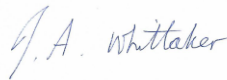




"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10

Forest School Policy

Spring 2024

Policy Review Details	
This policy will be reviewed in line with our policy review schedule.	
Date of Issue: Spring 2024	
	
Governor Signature	Headteacher Signature
Date of next review: Spring 2027	

Version Control

Change Record

Date	Author	Version	Reason for Change
Spring 2021	L.McQuaid	1	The Forest School Policy written by Lucy McQuaid.
19.1.2024	L.Oakes	2	Renewal date. Adapted to current policy template. Removed Appendix A, Forest School Covid implications. Update to statement of intent. Update to ratio's, in line with the Educational Visits Policy.

Summerseat Methodist Vision & Values

At Summerseat Methodist Primary, our vision, ethos and values are at the core of everything we do. They underpin our teaching and learning, and provide an environment which prepares our children to become lifelong learners; creating a safe and inclusive learning environment that nurtures individuality and enhances potential.



“I have come so that they may have life
and have it to the full.”

John 10:10

As a church school, we have identified and uphold the following core Christian values that help us achieve our ethos and vision: joy, teamwork, love, respect, care, trust, forgiveness and equality.



Safeguarding Statement

At Summerseat Methodist Primary School we recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We work to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice. The procedures contained in the Safeguarding Policy apply to all staff, volunteers and governors

Statement of intent

At **Summerseat Methodist Primary School**, we appreciate the value of a holistic approach to education. Through our Forest School, we aim to imbue within our pupils an appreciation and respect for the natural environment through hands-on experiences and exploration, to develop their confidence, social and communication skills, and to encourage teamwork by engaging in outdoor activities.

This policy is designed to ensure that the Forest School is a beneficial experience for pupils by making staff aware of their duties and expectations, and ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is considered at all times and appropriate safeguarding measures are in place for all Forest School activities.

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term programme that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a woodland environment.

Forest School has a developmental ethos shared by thousands of trained practitioners around the world, who are constantly developing their learning styles and skills to support new and imaginative learners. Its roots reach back to the open-air culture, seen as a way of life in Scandinavia where Forest School began. It arrived in the UK in 1993 and has grown from strength to strength since then. The process helps and facilitates more than knowledge-gathering, it helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to try stuff out and take risks. Forest School inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of how a learner fits within it.

Our main Forest School focus at Summerseat is based upon the physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of each child within our school community. Yet, to also give our children the opportunities to grow in confidence, resilience, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world. Overall, helping them to raise their academic achievements.

A Forest School encourages children to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- take supported risks
- discover how they learn best

- pursue knowledge that interests them
- learn how to manage failures
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- regularly experience achievement and success
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- become more motivated
- improve their concentration skills
- improve their communication
- explore the world through their senses.

1. Legal framework

- 1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- 1.2. This policy has due regard to national guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
 - DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education'
 - DfE (2022) 'Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools'
 - DfE (2022) 'Health and safety for school children'
 - DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years'

This policy must be read and used alongside the Forest School Handbook.

2. Roles and responsibilities

- 2.1. The **Forest School Leader** is responsible for:
 - Arranging the procurement of any equipment or clothing required for the Forest School.
 - Ensuring value for money when arranging the procurement of equipment or clothing for the Forest School.
 - Ensuring that the school's insurance covers the Forest School and all planned activities.
 - Conducting a detailed health and safety check before Forest School activities.
 - Adhering at all times to the **Forest School Risk Assessments**.
 - Carrying a fully stocked first-aid kit during all Forest School sessions.
 - Holding an up-to-date Outdoors First Aid certificate and leading first aid arrangements.
 - Inspecting equipment and tools before use to ensure they are safe for use, and that damaged or defective items are not used.
 - Keeping and maintaining an incident log to record any incidents that occur during Forest School activities.
 - Planning and delivering Forest School sessions, that are engaging, informative and develop pupils' skills and appreciation of the environment.
- 2.2. The **SENCO** is responsible for:
 - Assessing additional individual needs of pupils with SEND prior to Forest School activities and promoting measures to ensure pupils with SEND can participate safely.

