

Forest School Handbook

Policies & Procedures

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Wild Kids Vision Statement

Wild Kids Forest School aims to provide authentic Forest School to communities and families regardless of background. Making groups financially accessible with a community focus. We aim to create communities that love nature and help each other. By engaging with communities that are hard to reach and struggle to access forest school we will make the field truly inclusive and help grow the physical, mental and social health of all.

What is Forest School?

Forest School is outdoor, nature-based learning that focuses on the holistic development of the child. It is a regular, long-term process as opposed to one-off sessions and is facilitated by qualified forest school practitioners. Forest School is child-centred with a high adult to child ratio. Observation, rather than direction, is key and means that our sessions are adapted and tailored to the needs we observe with the groups we work with.

Principles of Forest School

At Wild Kids Forest School, we support and abide by the six principles of Forest School, laid out by the UK Forest School Association.

1. Forest School is a **long-term process** of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.
2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or **natural** wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world
3. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take **supported risks** appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
4. Forest School aims to promote the **holistic development** of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. Forest School is run by **qualified Practitioners** who continuously maintain and develop their professional Practice.
6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a **community** for development and learning.

**History of Forest School**

Forest School has its roots in Scandinavia, where outdoor learning has long been recognized as a vital part of early childhood education. Originating in Denmark, the Forest School approach was founded on the belief that regular, unstructured time spent in nature is essential for children’s physical, emotional, and social development. The concept emphasizes child-led exploration, risk-taking in natural environments, and learning through direct engagement with the outdoors.

In the early 1990s, the Forest School model was introduced to the UK by pioneering educators inspired by Scandinavian practices. Over the past few decades, it has grown from a novel idea into a respected educational approach integrated into many early years and school settings. Today, Forest School is celebrated for its role in fostering resilience, creativity, and a lifelong connection with nature, empowering children to learn and grow through hands-on experiences in the natural world.

Examples of Forest School Activities

* Sensory explorations -sit spots, listening activities, playing with leaves and mud ect.
* Foraging
* Shelter building
* Nature trails and bug hunts
* Tree Climbing
* Cooking on an open fire
* Basic tool use
* Nature arts and Crafts
* Team building and trust games
* Fire building, lighting and management
* Story telling and imaginative play
* Learning Knotts
* Creative building
* Games outlining the local ecosystem
* Finding signs of animals
* Identifying Plants

Forest School Ethos and Countryside Code

“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” (FDA). All forest school attendees are considered to be:

* Equal, Unique and valuable
* Competent to explore and discover
* Entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
* Entitled to choose, initiate and drive their own learning and development
* Entitled to experience regular success
* Entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
* Entitled to develop a strong, meaningful relationship with the natural world
* Entitled to have autonomy and support to explore their emotions

Some of the lasting benefits of Forest School are:

* Development of positive risk management and confidence to challenge themselves.
* Space to develop creativity, imagination and learn new skills
* Improved resilience, being able to think reflectively and strategically when working through a challenge
* Experiencing a sense of wellbeing and piece in nature
* Developing a deep respect for nature and the environment
* Improving gross and fine motor skills, agility and stamina
* Building confidence, self-esteem, social skills empathy and trust

Countryside Code

**Respect everyone**

• be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside

• leave gates and property as you find them

• do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking

• be nice, say hello, share the space

• follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available

**Protect the environment**

• take your litter home – leave no trace of your visit

• do not light fires and only have BBQs where signs say you can

• always keep dogs under control and in sight

• dog poo – bag it and bin it in any public waste bin or take it home

• care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance

**Enjoy the outdoors**

• check your route and local conditions

• plan your adventure – know what to expect and

what you can do

• enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory

More info available at <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/countrysidecode/>

 Forest School Rules and Code of Conduct

At Wild Kids Forest School, we encourage independent thought and actions, we guide children to make the most beneficial choice for everyone. We start the sessions by going over the agreement, sometimes this may be revisited and discussed as to what it means and/or refer to the longer guide for conduct.

