

St Saviour's Catholic Primary and Nursery School



Forest School Policy 2025-2026

Legal Status:	Non-Statutory
Last Review:	
Review date:	September 2025
Next Review:	September 2026
Responsible Person:	Governing Body

Mission Statement

"Keeping Jesus at the heart of everything we do."

At St Saviour's we aim to use the natural outdoor woodland areas on our school grounds to offer children high quality, holistic and enriched learning opportunities that blend forest school principals and progression of skills with curriculum learning based on current topics and schemes of work. This approach encourages children to become independent, resilient learners whilst developing their critical thinking and teamwork skills. Children will be encouraged to use their imaginations, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and helps to develop love and respect for the natural world. It can cover many areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed.

*Forest school is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on experiences in a woodland environment. **National Definition: Forest School (England) Network***

This policy should be used in conjunction with St Saviour's Behaviour, Safeguarding, Equality, SEND, Health and Safety Policies and staff handbook.

Roles and Responsibilities

Our Forest School sessions will be delivered by a qualified Level 3 Forest School teacher alongside the class teacher and support staff. Staff will deliver forest school sessions following procedures set out in this document and will comply at all times with controls and measures set out in the Forest school risk assessments and staff handbook.

The forest school teacher will have overall responsibility for:

- Providing risk assessments for working with fire, working with tools, working in a woodland area and additional risk assessments for specific activities for each session.
- Pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring of learning environments.
- Ensuring that on site rules are followed at all times and continue to risk assess during the session (dynamic risk assessment).
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into the forest before the session starts and that activities are resourced, prepped and set up before the children enter the site.
- Checking first aid kits and other safety equipment is well stocked and on site during sessions.
- The supervision of fire use, following the fire policy and risk assessments.
- The supervision of tool use in line with risk assessments and this policy.
- The cleaning and safe storing of equipment.
- Organising emergency procedures.
- Ensuring the site is left as it was found after every session and fire is fully extinguished.

The forest school teacher and class teacher will have overall responsibility for:

- Planning for sessions
- Adapting activities to suit individual children's needs.
- Administration of first aid (to include trained support staff)

All staff, students and volunteers will:

- Model safe practice throughout the session.
- Carry out delegated roles and responsibilities.
- Read any documentation including risk assessments given to them by the forest school teacher before the session commences.
- Extend children's learning and critical thinking where appropriate using open ended questions.
- Demonstrate love and respect for the natural environment.
- Support children to manage their own risks.
- Remind children of rules and boundaries and intervene as appropriate if children are putting themselves or others at risk.
- Be aware of dangers within Forest School environments and the hazards documented in the risk assessments and use these to monitor levels of safety at all times.

Equality and Diversity

All children will be included in all activities and no form of discrimination will take place. Reasonable adjustments will be made to make learning opportunities inclusive for all.

Emergency Procedure:

In the event of an emergency the following will happen:

- Emergency Whistle blown - All staff to have a whistle.
- Children advised to put tools/ equipment down by other adults in surrounding areas, stay where they are and await further instructions.
- Staff to assess the situation and remove any hazards. Once any hazard has been removed staff will deal with the incident or follow the first aid procedures in line with school policies/staff handbook.

Environment

Wherever possible, environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. Staff will promote environmental awareness and care for God's creation. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported during learning opportunities.

Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored to use for activities and as firewood.

During the winter months, large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them.

Hedgerows will be maintained to encourage small wildlife to live in the environments.

Learning environments will be assessed regularly by the forest school teacher and activity sites rotated to allow ground to recover.

Health & Safety

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them.

Rules and Conduct will be discussed during the first session. Children will have the opportunity to

identify hazards and risks in the environment and will collaboratively draw up a set of rules that is age appropriate and specific to their class. There are however general rules that all children must follow.

Fire Circle

- Walk around not through/ across the fire circle.
- No running in the fire circle.
- Don't put anything on or take anything off the fire without adult permission.
- When the fire is lit, stay seated until called up to the fire.
- Climb backwards off your log and walk around the outside of the fire circle.

