



Bretherton Endowed Forest School Policy

“Walking in the footsteps of Jesus with our Christian family, we learn, grow, achieve and flourish together in God’s love.”

This policy is for Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School and The Hub, Bretherton Endowed Out of School Provision.

Introduction

It is the mission of Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School to walk in the footsteps of Jesus with our Christian family, to learn, grow, achieve and flourish together in God’s love. To help fulfil our mission, we have introduced Forest School provision at our school in order to help educate the whole child.

This policy has been specifically written so that all parents, staff, volunteers and governors at Bretherton Endowed have a shared understanding of the Forest School ethos and its implementation at our school.

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

Health and Safety Policy; our Behaviour Policy; Safeguarding Policy; Special Educational Needs Policy; Equality Scheme.

Within this policy, the term ‘Forest School Leader’ refers to a member of staff, adult volunteer or bought in professional who holds a fully recognised Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification. Other staff may be able to access some parts of the forest school provision without the qualification if appropriately trained.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School as operated at Bretherton Endowed. Forest School builds on a child’s innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risk, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

Our Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

Develop self-esteem;

Develop self-confidence;

Form positive relationships with others;

Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others;

Learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults;

Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety;

Learn specific skills which link into the curriculum;

Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a forest environment.

Bretherton Endowed is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will be worn. During high winds or lightening it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods. The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development, all under the premise of 'play.'

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of our Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them. We aim to promote respect for wildlife and our woodland environment. This will be achieved partly through detailed long-term, medium-term and lesson planning. Careful reference will be made to our woodland management plan and ecological impact assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School Site.

Health and Safety Considerations

In the first instance please refer to Bretherton Endowed's Health and Safety Policy. The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times throughout any Forest School activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders. The Forest School programme provides children with opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst being independent in their learning, they will develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their actions have consequences. The Forest School Leaders will carry out risk assessments at the beginning of each term which will take account of seasonal changes. The Forest School site at Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School is situated adjacent to the right hand side of the school building and the rear of the school field. The Forest School Leaders and other practitioners regard their duty of care when working with pupils as extremely important.

For the safety and protection of all individuals – children, staff and volunteers - we ensure the following:

- Everyone involved in Forest School is briefed on health and safety and risk assessment of the site.
- Staff and volunteers are made aware of the Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding incorporating Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan.
- This is undertaken as part of induction and orientation of all staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers must undertake to adhere to the guidance contained within all these policies.
- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. During winter months pupils are expected to wear sturdy footwear or wellington boots, hats scarves, gloves and waterproof outerwear. Sunscreen and hats should be worn in the summer months.

Assessing and Reducing Risk at our Forest School

One of the reasons for introducing Forest School to Bretherton is a belief that children are sometimes overly and unnecessarily protected and cossetted from risks and that, ironically, this makes them less safe in the long run. At our Forest School we undertake a range of activities which contain a theoretical degree of risk. Through careful supervision, full training and good practice, we aim to ensure that accidents are avoided and that risks are reduced to manageable and acceptable levels. We have full written risk assessments in place for: our Site; Weather conditions and general welfare; Buildings and shelters; Rope and String; Fire; Food; Water; Collecting natural materials; Being off the ground; Blindfolds; Billhooks; Saws; Penknives and Potato peelers; Mallets. All these Risk Assessments can be found in the school office and on the school server. Written Risk Assessments are the starting point for our safe practice and procedures in Forest School. They are constantly reviewed and regularly updated in order to reflect the safest practice possible at Bretherton Endowed.

Fire at Forest School

If a fire is lit at our Forest School, it is always supervised by a Forest School Leader. Fires will never be left unattended. Safe fire practice is always adhered to. There will always be a water, bucket, fire gloves and fire blanket next to the fire. Children are taught and reminded of the fire circle rules from their first visit to Forest School.

These are:

Get a sit mat

Stand behind the logs

Step over and sit down on the logs on the sit mat

Stand up, turn around and step over the logs

Walk in a clockwise direction around the fire circle

Keep the area around the fire circle free from debris

NEVER cross the fire circle

When near the fire, always use the respect position

Cooking and Eating at Forest School

Forest School Leaders and other adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

Open fire cooking is only permissible in the designated areas.

The respect position should always be used when near the fire.

Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink.

All food is stored in appropriate containers.

Only clean equipment is used.

Any dietary requirements are noted and catered for.