- Ensuring the **SEND Policy** is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Liaising with the **headteacher** to ensure additional provision is available for pupils with SEND as required.
- Ensuring that the provision put in place for pupils with SEND is monitored for effectiveness throughout the duration of the Forest School activities.

2.3. The **DSL** is responsible for:

- Ensuring the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities, e.g. by minimising pupils' exposure to members of the public at the Forest School.
- Consulting the **headteacher** and **Forest School leader** on measures necessary to ensure pupils are safeguarded adequately during activities.

2.4. Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy and the Forest School Handbook at all times during Forest School activities.
- Ensuring that pupils are always accounted for and supervised.
- Reporting any concerns and incidents to the **Forest School leader** and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting any safeguarding incidents to the **DSL** and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting concerns regarding the provision for pupils with SEND to the **SENCO**.
- Ensuring that pupils are always respectful to each other, staff and the natural environment.
- Disciplining pupils in line with the **Behavioural Policy** when necessary.
- Adhering to the **Staff Code of Conduct** at all times.

3. Travel

- 3.1. The route to and from the site will be suitably risk assessed before the school's first Forest School session at the beginning of the year.
- 3.2. An attendance register will be taken of pupils upon arrival and before leaving the location – the class will not leave unless all pupils are accounted for.
- 3.3. Staff ensure that the security of the school and the Forest School location is not compromised whilst unattended, e.g. by locking any entrances and exits as necessary.

4. Location

- 4.1. The location chosen is suitable for allowing pupils to explore the natural world and build their confidence in an outdoor environment.
- 4.2. Pupils are reminded of the hazards of the site prior to entering and are reminded to remain vigilant throughout.

- 4.3. The location will be surveyed **prior to every session by the Forest School Leader and the Site Manager** to ensure it is safe for pupils to use.
- 4.4. The **Site Manager** will remove or control any minor hazards.
- 4.5. Any areas that are deemed to pose a substantial risk and cannot be adequately controlled or removed are clearly marked and staff and pupils will not enter them for any reason.
- 4.6. Staff will communicate clearly to pupils the areas they are permitted to explore and issue frequent reminders, where necessary.
- 4.7. Pupils will be taught to show respect for the environment, e.g. they do not litter and leave the area clean and tidy. If the area isn't left tidy and clear a litter pick will be carried out.

5. Supervision

- 5.1. Staff and volunteers will supervise pupils at a ratio's shown below, in line with the School's Educational Visits Policy:

Nursery/Pre-school 1:3

Reception 1: 4

School years 1 - 3, 1:6

School years 4 - 6, 1:15

- 5.2. Head counts will be conducted regularly to prevent the risk of pupils going missing or leaving the sight of staff and volunteers. The return call will be carried out at regular intervals throughout the Forest School session to facilitate this ('one, two three where are you?' 'One, two, three here I am).
- 5.3. In the event of a pupil going missing, staff will follow the 'Missing child Procedure' in the Forest School Handbook.
- 5.4. Supervising staff and volunteers will be adequately trained to ensure they can safely assist pupils during Forest School activities, every member of staff will read and use the Forest School Handbook for guidance and support.
- 5.5. Supervising staff will be informed of any hazards present by the **Forest School leader** and ensure mitigating measures are in place and adhered to by pupils.

6. Tools

- 6.1. Pupils will be taught how to use tools and equipment independently and safely during activities (Please see relevant Risk Assessments).
- 6.2. Staff will demonstrate the safe use of all tools before pupils are allowed to use them.
- 6.3. The Forest School leader assesses the risks posed by particular tools and consequently implements suitable staff: pupil ratios to supervise pupils using these tools.

- 6.4. All activities planned, including those using tools, will be risk assessed by the **Forest School leader**.
- 6.5. All tools will be kept clean and fit for use; tools which are damaged or defective will not be used.
- 6.6. An inventory of all tools is kept to ensure they can be accounted for and any lost or misplaced items identified.
- 6.7. If a member of staff, volunteer or pupil suffers an injury during the use of a tool, the activity will be suspended, and the injury will be handled in line with the **First Aid Policy**.

