

Forest of Avon Trust

Forest School Handbook of Policies & Procedures

To be read by all adult leaders, volunteers and visitors of Forest of Avon Trust
forest school sessions

Contents

Introduction & Background	2
Ashton Court	3
Environmental Policy & Environmental Impact Assessment	5
Health & Safety	7
Tools, Fires and Activity Guidance	10
General Site Safety & Group Guidance	11
Safeguarding	15
Equal Opportunities	16
Behaviour	17
Learning & Development	20
Communication Strategy	21
Session Routines	22
Terms & Conditions	23
Sign-off Sheet	24
Appendices:	25
1: Risk Assessment & Session outline	25
2: Health Questionnaire	29
3: Incident Log Sheet	30
4: <i>Pro forma</i> Consent Form	31
5: Volunteer/Freelance Induction Agreement	32
6: Session Evaluation Form	33

Introduction & Background

The Forest of Avon Trust handbook contains information, policies and procedures relating to the running of Forest School sessions in a safe and enjoyable way. It was developed by Jon Attwood, Louise Emerson and Beatrix Oliver at the Forest of Avon Trust.

The Handbook is made available to partner organisations wishing to work with us prior to the activity taking place. It is also to be read by all staff, volunteers and freelancers working for or with the Forest of Avon Trust prior to participation. The Handbook is subject to annual review and to immediate review if an incident indicates the need for this.

Our Ethos

We believe everybody should have regular, long-term access to a woodland or natural environment which provides them with inspirational and challenging outdoor learning opportunities. Forest School offers a learner centred approach, where participants can learn through self-directed play and exploration. Participants who come to the woods with Forest of Avon Trust will be given the opportunity to develop their curiosity, confidence, self-esteem, creativity, empathy, communication skills, knowledge of the natural environment and ability to assess risk.

Activities

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of participants. Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations

Ashton Court

The 150 acre Ashton Court Estate, on the edge of Bristol, was purchased by Bristol City Council in 1959 and has since been a space open for public enjoyment. The Forest of Avon Trust office is located in the Mansion house and the Trust has special permission from the Estate to use its extensive woodlands for Forest School activities.

Getting here, parking & access

By bus

Frequent buses serve the southern Bower Ashton entrance to Ashton Court. The Wessex Red number **11** service links Bower Ashton to the city centre and the north of Bristol, and the number **11a** links Bower Ashton Campus to the city centre and Temple Meads. These services run up to four times an hour. Bus **505** runs to Bower Ashton from Southmead and Clifton. Buses to and from Clevedon, Weston-super-Mare, Portishead and Nailsea also stop close by. See <http://travelwest.info/bus> for routes and timetables.

By bike

Two long-distance cycle routes run directly past the Mansion house. National **Route 33** of the National Cycle Network starts in Bristol and passes through Clevedon, Weston-super-Mare, Bridgwater and Chard. It enters Ashton Court from the Bower Ashton entrance (near Southville) and the Long Ashton entrance. **Route 334** runs to the west of Bristol and connects Portbury and Felton via Ashton Court and Long Ashton. It can be joined at the Leigh Woods entrance and is therefore suited to those travelling from Clifton and North Bristol via the Clifton Suspension Bridge. Where the route turns right to Long Ashton, take a left turn towards the Mansion house instead. For maps and information about cycle routes visit <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map>

By car or minibus

To get to the woodland vehicles will need to enter Ashton Court via the **Clifton Lodge entrance**, which is **opposite the Clifton Suspension Bridge** and is also the entrance for **Ashton Court Golf Course**. To get to this entrance, there are two possible routes from Bristol. The first, takes you via Clifton and the suspension bridge on the **B3129**. Once over the bridge, go straight ahead to the first set of traffic lights, then cross over the A369 and under the **stone archway**, which is the Clifton Lodge entrance to Ashton Court Estate. Alternatively, the Clifton Lodge entrance can be approached from **Hotwells** by taking the **A3029** out of town. Once over the river Avon, go into the left hand lane, then bear right onto the **A370 (very briefly)** and almost immediately take the slip-road on the right which takes you through an underpass to a roundabout. Take the second exit on the roundabout, this is the **A369**. Stay on this road until you reach the traffic lights at the top of the hill. The Clifton Lodge entrance is directly after these, on the left.

Once through Clifton Lodge entrance, drive straight ahead - don't bear right up the hill to the Golf Club. Go straight on, someone from the Forest of Avon Trust will open up the barrier to allow vehicles through and give directions to the Forest School site.

Within the Estate

From Bower Ashton art college, continue past the college through the gates of Ashton Court (these are clearly marked) and walk to the courtyard of the Mansion house. The Forest of Avon Trust office is contacted via a telecom at the door marked 'Estate Office' to the right of the cafe.



Local medical facilities

The nearest 24/7 **Accident and Emergency** department is at Bristol Royal Infirmary, which is 3 miles from Ashton Court.

Upper Maudlin Street, Bristol BS2 8BJ

0117 923 000

For non-emergency ailments use the Bristol City Walk-in Centre (NHS), located in the city centre.

Appointments are not needed before 4pm. Open Monday - Saturday 8am - 8pm.