Other areas

- Don't put anything in your mouth other than food and drink given to you by adults.
- Stay within the Forest School boundaries.
- When carrying sticks point them towards the floor or drag them behind you.
- If climbing trees - only climb to a sensible height and make sure you can get down.
- Only one person in the hammock - always!
- Only use tools under adult supervision.
- Point out hazards and risks!
- Move slowly around nettles and brambles, no pushing!
- Look after each other!
- Work as a team!
- Be kind to each other!
- Listen to the adults, we are here to keep you safe!
- Respect the natural world at all times- God's creation.

Children will be reminded of behaviour expectations throughout the session and staff will intervene as appropriate. If the behaviour of an individual, or group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others safety at risk then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School leader and class teacher.

Risk assessments

Risk assessments will be in place for specific activities such as hammocks, slack lines, den building etc... Working in a woodland area, working with tools and working with fire risk assessments are in place for all sessions and these are reviewed regularly by the Forest school teacher. These are in depth documents that cover the use of all tools the children will come into contact with and all fire related activities. The Forest school teacher will use their judgement to determine if fire and tools are appropriate for planned sessions after a pre-site visit and a meeting with class teacher.

The Forest School teacher will assess weather conditions before sessions start and regularly throughout and will postpone/ evacuate the area if they become too extreme.

Use of tools procedure

Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and trained in the use of each tool before they use it. This will be done each session, regardless of how many times the children have used tools in previous sessions.

Tool use guidance documents will be carried by the leader during each session and tool use will be directly supervised in 1:1 and small groups only.

Relevant personal protection equipment will be worn where necessary.

Tools will be counted in and out, stored safely and kept out of the reach of children.

Tools will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used.

Use of open fires procedure

Fires are an important part of Forest School so we aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in sessions with fires are aware of any aspects of the fire safety measures that affect them.

Fires will only be lit in designated areas in line with FSA guidelines.

A lit fire must never be left unattended.

There must always be water available to extinguish the fire.

If a tarpaulin is placed above the fire, it should be approximately 8 feet above the fire and seating will be at a distance of 1.5 meters.

Relevant personal protection equipment will be used where necessary.

Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.

When accessing or moving around the fire, children must walk around the outside of circle, then remain sitting whilst they are around the fire

The fire box containing fire retardant gloves, first aid kits and fire blanket should be placed close to the fire circle along with a covered bucket of clean cold water.

Shoes must always be worn.

Children/staff are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire

Fires will not be lit in strong winds or on excessively hot days.

No flammable liquids or plastics are to be used on the fire

At the end of the session, the fire must be extinguished with water until all smoke and steam has ceased

Weather conditions

'There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!'

Children and staff are advised to dress warmly covering arms and legs. Children and staff must have a coat and appropriate footwear.

In hot weather the trees provide natural shade from the sun, however pupils will be encouraged to wear sun hats and sun cream.

There may be some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather:

In the case of high winds of 25 mph or more determined by the met office online.

In the case of extreme temperatures determined by a met office amber weather warning.

In the case of extreme cold of below '0' a session will be cancelled. If the temperature is near to this, depending on the age of the children sessions will go ahead. We will ensure children are appropriately dressed and hats and gloves are worn. Sessions will be made shorter and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

Food safety and Hygiene Procedures:

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready, they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows/waffles and making s'mores.

Hand sanitizer will be available to children and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner before handling and preparing food.

All staff will be aware of any allergies and intolerances.

Ensure there is a dedicated space for food prep – separate areas for meat and non-meat prep. Keep utensils in separate areas. Ensure there are enough pans/pots/bowls in each area.

Before cooking, food will be stored in clean containers with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.

Water for cooking will be provided in a cleaned sealed storage container.

All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.

Hot food and drink will be monitored by staff and children will be taught how to check items are cool enough before eating

ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults.

The area is to be checked to ensure there are no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.

ALL utensils and pans will be washed in hot soapy water and stored away correctly.

Medication and First Aid

The Forest school teacher will be aware of all allergies, intolerances and medical needs of the children and staff prior to session.

Inhalers to be brought out to site with each class

First aid kits will be fully stocked and will include a burns kit, ice snaps, tourniquet and trauma bandage.

All trained staff will be expected to administer first aid.

All staff will know where the nearest tap is.

All staff will know where the nearest defibrillator is.

Forest school teacher will have a mobile phone for emergencies and to contact the office/headteacher if required.