#### Forest School Policy

**Statement of Intent**

Forest School offers children regular opportunities to undertake learning and play in local woodland. It is complementary, not separate to learning in a traditional classroom or playschool environment. Sessions in Forest School are not timetable or workbook-led, but driven by the learners themselves, drawing on their interests and imagination.

Through Forest School children are able to develop a lifelong love and understanding of the natural environment, whilst developing the core purposes of the Forest School ethos, namely, development of self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

### Philosophy

The philosophy which underpins the Forest School movement is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age from 2½ years upwards, through mastery of small, achievable tasks in a woodland environment, to grow in confidence and independence so that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth. Children will acquire new skills as they are ready for them so that activities can maintain a degree of challenge and excitement, whilst remaining safe and controlled.

Children see natural outdoor settings as free from adult agendas and influences. This encourages unrestricted play and the right balance between challenge and discovery will help develop many different skills for life. Playing outdoors, in natural places, supports and develops a child's sense of awareness. They recognise their independence and connection with nature and the outside world.

### Experience

Experience in other settings has shown Forest School to be inspirational, opinion changing and challenging. It raises expectations and develops insights into individual learning styles and schemas. It is personally and socially uplifting so laying the foundations for other learning. Unlike other forms of outdoor education which generally concentrate on team-building, challenging activities or competitiveness, the Forest School embraces an entirely different approach through the nurturing, support and development of the self-esteem of participants.

### Location

Every activity carried out in the outdoors will have an impact on the immediate environment. We plan to keep this impact to a minimum. Activities will include: den building, willow weaving, pond dipping, insect safaris, mud sculpting, natural art, whittling etc.

### Clothing

It is important that all children have appropriate clothing suitable for all weather conditions. The Playgroup will supply waterproof trousers for the duration of the Forest School programme. These will be on loan for as long as the child attends Forest School. The waterproofs will be large enough that the children can wear warm clothing underneath.

Regardless of the weather all children are expected to wear long sleeves, long trousers and closed shoes at all times. This will protect them from the sun, stinging plants etc. Wellies should be worn on wet days. Sun hats are necessary for sunny days

# Environmental Considerations

Forest School has environmental awareness at the heart of its ethos- wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycle materials will be used when appropriate. Good practice should be modelled by adults showing children that the world in which we live in should be cared for. Involving children in site checks and planning environmental games will help support this.

# Health and Safety Considerations *(please see separate Health & Safety Policy)*

The Forest School programme will support young children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will even encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

# Child and Vulnerable Persons

Forest School Leaders and practitioners should regard their duty of care when working with young persons as extremely important.

To ensure all individuals (children, workers, and volunteers) are safe and protected we strongly recommend the following:-

* Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers should be made aware of the relevant school policies and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them
* Key members of staff will have Safeguarding Children Training.
* Forest School Leaders delivering training will have an enhanced level DBS check. It is strongly recommended that any regular volunteer attending Forest School should also have this. Where a volunteer or member of staff does not hold a current DBS certificate then they should not be left unsupervised with children.
* We regard safety and good practice as extremely important and it is the responsibility of individual staff and volunteers to ensure general safety during working.
* Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the Forest School Leader or Preschool Leader who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

# Considerations for Equality and Inclusion

## In Forest School sessions all persons should be treated equally.

We aim to and are committed to:

* providing a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued;
* including and value the contribution of all children and adults to our understanding of equality and diversity;
* make inclusion a thread which runs through all of the activities of Forest School

# Cancellation Procedure

There may be times when Forest School sessions have to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. These may be:-

* Staff illness – which prevents staff / child ratios being met.
* Severe weather conditions.
* Any situation that poses a health and safety risk.

##### **In the event of this situation arising we inform all parties involved:**

* Cancellation decisions are made as soon as possible and that the school, staff and volunteers are contacted via telephone.
* We will endeavour to run Forest School sessions whenever possible, however reserve the right to cancel on the day, but will aim to inform everyone as soon as possible.

## **Evaluation Procedure**

In order to develop the Forest School program and to ensure good practice is maintained a number or evaluation tools maybe undertaken:

* Evaluation of activities undertaken.
* Evaluation of session – looking at what dispositions and attitudes are being developed.
* Evaluation from children.
* Evaluation from all staff involved in Forest School.

**In addition, the following procedures and documentation in relation to Forest School are in place:**

**Our Preschool Policies**

* Health & Safety
* Risk Assessment
* Safeguarding Children

**The legal framework for this guidance is:**

* Race Relations Act 1976;
* Race Relations Amendment Act 2000;
* Sex Discrimination Act 1986;
* Children Act 1989; and
* Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Signed at trustees meeting.............................................................................................

Date...........................................................................

Adopted at staff meeting..............................................................................................

Date............................................................................

Review Date................................................................