Broadmead Medical Centre

59 Broadmead, Bristol, BS1 3EA

0117 954 9828

Environmental Policy & Environmental Impact Assessment

We aim for all our participants and staff to engender a high level of respect for the natural world and encourage all to be involved in decisions about their environment and safety.

We aim to ensure that, where possible, the Forest of Avon Trust purchases products that have been assessed for having a lower impact on the environment. By operating in a way that minimises waste, optimises recycling and promotes the reuse of materials we hope to demonstrate and encourage a wider respect for the environment, as well as an understanding that all produce and waste is linked to the health of our planet as a whole.

On site activities such as fires will follow practices that minimise impact on wildlife through being mindful of what is burnt and how any residues are disposed of. Before leaving a site we will ensure that litter is collected and disposed of suitably.

Minimising Impacts

Activity	Impact	Mitigation
Collecting Wood	Dead wood is important to any woodland ecology as it has a multitude of uses, from homes for mini beasts to beds for fungi, so a lack of it is bad for any woodland habitat.	Limit the frequency of fires and evaluate the amount of dry, dead wood before having a fire. Collect only the minimum amount required for any given fire. Reserve specific areas for dead wood conservation.
Fires	Changes in soil chemistry can lead to increases in PH levels, carbon, phosphorous, etc. which can be harmful to some plants, whilst other essential nutrients may be depleted. Fire can travel underground to roots even after appearing to be extinguished.	Designate fixed locations for fires on parts of the site that aren't particularly ecologically interesting or unique. If possible, dispose of ash into patches of nettles. Ensure that all fires are extinguished fully before leaving a site. Where needed, use a fire wok to contain fire.
Cooking	Food waste may attract animals to the site or increase numbers of certain species, potentially leading to adverse changes in biodiversity.	Inform participants of these impacts and provide a container (to be taken away) or an ecologically sound place for food disposal.
Tree Climbing, Shelter Building & Swings	Damage to trees.	Restrict these activities to suitable trees that will tolerate them.
Collecting Natural	Damage to plants - some plants are	Inform groups as to which types of

Materials	far more sensitive to losing their leaves or flowers than others and different seasons affect this too.	plants are best to pick, if any. Ensure leaves or flowers are taken from fallen parts where possible. Limit the frequency of this type of activity. Leave plants unpicked whenever picking is not necessary.
Toilet Use	Wet wipes contain plastic. Human waste entering waterways	Burying faeces and tissues ensures they biodegrade. Either buy biodegradable ones, refrain from using them, or dispose of them in a bag to be taken away. Designated toileting area will be at least 20 metres from a waterway.

Sustainable procurement

The Forest of Avon Trust is a charity which holds environmental sustainability as a core value. We understand that the choices we make as buyers and consumers is a large part of our footprint and therefore strive to take this into account in our purchases. As far as possible we will buy items which are produced: as locally as possible; organically; from sustainable or renewable sources; ethically, with regards to environment, and workers' and animal welfare; and with minimum packaging.

Health & Safety

Health & Safety Policy

Forest School programmes may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for participants. It is the general approach of The Forest of Avon Trust to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits too. However, the Forest of Avon Trust seeks to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessment covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session.

Legislation

The Forest of Avon Trust fully accepts its legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The purpose of this act is to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of health and safety at work. It protects not only all people at work, but also the health and safety of the general public who may be affected by the work activities.

Staff & Training

All our tutors are professionals with relevant qualifications and experience and have undertaken current DBS (CRB) checks. At least one member of the on-site team will hold an up to date first aid qualification. We will also aim to provide adequate training and support to ensure all staff, volunteers and freelancers are confident and competent when following the policies and procedures we have set out in this Handbook.

Risk / Benefit Analyses

We believe that, while there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. We also recognise that taking risks is an important part of learning and developing and we want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn about risks, challenges and personal safety. Consequently, we will use a risk/benefit analysis in our assessment of our sites and activities.

On Site Risk Assessment Procedure

Forest School sites must be safe and easily accessible, so whenever possible we will visit and assess sites before activities take place. During our assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level. The location of the site and its grid reference are noted in the Site Information page of this Handbook. All staff, volunteers and freelancers will have access to this information in case the leader is unable to attend to an incident.

We will make agreements with landowner and explore specific site issues if necessary. Whilst doing this we will identify any hazards and implement the necessary controls, check for mobile phone coverage and access in case of emergency, and assess toilet facilities. We will ensure all Trust staff and partners are provided with a copy of the risk assessment prior to an activity.

When and where possible, we will carry out a last check of a site prior to the arrival of a group. Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to groups' arrival a site sweep and assessment will be made with the group upon their arrival.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards, such as windblown trees or litter

2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
4. Record the findings
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary

Shared Information & Responsibility

The majority of site based activities undertaken by the Forest of Avon Trust are carried out in partnership with schools and other organisations. In these situations the sharing of responsibility with respect to group safety and risk/benefit analysis will be agreed in advance. Any special knowledge of the group - for example a participant may have a particular fear of dogs or a food allergy - can be useful when planning activities as we aim to make every session as beneficial to participants as possible. Partner organisations and schools must provide information on behaviours that may present risk to individuals and/or the group and, if necessary, a separate risk assessment prepared.

