Clybiau Llywodraethwyr a Chylch Chwarae
Gresffordd Gresford
Governors' Clubs and Playgroup

Outdoor Learning & Forest School Policy

Equality Act Impact Assessment	YES	NO	Ionawr 2025
Last Review Date	May 2026		
Date to be reviewed	May 2027		
Date Adopted by Management Committee	10.06.2026		
Responsible Individual - Mr Richard Hatwood			
Chair of Management Committee – Mrs Jan MacDonald			

Vision Statement and Rationale

We aim to give children and practitioners a shared understanding of the ethos of Outdoor Learning as well as providing an immersive and engaging Forest School experience and to promote the holistic development of all pupils.

As a setting we aim to provide the children with the skills for life-long learning, to be independent, self-motivated, considerate and to develop an ethical consideration for our environment Outdoor learning and having experience in the Forest School environment particularly support the development of self-esteem and self-confidence.

The setting is committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to take part in Outdoor Learning experiences.

Please see our Additional Learning Needs policy on our website:
https://www.gresfordallsaints.co.uk/playgroup-playgroup-plus-1/

The legislative setting

We aim to and are committed to providing a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

Gresford Governors' Club and Playgroup undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act 1986
- Children's' Act 1989
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Definition of Forest School

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process that offers opportunities for holistic growth. It supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It can help to develop confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

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. Forest School originates in Scandinavia which first arrived in the UK in 1993 and has grown since then.

Forest School Principles

Six main principles for forest school sessions as agreed by the UK Forest School Community in 2011: -

1. Long term regular sessions – with the same group of children to show progression in their learning within physical boundaries.
2. Natural environment with some trees – using natural resources for inspiration.
3. Holistic development – aim to link experiences with school and/or home.
4. Supportive risk taking – subject to risk/benefit process.
5. Qualified and reflective practitioners – leaders to see themselves as learners too.
6. Child centred – respond to the needs and interests of the learners.

Our Aim

We aim to give children and practitioners a shared understanding of the ethos of a Forest School and Outdoor Learning experiences.

As a setting we aim to provide the children with the skills for life-long learning, to be independent, self-motivated, and considerate. Forest School particularly supports the development of self-esteem and self-confidence as well as holistic development. Holistic development includes health and well-being, physical development resilience independence spiritual connection social skills, language, creativity and confidence all of which is facilitated in learning and play in the natural environment.

Through Outdoor Learning and Forest School activities we aim to provide a stimulating learning environment to cater for the variety of learning styles and needs (visual, auditory and kinetic).

Importance of Play

Forest school supports the concept of child led learning – often facilitated through the encouragement of children to play.

Risky play involves activities for the children which involve playing and learning – such as climbing trees and using tools.

Many activities within a FS environment involve risk. Equally they have a benefit to individuals and should be promoted. Helping individuals learn new skills and develop self-esteem, relationship building, creative expression, interpersonal skills and self-confidence.

Environmental Considerations

Forest School has environmental awareness at the heart of its ethos.

We aim to ensure that;

- wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recyclable materials are used
- good practice should be modelled by adults to children to foster and encourage an understanding that we ned to care and look after the world in which we live

- to limit the damage to fauna and flora and to review our school site management plan and ecological impact assessment on a regular basis

Health and Safety Considerations

Forest School and Outdoor Learning activities will support children of all ages to begin to and develop responsibility for themselves and others. We hope to encourage and develop risk management strategies that will promote children to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

Outdoor Learning and Forest School activities will act in line with our settings Health and Safety Policy: https://www.gresfordallsaints.co.uk/playgroup-playgroup-plus-1/

Risk Assessment

In line with the Health and Safety Executives guidelines, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), the LEA, CIW and the settings Risk Assessment and Health and Safety policies: https://www.gresfordallsaints.co.uk/playgroup-playgroup-plus-1/

The following steps are to be followed:

- a full risk assessment of the site to identify hazards
- decide who could be harmed and how
- having spotted the hazards, evaluate the risks and decide on a course of action
- review the risk assessment and update if necessary

The risk assessment is a working document which may be subject to change for example unforeseen circumstances or extreme weather such as high winds or lightening.

