



Fire Safety Policy and Emergency Evacuation procedure

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Wheatfen Forest School aims to ensure that all children and adults 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 campfires
- Campfire areas are enclosed by logs to prevent the spread of fire.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit.
- When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission. When allowed to access the campfire, children must walk around the outside and wait for permission to kneel safely in the respect position by the fire.
- Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- Children will be taught how to change seats by standing and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- 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.
- If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.

Safety and Responsibility

Lighting and keeping fires burning

- Fires are lit using fire steels.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.

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.
- Forest School Leaders 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. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Managing Risk

Forest School aims to develop children's self-esteem, independence, and motivation to learn in a safe environment. The Forest School Leader will therefore be responsible for conducting appropriate site and activity risk assessments prior to each session. A five-step approach is adopted whereby the following steps are taken:

- Identify hazards and risks.
- Decide who may be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide if existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done.
- Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits and observations.
- Review assessments on a regular basis.

Participants, including staff and volunteers, will be informed of potential hazards and methods of working to minimise their risk further. When possible, all participants will be involved in the risk assessment process as part of their learning.

Particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and management of fire, participants will be taught appropriate and adequate skills to keep themselves safe.

Our aim is not to eliminate risk but to weigh up risks and benefits. All customers/participants are given a tour of the site and informed of the associated risks. The importance of allowing participants to risk assess for themselves based on knowledge of the site is discussed.

Allowing and promoting individual risk and benefit assessments for activities and the use of the woodland develops self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, self-motivation, and empathy.

Emergency Procedure

Prior to Forest School sessions participants are briefed on what they will be expected to do in the event of an emergency.

The emergency assembly point (fire circle unless otherwise indicated by the Forest School Leader) is clearly pointed out and the use of the emergency whistle retreat discussed.

There is direct easy access to the path back to the car park and study centre.

Emergency access is always maintained.



All visitors to site will prearrange with the Forest School leader and be expected. In the event of an unexpected visitor a member of staff will be sent to greet them and assess their reason for being on site. All visitors are signed in and their ID checked.

There is a clear line of site to the gate from group gathering points.

There is a minimum ratio of 1:5, adults: children at all times at Wheatfen Forest School.

Supervising parent/carers are included in this ratio.

Parents who remain on site throughout the sessions hold responsibility for the safety and welfare of their children. Forest School Leaders aim to support parents and facilitate exploration of the environment through play.

The number of Forest School leaders onsite and in sessions is dependent on the needs of the group. A minimum of 3 trained leaders will be onsite at all times and asked to carry walkie talkies to use in case of emergency.

An additional emergency contact is available in person on the adjoining property at all times.

In the Event of a Fire Evacuation

The Study Centre is the Emergency Assembly Point

The Emergency whistle can be heard throughout the woodland and every member of staff has one. Emergency procedures are tested and practiced deliberately with all groups. Any member of the group or Forest School leader may blow their whistle to signal an emergency.

In the event of the emergency whistle retreat

Forest School leaders will:

- Act immediately to ensure the safety of all onsite
- Direct all participants and colleagues to the Study Centre
- Assess the situation and follow the Emergency Action Plan

The Forest School leader will take charge of implementing the emergency procedure ensuring the safety of the group. This may involve delegating tasks to other adults on site.

A dynamic risk assessment will be made by the Forest School leader considering the immediate safety of any casualty and/or group members. As in all first aid situations the greatest need will be dealt with first.

Parents and additional adults supervising children may be asked to carry out specific tasks to support the Forest School leader i.e. contacting off site assistance, taking a register or helping customers to safely and promptly exit the site.

The Forest School Leader will follow the Emergency Action Plan process.



In the event, of the necessity to evacuate the woodland site

As part of the dynamic risk assessment the Forest School leader will assess the safest way to exit the site. In most scenarios this will be along the main access track on foot.

- All participants will be led up the path to the study centre
- A walking bus system will be adopted to safely transport participants to the study centre
- One Forest School Leader at the front and one at the back.
- A register will be taken when participants are gathered at the study centre.