Insurance

The Forest of Avon Trust and its staff are insured by Birnbeck Insurance for £5 million public liability cover.

Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure

Emergencies are never wanted, but they are a possibility, and so we at the Forest of Avon Trust ensure that all leaders are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures. Most emergencies can be resolved on-the-spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services should be contacted and the following procedures followed:

1. **Secure safety of whole group** from further danger. Stop all work/activities if safe. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance. If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.
2. **First Aider to attend to any casualties** with adult helper and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one first aider must be on site at all times. A record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them to be made if possible.
3. **Emergency services contacted as necessary**, ideally by an adult helper. Charged mobile phones are carried by staff. Despatch a designated driver to meet emergency vehicle at the entrance where possible/necessary. Give following grid references to 999 operator:
Top entrance to Ashton court (intersection of A369 & B3129): ST 55845 72707
Nearest location accessible by Emergency Vehicle: ST 54646 72023
4. **Safety of the rest of group** will be maintained by the remaining staff and adults away from the scene of the incident.
5. **Informing next of kin** should be carried out as soon as practicable after the incident by The Forest of Avon Trust Director or by the designated member of staff of the partner organisation according to their own health and safety policy.

6. **Inform management** The Forest of Avon Trust Director and managers of partner organisations must be informed of any major incident as soon as possible. Following this as soon as is possible the landowner of the site should also be informed.
7. **Incident report and/or first aid book** should be filled in on site if possible and then logged back at the Forest of Avon Trust Office (some visiting group staff may fill out their own incident report form) – see first aid kit for report form. This should be filled in whenever the emergency plan is used even if no one was harmed and it was just a near miss.

Legislation

Ensure that all equipment involved in an accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by the police.

Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record i.e. a log, of all facts, events, times and circumstances and retain this record until all matters are finally settled. If possible take photographs.

Do not allow anyone to interview any party member without an independent witness being present.

An incident report or entry in the first aid book must be completed, signed and dated (at Forest of Avon Trust office, if not done on site).

Incidents leading to admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours Tel 0845 3009923 (HSE - Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

First aid kits must be restocked after use and a stock check carried out every 6 months. Any incident or near miss must be subsequently investigated by staff team to review existing controls and procedures.

Lost or Missing Person Procedure

Unknown woods can be disorientating, especially if a participant is unused to this kind of environment. Many woodland sites are not surrounded by walls or fences, and whilst we appreciate this sense of freedom can be beneficial to all, there is also the possibility that a participant may get lost. There are a number of ways we can prevent this:

- We encourage all our participants to take an interest in their surroundings so as to help them find their bearings. Ultimately we would like to inspire all who are able to become responsible for their own safety with respect to staying close to the rest of the group.
- Boundaries will be chosen, clearly marked and made known to the group. Going outside the boundaries will require all of the group to go or a sub group, with at least one leader – allowing at least two leaders to stay with remainder of group.
- The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of day, then at other relevant points in the day – particularly after activities that include members splitting up.
- Good communication within the group will encourage collective responsibility for each others' safety – leaders are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participants whereabouts.

In the event of leaders fearing that a member of the group has gone missing:

1. All the group will be immediately called back in, by prearranged call or whistle, and counted and missing member determined. The time will be noted.
2. The Group Leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least two adults must stay with them at all times.
3. One or more adults should immediately start searching for the missing group member – calling and whistling as appropriate.
4. If the missing group member is not found within 5 minutes, the group Leader must contact police by telephoning 999 (this will result in the emergency plan coming in to action).

Leaders must recall and write down a description of what the missing person was wearing and any distinguishing features. Any information on their last known location and time should be noted. Also if they have any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted down. All information then must be passed to police or other agencies.

Tools, Fires & Activity Guidance

Tool Use Procedure

Using a range of tools will be necessary in many site based activities and is an important part of our work as it enables participants to develop new practical skills that help develop self-confidence. The Forest of Avon Trust aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with tools do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Tools that may be used include potato peelers, bow saws, pruning saws, loppers, knives, drills and hatchets. 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 supplied for use
- 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 groups are to be supervised closely by competent leaders until deemed competent to work with limited supervision
- 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/ sheaved 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. Where any cutting or felling is taking place, helmets should be worn, and gloves provided for handling brash etc.

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

- Each person to sit well out of reach of others (blood bubble)

Fire Procedure

Fires and the use of storm kettles are an important part of Forest School and other sessions. The Forest of Avon Trust aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with fires and/or storm kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Fires will only be used where it is appropriate to do so and where there has been an agreement with the site owner prior to the session.

- 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 suitable defined spaces or in a fire wok
- Participants will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment
- All participants 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, except where the landowner has agreed that a designated fire pit may be used repeatedly

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, damper bread or marshmallows over the fire. At least one member of Forest of Avon Trust staff will hold a current Food Hygiene Certificate and will ensure that safe procedures are undertaken accordingly.

General Session Safety & Group Guidance

Session Safety Resources

Whenever outdoor activity sessions are run there will always be the need for key items to meet the health and safety requirements of leading a group outdoors. The type, location & remoteness of the site, time of year and the group will have a significant impact on what resources are needed to run a safe and enjoyable session. A list is provided on page 21 - this is not an exhaustive list but provides key points to consider when planning sessions.