Parental Consent

Parents are informed of forest school sessions in advance and are asked to send their child with the appropriate PPE such as strong, sturdy sensible footwear, arms and legs covered and other appropriate clothing such as warm waterproof coat, hat and gloves etc. By allowing their child to participate parents are consenting to allow forest school leaders and on site first aiders to administer first aid if required. The staff in the setting will support the children are to apply their own suncream and insect repellent at regular intervals as and when required.

Accidents and First Aid Procedure

A first aid kit is taken down to the forest school area and remains there for the duration of the forest school session. This first aid kit together with the fire/burns kit are kept in hard plastic containers and conform to current health and safety regulations. These kits do not contain tablets or ointments. These first aid kits are checked and maintained every half term and any items that are past their expiry date will be discarded and replaced. Similarly, any items used during a forest school session will be replaced such as alco wipes and plasters.

In the event of an accident/incident the following procedure will apply

1. Stop the activity and forest school assistant to take the group whilst forest school leader/first aider administers first aid.
2. In the case of an accident that requires emergency assistance, the forest school leaders' mobile phone will be used to contact emergency services and the school office.
3. Forest school assistant will be sent for assistance from the main school building.
4. All accidents must be reported to the forest school leader and headteacher and recorded on accident forms in duplicate – one to be sent home with the child and one to be kept on file in setting. Incident book held by the forest school leader will also be completed.
5. Parents will be notified by a verbal conversation upon collection and any issue regarding a head injury will be dealt with in accordance with setting policy and a telephone call to child's parent/guardian.
6. Staff accidents on forest school site must be recorded on an accident form and reported to forest school leader and headteacher.
7. Our Early Years Manager must be informed as soon as possible if an accident has occurred which resulted in a child or adult needing professional medical assistance.
8. Disposable gloves are to be worn when dealing with spillage of any bodily fluids – paper towels on site to be used and disinfectant to be used if appropriate. Contaminated materials should be disposed of in a sealed plastic bag.
9. Staff should be aware of children's allergies when on site.

First Aid Kits

First aid kit contents – including needing: - accident book, notebook to make immediate notes, near misses to be recorded too, fire blanket, microfibre towel, foil blanket, emergency bag, bottle of water – sealed for cut cleansing, wipes, WATER based burns gel, tic remover, suncream, skin-so-soft, tweezers, gloves/face shield.

General first aid kit contents – several plasters, several Alco wipes, bandages, gauze, micropore tape, scissors, latex free gloves – three pairs.
Ice pack – brought to site in clean box.

Welfare

Fire Safety Procedures

Siting and building

In forest school we will be teaching the safe siting, lighting and management of a campfire and surrounding area.
Any fires on site will be contained within a metal drum on the fire pit base with stone surround which is 1.5m away from the fire itself, this is purpose built on a flat and clear surface away from hazards.
The forest school leader will ensure that there is safe boundary around the fire, any fire shelters or flame-resistant tarpauline will be erected 8ft above the fire pit area. Clear exits around the fire area.

Prior to lighting the fire, the forest school leader will check the weather conditions, particularly wind direction and any likelihood of rain as this can have an impact on the early success and longevity of the fire.
The forest school leader will encourage the children on site to collect sticks for use on the fire particularly non-toxic types of wood.

Lighting

In the fire lighting kit there is cotton wool, newspaper made into doughnuts as well as flint and steel. The sticks collected will be placed in size order ready for use, from tinder (preferably silver birch as it light easily and burns hot and fast) to pencil sized etc through to logs, usually laid in a tepee or waffle formation. Light whilst crouching down on one knee for stability.
Set the newspaper, cotton wool (with a touch of Vaseline added if needed) small tinder and then strike flint with steel onto the cotton wool and newspaper.
Use a kneeler pad or other flat object as a bellow to fan the fire.