**The repeated agreement for the children is:**

We look after ourselves, we look after each other and we look after this place.

No Pick, no lick and be careful with that stick.

**The Guide for Conduct is:**

**F**riendship: Act as a friend to all in the woods

**O**wnership: While you are at Forest School, you will be encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for your choices and behaviour

**R**espect: Have respect for the environment and all people including yourself

**E**quality: All will be treated equally regardless of any differences

**S**afe: Even when taking risks, we do our best to be safe for ourselves and others, we will stay safely within the agreed boundaries on the Forest School site.

**T**rust: We will trust each other to make the right choices and support each other with those choices

**S**ensitive: We will look out for one another and be sensitive if someone is feeling sad or having a bad day

**C**onfidentiality: Whatever happens within our Forest School group will be dealt with in the group at the time and we will not talk about the group outside if not necessary

**H**onour: We will honour each other’s personal space and boundaries

**O**bservant: It is good to be observant and pay attention to our own feelings and those of the group

**O**pen: Sometimes things won’t go the way we might like. Be open to change and to learn from mistakes

**L**eave no Trace: It is important to love and look after our environment, especially the space we use. We leave the space as we found it, free from litter and damage, including structures others have built, animal, plant or human.

**Behaviour Management Policy**

At Wild Kids Forest School we value individuals and understand that children and young people don't always make the right choices and are not always in control of their actions. This is why it is our aim to support the children and young people (CYP) to make the right choices and learn how to manage their own behaviour.

We do this by providing positive role models, leading by example and using correctional and explanatory methods to correct behaviour, so that the CYP can learn to do it themselves and why they need to.

We have adopted the Gentle teaching philosophy in our practice, this is a philosophy used in supporting the most extreme of challenging behaviour, its successes include tackling gang culture and supporting adults with severe learning difficulties access their community safely. It is simply to give unconditional care and kindness (love) to individuals, even when their behaviour is anything but. This approach leads to the following pillars of this philosophy: Be safe, feel safe, be loving/caring/kind, feel loved/cared for/kindness. If these 4 pillar stones are achieved the individual will grow in happiness, confidence and self worth.

In accordance with our mission statement the following procedures will be followed and actioned by the Lead:

• Serious Incident- This is physical violence or abuse and can include persistent bullying, unacceptable behaviour or repeat of medium incidents- Young person to receive official final stage warning and must leave session immediately, depending on nature of incident police to be involved. A follow up meeting with Lead, parents and offending young person is to be held before youth continues to attend sessions.

• Medium Incident - this is anything that is harassing in nature, breaking major rules, bullying or repeated minor incidents- Youth to receive official warning and leave session immediately.

• Minor Incident - This is breaking rules, none compliance with instructions or activity leaders or rudeness- young person is to receive up to 3 verbal warnings before proceeding to medium incident actions on 3rd warning.

• Inappropriate behaviour- This is anything of a sexual nature, smoking, talking about illegal substances and activities with other children, swearing, talking about child protection issues with other children- the youth should be taken aside and explained why their behaviour is inappropriate, and the necessary actions to be taken with the leader in charge if applicable, verbal warning to be given if persistent or necessary.

• Rule breaking- any adult can give a verbal warning for rule breaking, youth must be informed why they are receiving it and session leader must also be informed. Verbal warnings expire after every session. Official warnings are recorded by Session leader.

• Official warnings- official warnings are to be issued and recorded by session leader. 3 official warnings(final stage warning) lead to a 4 session ban, the second final stage warning received(6 official warnings) will lead to a 6 month ban, the third final stage warning received (9 official warnings) will lead to a year ban. After any final stage warning a meeting will be held with young person, head youth leader and parents.

• Anger management issues- This will apply to young people that have identified they have "anger problems." The Lead will assign a dedicated "quiet zone" along with a recognisable indicator(to tell adults where and why they are going) to allow these children to take time out to calm down. They will have 5/10mins alone then a youth leader or Lead will go and talk to them to resolve their issue or frustration.