Weather & Clothing

Clothing advice will be given to participants and their parents/carers prior to the visit e.g.

Winter: waterproofs/coats, fleece/jumper, hats and gloves

Summer: waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, long sleeved tops and trousers

Footwear: wellies or strong/sturdy (ideally waterproof) outdoor shoes and warm woolen or manmade fibre socks (not cotton).

Where possible, we will keep spare sets of waterproofs in case of a participant arriving without adequate protection.

Toileting

For sites without toilet facilities, the following procedures have been proven to work effectively and to comply with current child protection recommendations.

- Encourage everyone to use the toilet before coming on site.
- We will identify a suitable location away from the work area in advance of the session. A screen can be used to provide privacy and a toileting bag placed at this location.
- The group should be introduced to wild toileting - participants encouraged to use a trowel to bury faeces and tissue if necessary - and any queries or uncertainties to be dealt with. At all times the emphasis needs to be on discretion and encouraging participants to do as much as possible independently.
- If a guardian/carer/parent who knows a participant is not available to help with their toileting, then ensure that they are supported by two CRB checked members of staff.
- Hand washing facilities should be available but if this is not possible wet wipes and cleaning gel can be used. All wet wipes should be placed in bags and disposed of off site.

Toileting kits contain:

- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes and cleaning gel
- Nappy bags
- Small trowel
- Tarps to make a modesty screen
- Spare pants and jogging bottoms if younger children

Dogs & Members of the Public

Some sites will be open to the public and so there may well be other people out enjoying the woods. Most people will be happy to pass by the Forest School group without hindering activities, but there is the possibility of unwanted attention from a passer-by. In this event a leader will step in and assure the member of public that if they wish to raise any issues, then they should contact the Forest of Avon Trust office at a time convenient to both parties. If the situation escalates to a dangerous level staff will use a mobile phone to call the police and use the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure.

Some participants may be unused to or even afraid of dogs. If this is known to be the case for any particular participants please inform any/all leader(s) prior to arrival on site. If a dog appears the fearful participant can be joined by at least one member of staff. If a dog approaches the group and appears to likely to cause trouble all participants will be advised not to run or act excitably - ideally keep arms by their sides, voices low and stay as still as possible. A leader will speak to the owner. Signs will be mounted on footpaths close to the Forest School area asking dog-owners to keep dogs under control and for cyclists to be aware that children are playing in the area.

Hazardous Plants & Fungi

Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the group so that all members are aware of the dangers. The sap or hairs from some plants can cause rashes and blistering when in contact with skin, or after the skin is then exposed to sunlight. Most rashes are caused by stinging nettles, though giant hogweed may also be a problem. Both of these plants are easily distinguishable and if either is seen growing on site all members of the group will be taught how to distinguish and avoid coming into contact with it.

Serious poisoning from ingestion of leaves, berries or mushrooms rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, we disallow all participants from foraging and eating anything that has not been agreed safe by a Forest School leader.

If a member of the group is exposed to a hazardous plant or fungi, so that they have a reaction a leader must be informed and appropriate First Aid given. If the nature of the reaction is more serious the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure must be followed.

Biting & Stinging Insects

Insect bites and stings can be common, particularly in spring and summer, and usually cause only minor irritation. In rare cases, people can have a serious allergic reaction to a bite or sting that requires immediate medical treatment - if this is the case then a leader will refer directly to the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure.

If there is prior knowledge to suggest that a participant will have an allergic reaction if bitten, then the Forest of Avon Trust, and ideally the Forest School Leader, must be informed before any activities take place on site.

If ticks are known to exist in proximity to a site then all participants need to check or be checked for ticks as soon as possible following any activity on site. Where a tick is found on a participant, a plaster should be placed over it and parents/carers informed at the end of the session so that they can remove it safely. Information on safe removal of ticks can be found at www.tickbitepreventionweek.org/tick-removal

Safe Lifting

Forest School activities can be physically demanding for participants and staff, for example when handling heavy objects, so it is wise to be aware of best practise. One of the greatest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly. Here are some tips:

- Think and plan where and how you are going to move an object before you lift
- Keep the load close to your waist and the heaviest side of the load next to your body
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward if possible
- Ensure a good hold on the load, hug it close to your body if possible
- Avoid bending your back, only bend at your hips or knees if possible
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways especially if bending at the back
- Keep your head up and look ahead, not down at the load once it is held securely
- Move smoothly
- Know your limits - don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage without help
- Put the load down if you need to adjust it
- Where possible, use ropes to drag objects such as trees

Lone working

When preparing for a session, it may be necessary for one person to visit a site alone. In these circumstances, anyone carrying out the work should inform a member of Forest of Avon Trust staff before departing and ensure that each have the mobile and home/work telephone numbers of the other. The lone worker should leave details of where they will be working and at what times. Contact should be made when the lone worker leaves the site. If the lone worker changes location they should inform the designated Forest of Avon Trust staff member of the change.