Managing

This is to ensure that the fire keeps contained and keeps burning in a safe and secure way, with a full fire bucket and burns kit on standby.
Feeding the fire requires the forest school leader to adopt a supportive stance such as on one knee, and to utilise fire gauntlet gloves, then logs can safely be added and the fire adjusted with longer sticks as and when required, The forest school leader will keep a watchful eye on the surrounding areas to ensure that the fire as well as hot ashes are safely contained and the fires will need to be supervised by an adult at all times and only kept going for as long as is needed.
Bellows can be used to fan air down and into the fire to assist.

Extinguishing

When extinguishing the fire, this is an ideal opportunity to try and link in some reflection of the session with the children. Utilising water from the fire bucket and a small container and working from outside in, slowly and carefully pouring small cupful amounts into the fire area, that way the fire doesn't smoke or flood.
When the fire has been steadily extinguished, disperse the ashes to ensure that the ground has been saturated and that there are no glowing embers left to reduce ecological impact and to leave no trace.

<u>Tool Use Procedure</u>

Tools are kept in a secure bag which is clearly labelled with the bags content.

When introducing tools to the children we highlight the following;

- correct name of the tool
- checking the tool over to ensure safe to use
- correct handling of the tool
- purpose that the tool is used for (e.g palm drills for putting small holes into a piece of wood)
- Demonstrating safe and correct use of the tool together with the appropriate PPE

- When finishing using the tool, teaching how to correctly store it and return it to the tool bag.

We will;

- ensure that the children using the tools are supervised appropriately to their age
- ensure that the children are wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment for example a glove on the non-dominant hand
- allow the children the opportunity to take the appropriate supported risks
- ensure safe use of the tools, that they are used in a designated and agreed area of the site
- appropriate tool has been selected for the task

Individual Tools

Potato Peelers	Use for peeling and sharpening sticks – amount depending on agreed ratios
Knife	Cutting – to be held by forest school leader
Secateurs	For cutting/pruning. The bypass action type are recommended.
Loppers	For cutting/pruning branches for 3-5cm in diameter
Bow Saw	Suitable for most coppicing work – suitable for felling large coppice stems and small trees.

Cooking and Eating procedure

Before children and adults eat or cook they must ensure that they have washed their hands. We ensure that all adults are aware of any food allergies and / or intolerances and cater for these accordingly wherever possible.

When cooking around the fire we must ensure the following;

- all food is properly and safely cooked
- check food is not too hot prior to eating
- food is stored correctly, for example in a cool bag, in sealed containers, in the shade

- any leftovers are removed from the site
- fire rules and fire safety procedures are adhered to
- water, fire blanket and emergency bag are on hand in case of burns
- safe and appropriate number of children cooking at once – dependant on what is being cooked
- appropriate cooking equipment and protective clothing is worn

Toilet facilities are not provided on the forest school site as it is within the school grounds so children are instructed to inform a member of staff if they need to use the toilet, then a member of staff will take them to the toilet.

Please see our toileting and nappy changing policies on our website: https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/allsaints-primary-school/UploadedDocument/38adf93d19ce4626b49963909cd5e3ca/fire-safety-policy-ebrill-2021.pdf

Equipment List

First aid kit, burns kit, bin bags, fresh clean water for handwashing, kitchen towel, clean hand towel, antibac handwash, fire register, accident forms, mobile phone for emergency.
When using fire – fire bucket, burns kit and fire gauntlets – kindling, tinder, fire lighter/flint and steel, cotton wool, newspaper.
Using tools – tool kit – PPE gloves

PPE and Clothing:

- Children are to bring sensible footwear, ideally wellington boots, snow boots or trainers. No sandals, crocs or other open shoes to be worn during sessions. Socks to be worn to protect feet and legs.
- Children should wear long trousers to protect their legs from scratches and stings.
- During cold and damp weather children are to wear waterproof tops and trousers. Staff to assess whether they think the children are wearing sufficient PPE and to provide spares when necessary.
- Children to wear sun hats or caps during hot weather and to ensure they come to site with water in their drinks bottle.

