

The Forest School leaders will inspect the tools before each session to ensure safety.

Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect by learning 'Tool Talks'.

Whilst using hand tools, the staff to child ratio is increased depending on the tool in use. The ratios will vary from 1:1 to 1:3.

Tools will be kept in the tool bag and only removed by the Forest School Leader.

Adult and child sized gloves will be available and are only to be used for the 'helping hand'. It is not advisable to use any hand tools with gloves on as it detaches the user from the tool.

Running with tools and pointing tools at others is prohibited.

Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.

General rules for tool use:

All tools have a separate risk assessment (please see the school website for copies of the separate Risk Assessments and Forest School Policy.

- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises.
- All staff to ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site.
- All tools should be signed out when in use.
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible.
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use.
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult.

Knives:

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by an adult, preferably the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice.
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area.
- Knives should be used away from the body.
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

Bow Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated and when confident and competent, can be paired up with the Forest School Leader observing.
- Guard is in place when not in use.
- Use in a designated area away from others.
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand (helping hand).

Loppers:

- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated and when confident and competent, can be paired up with the Forest School Leader observing.
- Use in a designated area, away from others.
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use.
- Loppers must only be used above the ground if possible.

Fire Safety

Fire poses a threat to life through fume, smoke, burning and structural collapse. The aim of fire safety is to minimise the risk of fire by taking the adequate safety precautions.

So far as practicable, forest school leaders must ensure that children and volunteers who attend forest schools sessions are aware of any aspects of the fire safety measures which affect them in the fire risk assessment.

Volunteers and other supporting staff will be expected to read the Fire Risk Assessment document prior to any forest schools sessions involving fire. The policy, procedures and risk assessment for fire use will be regularly reviewed and any recommendations will be fully implemented by staff. Any major changes to policy and risk assessments will also be reviewed by Governors.

The member of staff responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy is the Forest School Leader. Any concerns must be drawn to her attention immediately.

Fire Prevention

Fire prevention measures centre upon the removal or control of available fuel and ignition sources. Fuel includes waste, debris, flammable gases and liquids and flammable materials.

Waste materials must not be allowed to accumulate in and around the Forest School site areas. Waste bags and bins are provided each session and must be regularly emptied and rubbish disposed of.

Flammable liquids are never stored on site. Any used will be in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and removed after each session.

When fires are being lit in the fire pit during forest schools sessions, the leader will ensure all staff and learners adhere to the fire procedures and risk assessment. Children will be strictly supervised when using the fire pit and fire lighting materials. A set of fire gloves and a fire blanket will be kept close to the fire area but away from naked flames. A jerry can filled with water and fire bucket will be prepared beforehand.

No electrical equipment will be used and if any were in the future, these would be regularly inspected and maintained.

Volunteer Policy & Procedures

Definition

A volunteer is anyone who is willing to get involved in the sessions and support the child who will be in the group. Forest School sessions actively encourage the participation and support of parents/carers during the sessions to enhance the quality of the provision and to foster and build their relationships with the participating child.

Eligibility

The use of volunteers enhances the experiences the Forest School leader can provide for the children by bringing new skills, enthusiasm and a fresh perspective to what we can offer as well as fostering the parent/carer child relationships.

As well as inviting the parents/carers of the children involved in the sessions, volunteers are also accepted from:

- Student placements
- Parent/carers outside of the participating group interested in becoming more involved in Forest Schools
- Other members of teaching and non-teaching staff in school who would like to find out more and support the children in a different context

Volunteers will at no point be expected to lead, teach or be solely responsible for a group. They are there mainly in an observational capacity and to support the children in their experiences during the sessions.

Before the start of any session, the volunteers will have a discussion with the Forest School Leader to determine the learning experiences and how they can support during the session. They will also be asked to read through the relevant policies, procedures and risk assessments involved in the session and be expected to adhere to these at all times.

Volunteers will be required to register their presence in the building using the signing in machine at the main reception as well as use the sign in/out sheet the Forest School Leader provides.

St John's Stonefold CE Primary School, Forest School Action Plan 2027

Objectives	Action/Tasks	Person Responsible	What will success look like?
Increase participation across vulnerable groups	Create extended opportunities for children from vulnerable groups to access Forest School Provision	SLT	Pupils in vulnerable groups will have extra opportunities to take part in Forest School lessons
Strengthen SEND provision outdoors	Identify target pupils Develop personalised Forest School experiences Monitor engagement and emotional wellbeing	EM/SLT	Target pupils show increased engagement Improved confidence Positive pupil and parent feedback
Develop staff expertise	In house training/team teaching for adults supporting EM conducting Forest School sessions	EM	Additional staff trained
Improve biodiversity	Create and maintain a wildflower meadow Conduct biodiversity surveys of animals, insects and plants Composting	EM/Eco Council	Wildflower area established Biodiversity surveys completed annually Increased evidence of insects, birds or wildlife habitats

			Pupils can explain how they are caring for God's creation.
Monitor impact on wellbeing	Pupil Voice Pupil questionnaires	SLT	Pupil voice evidences benefits