• Distress- This section refers to "tantrums", "hysterical crying" or general upset that is causing disruption which is difficult to deal with- Young person is to take 5/10 mins time out alone with a glass of water(in quiet zone or on a chair away from group, after they have calmed down an adult can address the reason for distress and resolve the matter, parents to be called to collect if unable to calm down.

• Bad attitudes- more often than not these change between young people and adults. Our approach co, insides with our mission statement. Adult to get a second opinion of another adult and take the child aside and address the issue, if attitude continues or is aimed at an individual this is bullying and will be treated as such. If the attitude is a general one, Lead will address this direct with the child and verbal warnings will be given thereafter.

• Bullying- This will not be tolerated. if anyone knows or suspects bullying it must be reported to Head Youth Leader, they will then assign a youth leader to shadow the victim being bullied to keep them safe and to report and record any relevant facts relating to the bullying, if the bullying continues a meeting with all concerned will be held during session to address it and warnings can and will be given by the lead.

**Set Rules**

**Major Rules(in bold)**

• **No Hitting**

**• No swearing**

**• No child is to leave the venue without consent of an adult.**

**• Bullying is not tolerated**

• Look after yourself, others and nature

• Always be polite and use manners

• No name calling

**Discussions**

All discussions and talks will follow restorative practice and always aim to resolve in a positive way, where everyone involved come to an agreed outcome. Positive language should be used and check ins after should be done to ensure the situation has, in fact, been resolved.

**Environmental Policy**

It is difficult to avoid environmental impact when running forest schools in a woodland. The prensence of young people will of course impact the site in some ways. However, at Wild Kids Forest School, we strive to minimise the harm caused to the local plant species and wildlife on the sites. During sessions the participants will e encouraged to be observant and responsible for the protection of plants and wildlife in the site area, and to be aware of their surroundings. We aim to follow the Leave no Trace Ethos, which is:

* Plan ahead and Prepare
* Travel on durable surfaces
* Create no waste or dispose of waste properly
* Leave what you find
* Minimise campfire impact- only make fire in a set fire pit.
* Respect wildlife
* Be considerate to other visitors and surrounding community.

**Equality Policy**

 At Wild Kids, all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued. We ensure that our service is fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children, particularly those defined in The Equality Act 2010 such as: from their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability. Equal opportunity requires that everyone has an equal chance to develop themselves to their full potential and be safe and free from harm. The Early Years Foundation Stage states that ‘Children should be treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities’, it includes:

•Social Inclusion for all

•Life choices are widened, not restricted

•Talents are nourished, not suppressed

•No one experiences disadvantage or discrimination

•Stereotypes are challenged by staff

•All forms of bullying and harassment are condemned and challenged

•Individual and community needs are responded to in a sympathetic and

imaginative manner.

•Individuals and groups are allocated appropriate levels of support to

ensure that their potential is fulfilled.

At Wild Kids, we are open to all members of the community. We ensure all of our parents/guardians/referees are aware of our equal opportunities policy and all other relevant policies. We do not discriminate against a child or their family and will not prevent entry to our setting on the basis of colour, ethnicity, religion or social background. We do not discriminate against a disabled child or refuse a child entry to the nursery for reasons relating to disability. We take action against any discriminatory behaviour by staff or parents or other children. Displaying of openly discriminatory and possibly offensive materials, name calling, or threatening behaviour are unacceptable in our forest school and will be dealt with in the strongest manner.

**Health & Safety Policy**

Wild Kids Forest School supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. We encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves, on others and on the environment. We will ensure that we do all that is reasonably practicable to achieve the highest standards of Health, Safety and Welfare when carrying out our activities. The forest School leader is responsible for the immediate safety of the children on the forest school site and will undertake the necessary site risk assessments both daily and seasonally (see risk assessments).

