

HOLY SOULS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pride in our achievements



Policy for Forest School and Forest School Health and Safety

mission Statement

Holy Souls School is a Catholic School where we live our life in Christ in the growing knowledge that God loves us. Our school is a place where everyone is able to feel welcomed, valued, secure, loved and happy. Everyone who comes into our school will be treated with respect. We remember what Jesus said, 'Treat others as you would like them to treat you'

Date Agreed by Governors: 7th December 2023

Governor Review Date: Autumn 2026

Holy Souls RC Primary School

Policy for Forest School and Forest School Health and Safety

Introduction

This document is a statement of the school's policy for Forest School and Forest School Health and Safety. It was developed during the autumn term of 2018, through a process of consultation with staff and Governors, it has been reviewed in the autumn term of 2023. A schedule for the review of this, and all other policy documents, is set out in the School Development Plan.

Mission Statement

"To love one another as I have loved you," is at the heart of our Mission Statement. Holy Souls School is a place where we share our life in Christ, in the growing knowledge that Jesus loves us. Our school is a place where everyone is able to feel welcomed, valued, secure, loved and happy. Everyone who comes into our school will be treated with respect and valued as a unique member of our school family.

By protecting the members of our school family, we are ensuring that all feel valued, secure and therefore loved and happy.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion at Holy Souls Forest School

Holy Souls School is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all our children, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We undertake to ensure that all our children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued;
- Appreciate and value the differences they see in others;
- Take responsibility for their own actions;
- Are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs;
- Are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success;
- Use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds;
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles;
- Are set challenging targets that enable them to succeed;
- Participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

To ensure all pupils are able to take part in forest school we have:

- Outdoor waterproof clothing
- Wellington Boots
- Hats
- Gloves

Children and parents are encouraged to provide their own, however, we realise this is not always possible, so our items may be used.

Parents are informed about the possibility of the children coming home with mud on them.

We encourage a measure of risk-taking, always under close adult supervision, and actively foster friendships and collaboration between children who do not always get along in the usual course of events.

Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment, even if this seems to be of a transitory nature. The forest environment is one to which we all have an entitlement and we believe the happy experiences we have there will linger in the memory for years to come.

Children with medical needs or disabilities will be helped so they can take as full a part as everyone else in Forest School sessions. Those with challenging behaviour are risk-assessed and may need one-to-one supervision, but their entitlement remains the same.

Safeguarding Children and Confidentiality and in Holy Souls Forest School

At Holy Souls School we fully recognise and understand the responsibility we have to ensure our pupils are safe and protected in regards to child protection and confidentiality. This applies to all adults working in the Forest School. Our school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is also recognised and enforced within our Forest School environment.

In addition to everyday practice, Forest School leaders need to recognise that the children may feel more relaxed and at ease when they are encouraged to take risks and make their own judgements in this area. This may result in them making a disclosure. If this happens during our Forest School sessions the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must be adhered to.

Reminder of key points:

- Listen to the child but don't ask any leading questions – remember you can't promise to keep a secret.
- Collect a blue form from the staffroom and fill it in.
- Give the form to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (the Headteacher) or in her absence to the Deputy Headteacher.

Forest School Health and Safety Policy

1. Aim of the Forest School Health and Safety Policy

The main aim is to set out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the school within Forest School. The following is a list of additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions.

The contents of this policy should be read alongside the following policies and procedures:

Health and Safety Policy

Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Social Media Policy

Special Needs Policy

Tool Use Procedures (see Appendix 1 at the end of this policy)

Fire Safety Use Procedures (see Appendix 2 at the end of this policy)

2. Scope

This policy applies to all adults who may accompany Forest School sessions. The person in charge is always the trained Forest School Leader. The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in his/her care, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.

All adult helpers **must** sign and date a form to show they have read this policy and appropriate risk assessments and that they understand and agree to comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School.

3. Health and Safety Responsibilities

The Forest School Leader or Assistant will carry a First Aid kit.

The Forest School Leader will carry a Fire Safety kit inc. fire blanket, fire medical kit and water bucket.

The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range.

In the event of an emergency, the Forest School Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services.

The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every session.

When tools are used the adult:child ratio will always be 1:1.

All tools will be kept in a locked area and will only be used by the Forest School Leader.

When a fire is in use the Forest School Leader is responsible for making sure the area is safe to use. The fire pit will never be left unattended.

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader, in conjunction with the site supervisor, to assess whether the site is safe to use before the session.

Suitable clothing and footwear must be worn by all adults and pupils.

6.0 Policy review

The school will review this policy at least every 3 years, or if there is any significant change and update, modify or amend it as it considers necessary, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and pupils. The Headteacher will draw this policy to the attention of all employees.

Sara Akehurst
September 2023

Appendix 1

Procedures for Using Tools at Forest School

Using a range of tools will be necessary in some activities and is an important part of Forest School. It enables participants to develop new practical skills that help develop self-confidence. At Holy Souls we aim to ensure that all children participating in sessions with tools do so safely and with as little risk to their health and safety as possible. Tools that may be used include potato peelers, knives, bow saws, loppers, bush craft knives and billhooks.

The following guidelines are to be followed when using tools:

- The forest school leader will check all tools are fit for continued use before the session.
- Only tools that are in safe working order shall be used.
- Correct and safe use of sharp tools will be demonstrated to all staff and participants.
- Tools should be counted when handed out and counted back in again when finished.
- All individuals are to be supervised closely.
- Tools should be kept in a designated safe area when not in use - none should be left unattended outside this area.
- All knives will be closed/ sheathed immediately after use.
- Saw guards will be replaced immediately after use.
- Walking around with open/ unmasked tools will not be permitted.
- Safe working distances and suitable ratios must be maintained at all times.

All group members will wear suitable boots/shoes and outdoor clothing for the activity they take part in.

Guidance on Knife Use

- Designate a specific zone for those using knives.
- Always carry knife with sheath firmly on.
- Always pass knife with sheath firmly on and in demonstrated manner.
- Always keep knife in sheath when not in use.
- Leader to count knives out & back in.
- Ensure participants have had demonstration before use (& leader is confident of participant's ability) including grip and body position.
- Knife work is always supervised by a responsible adult with a ratio of 1:1.

Appendix 2

Procedures for Using a Fire at Forest School

Fires and the use of Kelly kettles are an important part of the Forest School experience. At Holy Souls we aim to ensure that all children participating in sessions with fires and/or Kelly kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health and safety as possible.

Fires will only be used where it is appropriate to do so.

- Leaders will explain to participants the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat.
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood.
- Those in smoky areas will be encouraged to move to less smoky areas.
- Fires will only be lit in a fire pit.
- Participants will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment.
- All children will be given clear guidelines about how to behave and move around the area when the fire or kettle is lit.
- A lit fire will be supervised by an adult at all times, as will all cooking activities.
- Related safety equipment, including heat-proof gloves, a fire blanket, a burns kit and water will be kept within close range of fires.
- All fires should be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of a session.

Food Hygiene & Eating

All participants on activities will be encouraged to wash their hands with water and soap, which will be provided, before eating food. During some sessions, we may cook items such as popcorn, bread or marshmallows over the fire.