If no contact has been made by the lone worker at the agreed end of working time, then the designated staff member should attempt to contact them. If they are unable to contact the lone worker, then they should try their home number and inform the director of the Forest of Avon Trust.

If no contact has been made in 24 hours, the director of the designated staff member should contact the police.

Group walking

When the group goes for a walk the following procedures will be followed:

- The destination will be communicated to all adults present
- Children will be counted at the beginning and end of the walk, and at any necessary points in between, such as after a rest or play stop
- Walking on roads will be avoided, but where necessary will be in single file, with an adult at the front and the rear, and remaining adults interspersed between children
- For longer walks and those which venture beyond the Forest School site, the route and projected timings will be communicated so somebody who is not with the group, and arrangements made for a check-in system between that person and the group leader

Administering medicines and sun cream

Permission will be sought from a guardian to give their child paediatric paracetamol, sting or bite treatments, antiseptic cream and sun cream. These permissions will be included in the *pro forma* consent form. Guardians will also be asked to provide details of allergies or relevant illnesses and to supply medicines where necessary (such as an epi-pen or asthma inhaler). Where a guardian does not give permission for medicines and creams to be applied, their wishes will be adhered to by the Forest School Staff.

Reporting: incidents and accidents

Any accidents that involve injury will be recorded into a first aid book. Major injuries that constitute 'reportable injuries' will be reported to the Health and Safety Executive via RIDDOR. Parents will be notified of injuries in keeping with the 'Emergency and Major Incidents' policy.

'Incidents', which include major behavioural incidents and any major negative occurrence that is not an accident, will also be recorded by the Forest School leader in an Incident Report.

***Pro forma* consent**

Parents/guardians will be asked to fill in a consent form before their child begins a forest school programme with Forest of Avon Trust. The completed consent form will give relevant medical details of the child, consent for the child to take part in the forest school activities and permissions to administer medicines and creams and to admit the child to hospital for emergency treatment.

The form also provides emergency contact details and optional permission to take and use photographs of the child for promotional purposes and reports.

The forest school leader will keep copy of this form with him or her at all sessions attended by the child.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Policy

It is the responsibility of the Forest of Avon Trust to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults whilst in our care. We are committed to creating an environment which is safe from abuse and any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately dealt with.

The Forest of Avon Trust's Safeguarding Policy focuses on:

- Minimising the risk of abuse taking place through good planning and best practice
- Empowering those it works with to stay safe and speak out
- Taking appropriate action when any allegations arise

Staff & Assistants

All staff will have enhanced checks from the Disclosure & Barring Service, dated within 5 years and at the current home address. The Forest of Avon Trust will not employ people with unsuitable DBS certificates. All volunteers and visitors will be vetted by gathering: references / employment history / record of qualification / or because we will have had prior personal knowledge of the person. If the visitor has a DBS certificate relevant to working with children or vulnerable adults, this will be checked by a member of the Forest of Avon trust. Participants will not be left unsupervised with a visitor or volunteer where no DBS certificate has been seen.

Ratios

The following minimum adult ratios will ensure appropriate support and supervision of vulnerable groups at all times:

For children

Foundation Stage: 1 adult: 4 children

Key Stage 1: 1 adult: 6 children

Key Stage 2: 1 adult: 10 children

These ratios are for guidance only for groups of children and suitable levels of support should be determined in advance depending on the types of activity and needs of the group.

For vulnerable adults

For groups of vulnerable adults, suitable levels of support should be agreed in advance with staff/carers.

In all cases a minimum of two staff should be present – i.e. project leader from FoA Trust and staff supporting their group. The Forest of Avon Trust will provide project leadership and co-ordination and will act in a supporting role in terms of welfare of the group to staff supporting their groups.

Toileting

Where possible only the group's supporting staff or the child's/adult's parents may assist children with toileting.

Photos & Video

Permission will be requested via *pro forma* consent for the Forest of Avon Trust staff to take photographs of participants for monitoring and evaluation purposes and suitable use in publications for leaflets/materials/website. Where permission is refused, we will aim to avoid photographing and videoing that child and blur out faces wherever they do appear in recorded material.

Disclosures, Recording & Reporting

Appropriate steps will be taken where concerns arise regarding the safety of a participant. Concerns will be reported to a designated safeguarding person and we will ensure that disclosures are responded to sensitively and appropriately, in line with current best practise.

- Any concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon immediately
- Positive action will be taken to ensure the protection of participants who are subject to any concerns
- The safety of the rest of the group will be secured before taking further action if on site – if a crime has taken place call 999 and report this to the Police
- Implicated adult(s) will be encouraged to leave the group until the disclosure is officially cleared/action taken
- All appropriate staff/managers will be informed
- Relevant information/evidence will be recorded in an appropriate and cooperative manner
- In all child/vulnerable adult protection situations, confidentiality will be maintained at all times by disclosing information only to those who need to know

NSPCC helpline can be used for children 08088005000 or the Care Quality Commission for vulnerable adults 03000616161

The Forest of Avon Trust will follow guidance provided by partner organisations and local authorities.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

The Forest of Avon Trust is committed to equal opportunity for all and we wish to provide an environment in which people feel equally valued. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

When planning a visit, information is requested from schools/groups about any participants with access or medical requirements so they can be fully included in the programme. We will adapt activities to ensure that everyone can participate and, where possible, we will keep spare sets of waterproof clothing to ensure that bad weather is not a barrier to taking part.