Risk assessments will be carried out for each activity. Any hazards noted on site will be taken account of and the necessary action recorded. It is their responsibility to check the safety of equipment and tools that will be used and maintain safe storage of these on site and in between sessions. They will also oversee that the necessary protective clothing is provided and worn and give adequate safety information in sessions as required; Clear instructions and warnings will be given to students verbally as often as may be necessary. They are responsible for ensuring that any accidents are recorded in the Incident/Accident Report Book.

**First Aid Policy and Procedure**

The Lead at every Wild Kids provision holds a current and up to date Outdoors First Aid certificate so there will always be at least one adult present with this qualification. In the event of illness or injury to any child or adult during a Forest School session, first aid will be administered by a qualified first aider. All accidents will be recorded in the Forest School Incident/Accident Report Book and parents/guardians will be notified and asked to sign the record.

**Emergency First Aid Procedure**

 In the event of an emergency, the following procedure will be followed:

• The area will be secured and made safe

 • First aid will be administered by the Forest School Leader or a first aid qualified assistant

• The Forest School Leader or a first aid qualified assistant will stay with the casualty and monitor their condition

 • A team member will be asked to call the emergency services, giving an exact location and as much detail as possible

• A team member will gather the children for a headcount and keep them calm

• A team member will be asked to call children’s parents/guardians to arrange for children to be collected • An accident report form will be completed In the event of an injury to the Forest School Leader, first aid will be administered by another qualified first aider using the same procedure described above.

Emergency Procedure and Details In the event of an emergency occurring the following will happen:

•A signal will be made to stop what you are doing

•Gather with a member of staff, be silent and wait for instructions

•The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident

 •They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised

•They will attend to the casualty, giving first aid

•If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance: 999 should be dialled using a mobile phone carried by the Forest School Leader

In School settings:

•The school will be notified of the incident and details given

•The school will be responsible for notifying the parent

•The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety •One member of the staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site

•If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the child’s parent will be updated about the situation by the staff remaining at school

•In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange to contact the parent of the injured child so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor, or home.

•An incident report will be completed later by the Forest School Leader

**When requiring Emergency Services take the following steps:**

•Dial 999 and ask for the emergency services

•Speak clearly and slowly and be ready to repeat the information if asked

 •Be ready with the following information:

•Telephone number (mobile number if call is made on a mobile – see above)

•Details of your location and grid reference

•A brief description of the problem (for example, if you are requesting an ambulance, you will need to describe the symptoms of the person who is injured/ill)

•Access point for ambulance

•Nearest landing site for air ambulance

•Designate a meeting place to meet the emergency services

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Location AddressSladebank Woods, Summer Crescent, Stroud | Site name/descriptionSladebank Woodland |
| Nearest Main RoadOld Bisley Road | Designated Meeting place for Emergency services.Entrance at Summer Crescent  |
| Nearest Hospital/A&EStroud Hospital/Gloucester Hospital |  |
| Site Owner/Manager Martin Jakes | Nearest LandlineMartine Jakes Home |
| What 3 Words :  | Important phone numbers999101LeaderCraig 07474227928 |

In the case of an emergency an ambulance should be called immediately without undue delay attempting to contact parents or guardians.

• The forest school leader will stay with the injured person and administer first aid.

• The other children on site will be called together and supervised by a team member away from the injured person.

• Another team member will go to the site access point to await ambulance.

• If the injured child/adult is mobile then he/she should be taken for emergency treatment to the nearest hospital. In this instance the Forest school leader is responsible for arranging for an adult to transport the individual to hospital. The adult taking the injured person should stay with the injured person and return with them following treatment or stay with the injured person until the parent/guardian arrives at the hospital.

**Missing Child Policy**

In the event of a child found to be missing after a head count, all children will be called and gathered together. One adult will remain with the children while the other team members will begin a search of the immediate area calling for a response.

 • Once this has been completed, if the child is still missing the police will be called.

• Parents/guardians will be contacted at this stage and asked to collect their children immediately.

• The team will then return to continue the search.

• The forest school leader will remain on site and await police.

**Cooking and Food Hygiene Policy**

At Wild Kids, the team are required to obtain a Safe Food Hygiene certificate. In order to keep costs low we do not provide meals. We allow individuals to bring their own packed snacks if possible.

