

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Safety and Suitability of Premises, Environment and Equipment

Children must be kept safe while on outings.

8.11 Forest School

Policy statement

We believe that every child at Paddocks Pre-school should have regular access to Forest School sessions as it provides them with inspirational and challenging outdoor learning opportunities. Forest School offers a child centred approach, where our children can learn through self-directed play and exploration. Children who take part in Forest School sessions will be given the opportunity to develop their curiosity, confidence, self-esteem, creativity, empathy, communication skills, knowledge of the natural environment and ability to assess risk.

Procedures

Activities

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of children in the session.

Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations

Health & Safety Policy

Forest School programmes may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for our children. It is the general approach of Paddocks Pre-school to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits too. However, Paddock Pre-school seeks to minimise risk by following

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appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessment covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session.

Staff & Training

All our Forest School Leaders are professionals with relevant qualifications and experience and have undertaken current DBS (CRB) checks. At least one member of the Paddocks team will hold an up-to-date Forest School first aid qualification and all others will be paediatric first aid trained.

Risk assessment

Our Forest School sites must be safe and easily accessible, so whenever possible we will visit and assess sites before activities take place. During our assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level. We will make agreements with landowner and explore specific site issues if necessary. Whilst doing this we will identify any hazards and implement the necessary controls, check for mobile phone coverage/two way radio range and access in case of emergency, and assess toilet facilities. We will ensure every adult who is supporting a Forest School session are provided with a copy of the risk assessment prior to an activity.

When and where possible, we will carry out a last check of a site prior to the arrival of a group. Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to groups' arrival, a site sweep and assessment will be made with the group upon their arrival.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards, such as windblown trees or litter
2. Decide whether someone might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
4. Record the findings
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary

Emergency and serious incident

Emergencies are never wanted, but they are a possibility, and so we at the Paddocks Pre-school ensure that all leaders are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures. Most emergencies can be resolved on the spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services should be contacted and the following procedures followed:

1. Secure safety of whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities if safe. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance. If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.
2. First Aider to attend to any casualties with adult helper and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the group. At least one first aider must be on site at all times. A record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them to be made if possible.
3. Emergency services contacted as necessary. The charged Paddock Pre-school mobile phone is carried by the Forest School Leader. Paddocks Pre-school will be notified as soon as possible.
4. Safety of the rest of children will be maintained by the remaining team members and adults away from the scene of the incident.
5. Informing next of kin should be carried out as soon as possible after the incident by Paddocks Pre-school according to their own health and safety policy.
6. Incident report and/or first aid book should be filled in on site, if possible, and then logged back at Paddocks Pre-school and signed by the manager - see first aid kit for report form. This should be filled in whenever the emergency plan is used, even if no one was harmed.

Missing Child

A missing child should be dealt with in the same manner as our Missing Child policy (1.5).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding children will be dealt with in the same manner as our Safeguarding policy (1.2).

Administration of medicine and sun cream

Administration of medicine and sun cream will be dealt with in the same manner as our Administration of Medicine policy (6.1) and the Sun Safety policy (6.9).

Reporting accidents/incidents

Recording and reporting accidents and incidents will be dealt in the same manner as our Recording and Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy (6.3).

Safe Lifting

Forest School activities can be physically demanding for participants and staff, for example when handling heavy objects, so it is wise to be aware of best practice. One of the greatest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly. Here are some tips:

- Think and plan where and how you are going to move an object before you lift
- Keep the load close to your waist and the heaviest side of the load next to your body
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward if possible
- Ensure a good hold on the load, hug it close to your body if possible
- Avoid bending your back, only bend at your hips or knees
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways, especially if bending at the back
- Keep your head up and look ahead, not down at the load, once it is held securely
- Move smoothly
- Know your limits - don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage without help
- Put the load down if you need to adjust it
- Where possible, use ropes to drag objects such as trees

Pro Forma Consent

Parents/guardians are asked to fill in a consent form, which is included in our setting registration form, before their child begins any forest school sessions at Paddocks Pre-school. Information provided will give relevant medical details of the child, consent for the child to take part in the forest school activities and permissions to administer medicines and creams, and to admit the child to hospital for emergency treatment. The form also provides emergency contact details and optional permission to take and use photographs of the child for promotional purposes and reports.

The forest school leader will have access to this information at all sessions attended by the child.

For further information, please also read the Forest School Handbook.

This policy was adopted by	<u>Paddocks Pre-school</u>	<i>(name of provider)</i>
On	<u>Feb 2021</u>	<i>(date)</i>
Date to be reviewed	<u>Spring Term 2022</u>	<i>(date)</i>
Signed on behalf of the provider	<u>GOverton</u>	
Name of signatory	<u>Gemma Overton</u>	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	<u>Chair</u>	

Staff Signatures

(LG, LG, SL, SJ, JC, CM, LW, GP, AS)