Food will be cooked correctly.

All equipment and waste is cleared away.

Tools

The safety of all participants is of paramount importance. Participants ensure that tools are used safely by adopting the following:

Tools are stored correctly in school and checked after each session.

Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of the tool use session.

Leaders ensure that tool talks are given before any tools are used.

Children are supervised at all times whilst using tools of any description.

Inappropriate use of tools will not be tolerated and will result in immediate withdrawal from the task.

Dealing with strangers, members of the public and dogs

Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School incorporates the Forest School site. It is surrounded by a perimeter fence and shrubbery. However, there is always the possibility of these measures being breached. The following procedures will be adopted:

Children will be informed to never approach any person or animal (living or dead) within the forest or school grounds.

Staff will look for dog/animal owner and ask for its removal.

If the dog is stray, the situation will be risk assessed and it may be determined by staff that children should be taken indoors until the dog is under control.

Children will be told to inform a member of staff who will challenge any stranger on the site.

First Aid Level 3 Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid.

A First Aid Kit is always available on the Forest School site.

It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that the First Aid Kit is brought onto the site at the commencement of the session and returned to school after each session.

In cases of minor injury, such as cuts and grazes the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and complete a first aid note for the injured person to take home.

Emergency Procedures

It is vital that emergency procedures are adhered to. These are in place to safeguard pupils and adults alike. If a serious incident takes place, it will be essential to carry out an investigation promptly. Should a serious incident or accident occur, the Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of other participants by adopting the 'Long whistle - Come to me' call. Participants will be made aware of this procedure for calling everyone together in initial sessions of Forest School. In cases of emergency the Forest School Leader or other trained adult will administer first aid to the casualty. They will inform the school office who will alert parents and/or emergency services if necessary. They will inform the head teacher if the incident requires further medical treatment. If an accident occurs to a pupil, member of staff or visitor that requires help in addition to first aid e.g. Fire, Ambulance and Police then the LA must be informed of the circumstances as soon as possible. In the event of serious injury (this includes amputation, serious burns, acute illness, fracture, loss of sight or consciousness, or if

detained in hospital over 24 hours, or death); the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will be informed. These notifications are a legal requirement. The ‘Accident Report Form’ requires a written statement to be made with reference to the sequence of events, actions taken and responses and times of these actions. Names of witnesses should be recorded.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Forest School Leaders hold a fully recognised Level 3 Practitioners qualification; have fully enhanced CRB and outdoor first aid qualifications. Forest School Leaders have the overall responsibility for: Safety and risk assessment; Planning of sessions, evaluation and feedback; Liaising with school staff and governors; Administration of first aid; Responsibility for first aid kit, accident book, etc; Supervision of tool use; Supervision of fires and cooking area; Understanding the needs of children with SEND; Emergency procedures; Volunteers and trainees;

With support from the Forest School Leaders, volunteers and trainees are responsible for: Modelling good practice; Supporting and talking to pupils to extend their learning as appropriate; Additional support when Forest School leader is supervising tools or fire activities; Additional delegated jobs;

Insurance

Insurance for activities within Forest School are included within the school’s insurance policy.

Equal Opportunities

In the first instance please refer to the school Equalities Policy and Scheme. All people involved in Forest School sessions will be treated with respect and equality. Our priority is to ensure that children and adults have access to a safe and secure environment. We believe that any contributions made by staff, volunteers and participants in our sessions will be listened to and appreciated.

Evaluation Procedure

The Forest School Leaders have developed a long term progressive plan. They undertake to reflect and evaluate each session after its completion. At the end of each term the leaders meet to reflect on current activities, take into account feedback from all participants and then use this to inform future planning.

Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School Sustainability Plan

It is important to bear in mind the ecological impact of running a Forest School in the woodland at Bretherton’s and with that in mind consideration will be given to the following:

Bretherton Endowed CE Primary School – Policy Document

Any fire will be contained either within a Kelly kettle which uses very little fuel or within the fire pit which is situated within the centre of the fire circle

There will be a maximum of one fire per week to reduce the impact of the smoke disturbing any nesting birds in the upper canopy of the forest

The above actions will limit the amount of dead wood that is burnt as it is important for the soil layer of the forest

Children will be educated not to pick up anything still growing

There will usually be only one Forest School session per week to allow the ground to recover between visits

Policy agreed: November 2021

To be reviewed: Annually before the end of 2023



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