Dietary requirements and allergies will be closely motored and safeguarded.

**Wild Food Policy**

Forest School recognises that developing awareness and relationships with nature necessitates that participants develop the ability to recognise and interact appropriately with trees and plants. Huge benefits result from learning how to forage for wild food. With safe and professional guidance, participants are shown some uses of the plants for food, medicine, and other practical uses. This greatly enhances their appreciation of their environment and leads to motivation to protect it. The benefits of Wild Food Foraging include:

•gathering the plants and processing them together

•promotes teamwork and sense of community

•an appreciation for our own heritage uses of native plants

•gain self-confidence in being able to correctly identify plants and trees

•self-reliance

•ecological awareness of inter-connectedness of the natural cycles of nature

•understanding risk

•enhance knowledge (naturalist)

•empathy

•development of sense (safe, successful gathering requires all physical senses)

•education about sustainability

•practical skills used in foraging include pruning and coppicing

•important and valuable supplement to modern diet as wild foods are rich in minerals, vitamins and nutrients quality largely absent from the modern diet. Many of these plants also help the body to detox.

**Risks of Wild Food Foraging**:

•The most obvious risk is the ingestion of poisonous plant: The very presence of poisonous species naturally enhances the sensory and observational skills, necessary to make accurate identification. The presence of these species means that we must be constantly vigilant and respectful in this activity. •Another risk is over harvesting of wild plants and the damage to the ecosystem thereby. Once again, the risk presented by the activity offers very valuable learning opportunities Steps taken to minimise the risk of ingesting poisonous species:

•Expert guidance giving clear tools for accurate identification are given by the Forest School leader or expert practitioner

•Children will be reminded of the “No Pick No Lick” Policy during Forest School sessions

•Plants are only ever picked as a specific activity and then under adult supervision

•Participants will be clearly and precisely shown poisonous look-a-like species

•There will be a variety of teaching techniques for assuring the differences are understood Steps taken to minimise the risk of over harvesting wild plants:

•Education and awareness of ecological impact is an important value of forest school

•Participants are taught how to harvest sustainability with care and respect protected and less common species of plants

•Basic ecological surveys of the area where activities will be carried out will be made before the sessions

•The main leader in charge of leading the sessions on gathering wild plants will have good knowledge of protected species and know which species are abundant in the environment

•Gathering will be minimal and will consider animals, birds and insects which may be reliant on particular species

•Never harvest more than a small percentage of a species in one area

•Protected and less common species will not be used

•When opportunities arise species may be harvested to increase their numbers e.g., plant their seeds

**Other considerations when foraging for wild plants:**

•There may be possible pollution in area for foraging when there is doubt, no harvesting will be carried out. Usually the landowners will have knowledge of the chemicals used on or near their land.

•Always avoid harvesting from roadsides

•Avoid harvesting from areas of heavy dog walking or only harvest from higher branches

•Wash foraged food thoroughly

**Tools Policy**

Tools will only be used under supervision from qualified forest school leader . See below for our general rules:

•Tools will be kept maintained and in good order

•Tools will be inspected before each session

•Children and adults will not use tools until they have been shown how to use them

•Tools will be kept in the toolbox or designated area outlined with red rope, when not in use

•Tools will be removed from the toolbox only by the Forest School Leader

•We never run with tools

•Tools will be counted at the beginning and end of each session

• Permission to use tools can only be given by the Forest School Leader

• Permission to use tools may be withdrawn at the Forest School Leader’s discretion if the rules are not followed

•The working area should have sufficient space (at least two arms and a tool away from anyone else) and be clear of trip hazards

**Bow Saw rules**

• Bow saws must have a blade guard on when not in use

•Supervision ratios are 1:2

•Bow saws are used to cut any stick larger than a 2 pence piece

• A glove must be worn on the helping hand (children and adult sizes are available)