7. Materials

- 7.1. Pupils will be encouraged to interact with the environment, which includes touching and moving materials, e.g. rocks and sticks safely and are warned about not ingesting poisonous plants and berries.
- 7.2. Pupils will be allowed to carry sticks, provided they are shorter than the length of their arm and they maintain a suitable distance from others when carrying the stick to avoid injury.
- 7.3. Staff will supervise and encourage pupils to work together to move larger materials, e.g. branches.
- 7.4. Pupils will be asked to return any materials to the environment before leaving the Forest School.
- 7.5. Staff will supervise all interactions with the natural world, e.g. climbing, and intervene where there is a substantial risk posed by the pupil to themselves or others.
- 7.6. Pupils will be taught about the importance of not damaging or defacing living nature, e.g. trees and plants, when interacting with the environment and its materials.
- 7.7. The **Forest School leader** will provide materials during sessions, e.g. rope, and encourage pupils to use them to interact with their environment.

8. Wildlife

- 8.1. The **Forest School leader** will plan sessions in order to allow pupils to engage with wildlife as much as possible while considering safety at all times.
- 8.2. Pupils will be encouraged to discover and learn about the variety of wildlife that lives within the Forest School.
- 8.3. Pupils will be taught the importance of not disturbing natural habitats and respecting wildlife.

- 8.4. Staff, volunteers and pupils will be instructed by the **Forest School leader** about potential risks from local wildlife and the necessary precautions to take, e.g. how to spot and avoid stinging nettles and poisonous plants.
- 8.5. Pupils will only be allowed to get close to, touch, move or pick up plants or wildlife where it is safe to do so.
- 8.6. Instances of deliberate harm or damage to wildlife will be managed in line with the school's **Behavioural Policy**.
- 8.7. Pupils will be instructed that they are not to consume any food they find, e.g. berries (we use the phrase 'don't pick and lick' to remind the children).

9. Fire

- 9.1. Fires will only be lit in the forest school fire pit, surrounded by a safe zone and under the direction of the **Forest School leader**.
- 9.2. A suitably trained member of staff who is equipped to manage fire safety is on site at all times when fire is being taught about or is present.
- 9.3. The fire will only be lit once it is confirmed that all safety equipment, e.g. a water bucket, fire gauntlets, fire protection blanket and a First Aid burns kit is in place.
- 9.4. The fire will be supervised by an adult at all times.
- 9.5. Activities taking place near to the fire involving pupils, e.g. cooking, are supervised at a ratio of **1:2**.
- 9.6. The fire will be created using safe fire-lighting equipment with no accelerants used.
- 9.7. Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a water bucket, will be located nearby in the event of an emergency.
- 9.8. The **Forest School leader** will consider what food can be cooked and eaten by pupils using the fire, with any allergies of staff and pupils considered in addition to other dietary requirements.
- 9.9. Food that is to be eaten by pupils will be inspected by a member of staff to ensure it is fit for consumption, e.g. it is thoroughly cooked.
- 9.10. The **Forest School leader** will ensure the fire is extinguished safely before the session ends.

10. Clothing

- 10.1. The **Forest School Leader** will communicate to parents in advance of Forest School sessions the pupils' clothing requirements.
- 10.2. Clothing requirements are subject to change and weather dependent but will include the following:

- Long sleeved t-shirt
 - Trousers
 - Waterproof trousers or dungarees and jacket
 - Wellington boots
 - Trainers
 - Sunhat
 - Winter gear, e.g. fleece jacket, leggings, gloves
- 10.3. Pupils will bring their clothes in a named bag to minimise the risk of misplacing or losing items.
- 10.4. In order to make Forest School accessible to all pupils, the school will ensure spare clothing in multiple sizes is available to be lent to disadvantaged pupils where necessary.
- 10.5. Clothing and footwear appropriate to the Forest School environment, activity and weather will be worn at all times.
- 10.6. Pupils will not take part in Forest School activities if they do not have the appropriate clothing and the school is unable to provide its own; alternative arrangements will be put in place for the pupil.
- 10.7. Clothing will be worn to suit the weather; in cases of severe weather, the **Forest School leader** will decide if it is safe for the session to begin or continue. In cases of snow, ice and strong winds Forest School sessions will be cancelled and alternative provisions will be put in place.
- 10.8. Parents will be asked to provide sun lotion for pupils where necessary.

