



Forest School Policy

Bakewell Methodist Academy

2024 Version 1

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Introduction:

The Forest Schools Policy documents a range of policies and procedures that must be adhered to ensure that the learners can experience some risk based learning within a controlled environment. All leaders present during the sessions and volunteers will be expected to read and follow the procedures and policies outlined in this document to minimise the risk from any potential hazards as outlined in the separate Forest Schools Risk Assessments.

Mission statement

'Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees'.

(Forest School Association)

At Bakewell Methodist Academy, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child-centred approach.

Our ethos and Forest School principles:

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions and aims for children to visit in blocks of at least six to eight weeks each season. Ideally Forest Schools should be offered over a longer period to truly see the developmental benefits.
2. Planning, adaptation, observations, and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process. Planning is flexible and the learners take the direction for their learning and development.
3. It takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment.
4. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent, and creative learners who are emotionally literate.
5. We will offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves and encouraged risky play where appropriate.
6. It will be managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner. Sarah Owens and is currently training for the Level 3 Award, Forest School Leader and Meg Hudson has completed the Forest School Level 3 Award. Further staff will be trained in the future to help plan and facilitate in the sessions.
7. We will use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-goodpractice/>

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children as we encourage them to be involved with the whole process, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Expectations and rules will be

revisited at every session. We have Nurturing Nature Guidelines that the children are expected to remember and follow during the sessions. These include:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick.'
- Respect for plants, trees and animals.
- Always use walking feet around the site.
- When scavenging, only collect the natural debris on the floor.
- If you find anything you think could be dangerous, let the Leader or grown up know.
- Staying within the designated areas at all times.

Rationale/Aims:

The outdoors can provide space and freedom for a type of learning that is difficult to replicate within the confines of classroom walls. It provides an alternative context to apply knowledge and skills necessary to understand and appreciate the world we live in no matter the season or the weather. We strongly believe that all children have the right to be given the opportunities afforded by outdoor learning and the managed risks associated with it. It can provide relevant, engaging experiences that support learning in all areas of the curriculum. These can be presented as building on existing outdoor play, transferring activities normally carried out indoors, school garden projects, environmental education or off-site visits. Providing positive opportunities for active learning, the outside environment can promote skills of enquiry, problem solving, communication, co-operation, creativity and evaluation, therefore we seek to offer outdoor experiences that allow children to:

- Find space to be alone or interact in social groups of different sizes.
- Plan, build, evaluate and demolish.
- Find similarities and differences, observe, and classify.
- Be energetic, adventurous and assess risk.
- Make mark, use large scale media, be messy.
- Plant, grow and harvest.
- Hide, explore and discover.
- Investigate, make predictions, and test theories.
- Imagine, pretend, and reflect.
- Measure, locate, transport and record.

Forest School education at Bakewell Methodist Academy will focus on the key principles behind emotional resilience. Groups of learners will be assessed on the resiliency framework prior and after the block of sessions to gauge their strands of emotional need and the effectiveness of Forest Schools as an intervention.

Environmental Considerations:

One of the main principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. Each activity carried out as part of Forest School will

have impact on the environment, some positive and some negative. We aim to keep the negative impact to a minimum by regularly inspecting the site as detailed in the Site Impact and long term development plan (which can be found in the appendices). All those involved in Forest School will be encouraged to learn greater awareness of the world around them and to show respect to the wildlife by 'nurturing nature'.

Site Policy

The site will be left in a safe and ordered manner at the end of each session. The FS leader is responsible for the pre-session Site Risk Assessment by:

1. Completing a pre-session site risk assessment form, recording any necessary hazards in the log book (to be acted upon as soon as possible) and ensuring hazardous areas are cordoned off using the hazard tape.
2. Checking trip hazards and ensuring all safe storage of wood at the sides of fences or in the designated cordoned off area.
3. Fire area is safe, seating is 2 metres away from the fire pit and walkways around the pit circle are clear.

The FS leader is also responsible for ensuring a site risk assessment is completed after the session by:

1. The removal and disposal of all left over food.
2. The safe storage of non-perishable items.
3. Safely storing all wood to the sides of the fences and/or in the designated area.
4. Storing fire pits away so they do not collect water.
5. Leaving all areas clear of litter.

Risk Assessment

All risk assessments are on our website in the Forest Schools section.

Handbook

All rules, guidance and further information can be found in the Forest Schools Handbook on the website.