Forest of Avon Trust has produced a more detailed Equality and Diversity Policy, which outlines all organisation working practices in this area. This is available from the Forest of Avon Trust office on request.

Behaviour Policy

Everyone, including Forest of Avon Trust staff, volunteers and participants, have a responsibility to protect their own and other group members' health, safety and well-being. They should inform Forest of Avon Trust staff if anybody's actions are likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others.

We aim to promote:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness of personal abilities and limitations
- Respect and care for oneself, other people and the natural environment
- Co-operation and non-violent communication

Forest School Agreement and Ground Rules

In the course of the first session, an agreement will be sought between the staff and all participants for the conduct of the group. This will include items such as respecting oneself, each other and the environment and listening carefully to instructions when they are given. The group will be encouraged to contribute items to the agreement before it is 'sealed'. Ground rules are firmer non-negotiable rules, such as 'no violence' and will be explained along with the consequences of breaking them.

Physical Intervention

In accordance with the law, and our values, the Forest of Avon Trust does not use, or threaten to use, corporal punishment and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not administered by any person who is in contact with them. However, where necessary, physical intervention may be used in order to avert immediate danger to any person (including the child). Any occasion where physical intervention is used will be recorded in an Incident Report and parents/carers will be informed on the same day as the incident.

Behaviour expectations for leaders, assistants and visitors

- Be a positive role model for participants, particularly with regards to respecting each person and the environment
- Encourage and reinforce caring and nurturing behaviour
- Be vigilant with regards to common sense safety
- Facilitate from an egalitarian and liberal approach, avoiding unnecessary rigidity or petty rules
- Avoid coercive or manipulative behaviour management, or that based on personal negative messages, as we feel these damage morale, motivation and self-esteem and are counter-productive to the ethos and objectives of forest school.

Encouraging Positive Behaviour

We want to allow the greatest potential for each participant's forest school experience to be transformational and therefore wish to welcome each participant from an open and unbiased viewpoint with regards to their behaviour and abilities. Whilst recognising that it is useful to have previous information about participants' needs, we believe that no child is inherently 'naughty' and hope that the greater freedoms offered by a forest school environment will allow for a more flexible interpretation of positive engagement.

We will work with each group to develop a clear set of boundaries and guidelines. Each participant will have the opportunity to voice their own feelings. Talking about how they wish to be treated and listening to the feelings of others is important as it will allow the group to work together, understand one another and ultimately become more supportive and cooperative. It will also contribute to making the forest school a safe and enjoyable space.

De-escalation

If a situation arises in which participants are behaving in a way that threatens the safety of the group, the forest school leader will ensure that the following steps are taken:

1. Recount the facts of the incident as observed, in simple language and without judgement, and if possible mutually agree on these. Remind the participants involved of any guidelines they have not followed.
2. Listen to the involved party or parties, if necessary gently separate them from the group for this. Ask about how they feel about the incident, empathise with them to help them to express themselves and take responsibility for their feelings. Ask them to imagine how they think their behaviour has affected everyone else.
3. Talk with them to establish what their needs in the situation were and to understand how they were not being met. Discuss what their needs might be now and encourage them to consider the needs of everyone else present.
4. Help them to express any requests they might have clearly and in positive language. These can be requests of themselves, others, situations or of the environment.
5. Encourage discussion of new strategies, so that if a similar situation arises the participant(s) feel able to communicate their needs without resorting to negative behaviours.

Recording & Reporting

In all cases the forest school leader will complete an incident report form, and where necessary inform parents/carers.

Where relevant, any significant issues or incidents will be discussed with parents or carers in a private conversation, when the participant is not present.

Learning and Development

The contemporary forest school movement was brought to the UK from Scandinavia in the 1990s but it is predated by many British traditions, such as the Woodcraft Folk, Scouting and Guiding. It draws inspiration from these traditions, along with various educational philosophies, including Rousseau, Froebel, Steiner and Montessori.

Our Ethos

The Forest of Avon Trust would like our forest school programme to foster self-esteem, independence, emotional, resilience, co-operation, personal responsibility, autonomy and motivation, as well as a deeply personal knowledge, respect and care for our environment. The approach of the Forest of Avon Trust is learner-led, play-centred, holistic and experiential. When taking part in our forest school programme a participant is engaging with nature in wild spaces in an exploratory, sensory and physical way.

We believe it's important to create, where possible, a long-term relationship between a location and a group of participants - giving all participants a chance to get a feel for how an environment changes over time.

Participants will be encouraged to take constructive risks in order to develop skills, good judgment and to learn and develop through managing their own and others' risks. In planning activities we consider not only the risks but also the potential benefits for the learner.

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff members involved in the forest school programmes are conscious that it is an exploratory experience for the group. They allow the group to play and learn as independently as possible, often without demonstrating or suggesting. If invited to provide support then they do, but otherwise merely observe, allowing the experience to be learner-directed.