11. Toilet and hygiene facilities

- 11.1. Pupils will be encouraged to use the toilet at school before the Forest School session begins.
- 11.2. Any accidents will be managed in line with the school's **Intimate Care Policy**.
- 11.3. The **Forest School leader** will make staff aware of the toilet facilities available for use during sessions.
- 11.4. Pupils using the toilet will be supervised by a member of staff and taken back to the school building.
- 11.5. Water, eco-friendly soap or hand sanitiser will be available to allow pupils to clean their hands when necessary.
- 11.6. Clean drinking water will be supplied.

12. Behaviour

- 12.1. Pupils will be informed of their behavioural expectations and that inadequate behaviour may result in them being unable to participate in the Forest School.

- 12.2. The **Forest School leader** will establish set rules which are repeated during each session in order to promote pupils' ability to explore independently while keeping safe and behaving appropriately.
- 12.3. Positive behaviour, e.g. teamwork and consideration for others, will be promoted through planned activities.
- 12.4. All staff will model good behaviour, e.g. co-operation and caring for the environment, during Forest School activities.
- 12.5. Pupils will be made aware that positive behaviour, e.g. displaying respect for the environment, means they will be trusted to explore and lead sessions with greater independence.
- 12.6. Challenging behaviour is managed in line with the **Behavioural Policy**.
- 12.7. Challenging behaviour will initially be dealt with by one-to-one adult support, where possible, to identify its cause.
- 12.8. Pupils persistently displaying challenging behaviour, or acting in a manner that places themselves or others at risk of harm, will not be allowed to participate in the rest of the Forest School session; they will be escorted away and supervised away from other pupils.
- 12.9. The **headteacher** will decide if it is necessary to exclude a pupil indefinitely from Forest School activities due to persistent breaches of the **Behavioural Policy**.

13. Inclusivity

- 13.1. Forest School activities will be planned in line with the school's **SEND Policy** to ensure that pupils with SEND can participate as much as possible.
- 13.2. The **Forest School Leader** will liaise with the **Class Teacher** and **SENCO** and the parents of pupils with SEND to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.
- 13.3. The **Forest School Leader** will liaise with the **school nurse** and the parents of pupils with medical conditions or allergies to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.
- 13.4. The **Forest School Leader/Headteacher** will identify if the location poses accessibility issues to any pupils and whether any accessibility means will be required, e.g. accessibility ramps.
- 13.5. Pupils with SEND will be provided with supervision during Forest School activities where required; this supervision will not count towards other relevant staffing ratios.
- 13.6. A variety of materials will be used that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping.

- 13.7. Sensitivity to the religious and cultural beliefs of pupils will be displayed at all times, e.g. in regard to their clothing or foods they may not wish to eat.
- 13.8. All pupils will be encouraged to participate and will be made to feel that their experiences and contributions are valued in order to build their confidence and self-esteem.

14. Incidents and emergencies

- 14.1. At least **one** trained first aider will be present during all Forest School activities.
- 14.2. The **Forest School leader** will create and explain to staff and pupils the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident, e.g. the area where all pupils are to gather in order to be easily supervised.
- 14.3. The **Forest School leader** will carry a fully stocked first-aid kit at all times during Forest School sessions.
- 14.4. All incidents, injuries and illnesses will be managed in line with the **First Aid Policy**.
- 14.5. Staff will be aware of any allergies pupils may have and carry suitable medication as part of the first aid kit.
- 14.6. Staff will carry walki-talkie's to be able to contact each other and the school office. The Forest School Lead will carry the school mobile phone to ring the emergency services in the event of an incident.
- 14.7. In the event of a missing pupil, staff will gather all pupils together at an agreed point and will follow the 'Missing Child Procedure' in the Forest School Handbook.
- 14.8. If the missing pupil is not found after **10 minutes**, the police will be contacted immediately and informed of all necessary details; the school office and the pupil's parents will be contacted immediately afterwards.
- 14.9. In the event of an injury, staff will provide immediate assistance and a trained first aider will remain with the injured person until the situation is resolved.
- 14.10. The Forest School Leader will assess injuries and decide if further medical attention is needed; the emergency services will be contacted immediately where necessary.