Weather

- The Forest School Leader to keep a close eye on the weather conditions and cancel or shorten sessions if necessary.
- Sessions should be cancelled in high winds and extremely cold temperatures. After ice and snow the site should be carefully checked for hazards. The site should also be checked for fallen branches after high winds and storms.
- After heavy rainfall or during rain Forest School Leader to check trees that the children climb and make a decision as to whether they should continue to climb or to put the trees out of bounds for that session.

Daily Procedures

Before using the forest school site ensure the following have been carried out:-

- Check of the weather prior to the session and to plan accordingly or have indoor activities that can be adapted if needed.
- Site safety sweep of the area to be carried out in accordance with the site safety check sheet to check for litter, glass, animal faeces, etc. Any such items should be collected using disposable gloves and a plastic bag. Litter to be picked up using litter pickers and put in a bag to be disposed of. Regular litter picks to be carried out, half termly. Any hazards are removed if safe to do so or flagged up to the appropriate member of staff
- At the same time boundary ropes, fences, gates and hedges should be checked to ensure that they are secure and safe.
- Trees should be checked for any broken or dead branches which may fall.
- Checks should be made that no dead twigs, etc. protruding at eye-level from bushes etc.
- Check weather conditions, if it is unduly windy or a thunderstorm is imminent or has commenced. Then it is not advisable to carry out a Forest school session.
- Equipment list - first aid kit, fire register, burns kit, fire bucket, PPE, clean water for hand washing, soap, antibac gel, rubbish bag, litter pickers and hand towel need to be taken down to site.

During the session

- Remind the children of the relevant and correct PPE as well as site rules and safety such as stick safety, fire safety and berries/fungi awareness.
- Keep a close eye on the children whilst on site – assess their engagement and learning through the pedagogy of play.
- For those children that require support to learn – are they engaged or on task

End/After Session

- Clear the sire – ensure that any equipment is taken back to the setting building or stored away safely in the onsite shed in accordance with the shed inventory.
- Ensure all tools are counted in, cleaned and put away in the appropriate places.
- Extinguish the fire – ensure that it is out completely before leaving site and remove any bags of litter.
- Carry out a reflection task with the children.
- Last look round the site to ensure that nothing has been left or forgotten
- Refill the first aid kit and fill in any forms/complete forest school leaders' accident/near miss documentation and relay messages to parents regarding any accidents etc. Return first aid kit

Manual Handling

The setting will ensure that any problem areas (in relation to Manual handling) are risk assessed and appropriate control measures put in place. Further advice on the subject may be obtained from the Safety Officer and the model Risk Assessment for Primary schools.

Safeguarding

Our setting prides itself on its positive safeguarding culture and further information can be found on our website: https://www.gresfordallsaints.co.uk/wrap-around-care-1/

Children will be taken onto the forest school site by trained members of staff who are DBS checked in accordance with the local authority employment procedures.

Safeguarding of all children is our paramount concern and therefore any concerns will immediately be flagged up with one of the safeguarding officers on site in accordance with the setting safeguarding policy, details of which can be found on our website.

Whilst undertaking forest school activities, as with any school activities the children are expected to behave in accordance with the settings behaviour policy.

Bullying during forest school or outdoor sessions will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the settings antibullying policy

Lone Working

It would not be possible to run a forest school session safely with only one responsible adult in the forest school area. In the event that such a situation would arise – the forest school session would not be able to proceed.

Lost or Missing Person

Central register on site to ensure that we have group register in case of a fire. In the unlikely event of a missing person or lost child within the forest school area on the school site a member of staff will immediately contact the school office using their mobile phone to alert staff to assist. Children will be lined up by the access gate of the forest school and will be marked off against the setting staff are permitted to take an iPads onto the forest school site to capture the active learning and activities that the children are taking part in. Staff are aware of children for whom parents have not consented for them to appear in photos or on social media.

Photos are taken purely to capture a child's/the children's learning experiences to be shared on class Seesaw and so that parents and carers can see what the children have experienced. This is also a useful reflective tool for forest school practitioners when planning future sessions.