It is the role of the forest school leader(s) to take a lead in planning, delivering and evaluating the forest school programme. They also take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are adhered to. Volunteers and other adults may help with these responsibilities where they wish to and are able and/or qualified to.

Evaluation

Evaluation forms will be completed after each session and a reflective report is compiled after each programme of sessions.

Communication Strategy

This communication strategy explains how participants, parents, those involved with delivering the forest school programme and other stakeholders are kept informed with the delivery and outcomes.

Participants

Participants will be asked to evaluate the programme through verbal feedback, videos, writings and drawings. These will be opportunities for them to express how they feel the programme is going and to engage with the process of developing the future sessions.

Participants' contact person (teacher, support staff or parent)

Forest of Avon Trust will request that all those leading or supporting sessions read our Handbook before their group's sessions begin. Parents/carers of each participant will be asked to complete a consent form. The group's contact person will be asked to provide medical and behavioural information about each participant and confirm that they understand the programme and the handbook.

Verbal feedback will be sought from the contact person on a regular basis, and will be asked to complete an end-of programme evaluation form. Parents will receive information about the outcomes of the sessions through photos, a display or report.

Assistants & Volunteers

All adults present at the forest school must sign a form to confirm that they have read, understood and agree to comply with Forest of Avon Trust's forest school Handbook before the start of the programme or session they will take part in.

Assistants and volunteers will be informed of the plan for each session in advance by email or telephone and invited to provide input. They will be asked to provide feedback on how each session went verbally or written, as preferred.

Other Interested Groups

Following an evaluation of the sessions a case study or report will often be produced and this will be shared with others, such as other schools, forest school leaders, etc.

Session Routines

Equipment

First Aid Kit	<i>Pro forma</i> consent forms	Risk-benefit analysis
First Aid book	Incident log	Emergency Procedure
Mobile phone	Tools & firelighting kit	Handwashing kit
Fresh water/water carrier	Personal protective equipment	Emergency bivi-bag
Spare clothing	Fire blanket	Toileting kit

Setting Up

1. Carry out a session risk assessment of site and advise/act accordingly
2. Collect necessary equipment and restock first aid where necessary
3. Meet and register group
4. Check phone signal

Session Opening

1. Introductions of any new faces
2. Make the group aware of new hazards or medical considerations
3. Check that they are all wearing suitable clothing and footwear
4. Take the group to the location
5. Form an opening circle
6. Describe or walk the boundaries for the day
7. Engage children in the development of rules and guidelines for the day
8. Describe the day's activities

During the Session

- Visually check all equipment before use
- Check on pastoral needs of group
- Conduct a head count, as needed
- Ensure appropriate personal protective clothing is worn

Closing the Session

1. Extinguish any fires properly
2. Count any tools used into their bag
3. Remove structures
4. Check for litter etc.
5. Collect the equipment
6. Form a closing circle
7. Conduct some type of evaluation with the group (questions, talking stick or drawing)
8. Walk the group to the pick-up point
9. Bid farewell to the group
10. Thoroughly check equipment
11. Complete the appropriate evaluation forms

Terms and Conditions

What to Bring

“There is no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing.” This is almost true; strong winds are probably the one real exception. We aim to go out in all seasons, so for each we need participants to dress appropriately. Our sessions are relatively active, but in winter spending hours outside can mean getting very cold if a participant isn't wearing several layers, warm socks, a hat, gloves, scarf, etc. It's also advisable always to wear long trousers and sturdy boots or wellies in all weathers in the woods.

The Forest of Avon Trust cannot take responsibility for any personal property that is lost or damaged during sessions, and therefore we recommend that any mobile phones or valuable items are not brought to the sessions.

Feedback and Concerns

We encourage all participants and carers/parents to give us regular feedback about their experience and also to talk to us about anything that is causing consternation. Feedback and concerns can be expressed verbally, in person or by telephone, or in writing by email. We will always endeavour to be as open, honest and as straightforward as possible with carers/parents with regard to any issue; maintaining a two way flow of information can lead to resolutions before problems arise or escalate. All communications regarding formal feedback or concerns will be logged and records kept. In the event of a concern being about our practice, we will investigate this and feed back our conclusions with 28 days.

Cancellation and Postponement

In the case of extreme weather and no suitable alternative venue being available Forest of Avon Trust staff may need to cancel sessions at short notice. Where possible, these will be rescheduled.

In the case of Forest of Avon Trust staff ill-health every effort will be made to seek replacement staff or to reschedule. Where this is not possible a refund will be offered.

Where groups cancel their attendance less than a week in advance of a session/sessions the session will be rescheduled if possible. Where it is not possible to reschedule, the group is liable to be charged for the sessions missed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment & Session Outline

Date & location Ashton Court, Clarken Coombe Wood
Participating group	Ashton Vale Primary School
Group leader	Louise Emerson & Bea Oliver
Mobile phone reception	On site. Nearest fixed phone: Ashton Court mansion
First aider on site	Louise Emerson & Bea Oliver
Emergency vehicle nearest access point	Clifton Lodge Entrance – A369 Rownham Hill meets B3129 Bridge Valley Road – then locked barrier – meet here
Insurance	Birnbeck Insurance

List of activities to be undertaken in session:

Potential benefits of activities to group:

Kit and PPE required (& numbers for counting in and out):

Impact on site of session – and ways to minimise this:

Nature of Hazard	Uncontrolled Outcome	Precautions to be taken (planning and group guidance)	Risk level L,M,H
Very cold, wet, hot or windy weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposure & dehydration - Injury from falling branches - Hypo/hyperthermia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise all to wear appropriate outdoor clothing. - Leave woodland in high winds with falling branches - Area under leaning trees or loose branches to be cordoned off 	
Slippery/muddy or uneven underfoot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sprain, fracture or concussion - Falling from a height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise group to wear appropriate outdoor footwear - Tutors to identify areas appropriate to the access needs of the group. - Advise all to walk carefully - Nobody aided in climbing higher than head-height - Brief group on slipperiness of logs 	
Poisonous or thorny plants, berries or fungi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stings, rashes & sickness - Infected wound - Damage to clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All to be briefed on contact with plants - Group instructed not to eat anything not presented by a group leader - Advise to clean hands before eating or drinking - Advise to wear appropriate clothing 	
Stinging and biting insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stings leading to allergic response - Tick bite leading to Lyme disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief group on potential for bee and wasp stings and possibility of ticks in the woodland - Ask about any history of allergic responses - Ask group to check skin for any bites at home and if rash, red halo, or flu type symptoms occur go to doctor - Advise to keep skin covered 	
Litter and animal faeces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cuts - Infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leaders to check and clear area - Advise all participants to wash hands after an activity - Gloves, disposal bags and wipes to be available 	
Animals and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwanted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signs up for dog owners to keep 	

public present	attention from animals - Confrontation	dogs under control - Encourage all to keep and quiet still when dogs approach - Raise awareness of golfers and location of golf course - Group to be made aware of cyclists in yew woods - Leaders to have mobiles available	
Lost member of group	-Exposure, panic, injury, shock	- Walk boundaries with group - Ask group to stay within boundaries - Highlight boundaries using marker flags - Staff familiarise themselves with Lost or Missing Person Procedure	
Fires	- Burns	- Keep a clear space free from equipment or undergrowth around the fire area - Have extra water available to put out fire - Have burns kits available - Have heat-proof gloves and fire blanket available - Safety briefing on fire - Use fire wok to contain fire if necessary	
Food preparation	- Food poisoning - Food allergy	- Ask group if anyone has food allergies - Ensure all food stored correctly prior to cooking - Ensure all wash hands correctly before cooking - Insure all cooking equipment is clean	
Date Assessed & signed			

Appendix 2: Health and Personal Safety Questionnaire

To help us plan our woodland sessions and first aid provision please answer the following questions:

Is there any activity/task that you or your group may find difficult for health or mobility reasons?

Are you or your group taking any medication that a first aider or doctor would need to be aware of?

Is there any information that we may need to ensure you and your group's safety (e.g. behavioural issues)?

Appendix 3: Incident log sheet

Complete the form for every accident leading to injury, violent or aggressive incident, ill health, disease or near miss.

Incident of date and time:

Location:

Person injured or subject of aggression:

Relationship to Forest of Avon Trust:

Was the incident:

a near miss

ill health/disease

an accident leading to injury

a violent or aggressive incident

What happened (describe below including the nature of any injury/illness):

Was anyone else involved (note names if so)?

Was anything damaged (e.g. vehicle)?

What action has been taken to prevent a recurrence?

Name of person completing form & relationship to Forest of Avon Trust:

Appendix 4: Pro forma consent

I have read the accompanying information about the Forest of Avon Trust woodland activities.

I am happy for to participate and give my permission for:

Please delete any of the statements below you do not want to give permission for

- The audio recording of conversation
- The use of photographs and videos in publicly-available reports and news articles for promotional and educational purposes
- The use of written research data for reports, presentations and publications.

Signed..... Date.....

Print nameRelationship to Participant.....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Telephone contact.....

Email contact.....

.....

Please return one copy of this form to: The Forest of Avon Trust, The Estate Office, Ashton Court Estate, Bristol BS41 9JN.

Appendix 5: Volunteer/Freelance Induction Agreement

This agreement states that you have undertaken a suitable induction process by a member of staff from the Forest of Avon Trust and are familiar with relevant policies and risk assessments relating to the work you are undertaking on behalf of the Trust.

Volunteer/Freelancer name:

Signature of volunteer/freelancer:

Date:

Appendix 6: Session Evaluation Form

Session date & number	
Group & Leader/s	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Session Delivery • Activities undertaken by group • Factors effecting delivery 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning & Development Outcomes for the group – observations and comments from leaders and learners. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations relating to learning, behaviour and development for 3 individuals being followed 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of play occurring in the Group that supports holistic learning and development 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of interventions where leaders provided additional support or guidance aimed at encouraging appropriate behaviour and promoting learning and development 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General feedback from group • Input & ideas for next session • Changes to following sessions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety issues that arose during the session or near misses • How issues were dealt with • Recommended changes to policy or procedure to ensure issues are mitigated 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid Kit used • Accident Log Made • What needs re-stocking 	
Date completed	Signed