• Wood being sawn must be supported on a safe cutting bench

• The crossed hands method must be used to start sawing

**Lopper rules**

• Supervision ratios are 1:2

• Loppers are used to cut anything smaller than a 2 pence piece

• Loppers are used with bare hands

**Knife rules**

• Knives must have a sheath on when not in use

• Supervision ratios are 1:1

• Knives are always used on the outside of the body and away from the body

• A glove must be worn on the helping hand (children and adult sizes are available)

**Axe Rules**

* Supervision ratios is 1:1 for independent use
* Supervision for collaborative use is 1:2
* Independent use- the body must be outside of the swing zone
* Do not swing axe over head or attempt to split knotted wood
* Hand axes only
* For splitting logs smaller than 30cm in diameter.

Refer to Activity Risk Assessment (TOOLS)

**Weather Policy**

Forest School sessions take place in all seasons and in all weathers – sun, rain, snow, ice, etc. We always aim to be outside as much as possible. Staff will be checking the weather forecast prior to the session and will decide on the appropriateness of activities outside, the need to adapt activities, whether to move inside or in rare occasions cancel the session. We will aim to have access to a sheltered or indoor space when possible where children can be warm and dry.

If a session needs to be cancelled every attempt will be made to reschedule this session.

Dealing with different types of weather conditions:

**Heavy Rain**: In the case of torrential rain, which is set to last a while, the session may be cancelled by the forest school facilitator at the earliest opportunity.

**Wind**: We follow the Beaufort Scale to decide whether the session is safe to go ahead in windy conditions. We normally cancel/relocate sessions if the wind is Force 7 with gusts above that level. The final decision is made by the Wild Kids facilitator who knows the site and will consider factors such as the type, size, and age of trees, if trees are in leaf, if there are any overhanging branches, age of group working with.



**Extreme heat**: In the case of extreme heat, children will be encouraged to drink plenty of water, wear suitable clothing and seek shelter from the sun when necessary. Staff will monitor the situation and provide/move activities into the shade.

**Extreme cold**: In the case of extreme cold, if children have appropriate clothing the session will often go ahead. Where possible a fire will be lit, and hot drinks will be provided. Staff will monitor the situation and if necessary, relocate or finish the session early.

**Thunder and Lightning**: Lightning strikes the best conductor on the ground, whether it has been struck before or not. When you hear thunder, you are already within range of where the next ground flash may occur; lightning can strike as far as 10 miles away from the centre of a storm. In the case of a lightning storm groups will seek shelter in buildings or vehicles. Where this is not possible, we will shelter under our existing cover (tarp/tents) and wait for the storm to pass.

**Further risks to avoid may include**:

• crossing open or exposed areas to reach shelter

• crossing /walking on roads where rain has seriously reduced visibility

• exposure to torrential rain increasing the chance of hypothermia.



**Yellow**: Be aware. Severe weather is possible over the next few days and could affect you. Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day-to-day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and Yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans in the next few days.

**Amber**: Be prepared. There is an increased likelihood of bad weather affecting you, which could potentially disrupt your plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means you need to be prepared to change your plans and protect you, your family and community from the impacts of the severe weather based on the forecast from the Met Office

**Red**: Take action. Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather. Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.

Useful weather links:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/maps-and-charts/surface-pressure/>

 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather>

 **Fire Policy**

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. At Wild Kids, we take fire safety very seriously and aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires will do so with as little risk to their health as possible.

Our fire protocols are as follows:

Considerations before having a fire:

• Wind direction.

• No combustible materials nearby/over-hanging branches.

• Soil type – ensure not too peaty

**Fire procedures**:

• The fire will be contained within a circle of logs

• The logs will be pegged to stop them rolling

• Seating logs will be placed in a circle a safe distance away from the fire.

• No hair/Jewellery dangling – hair tied back.

• No gloves on when placing materials.

• The seating circle will have a clear entrance and exit

• Seating should be positioned 2m away from fire, allowing gaps in between seating for escape routes.

• Ensure the area between the seating area and fire pit is free from debris and trip hazards.

•The ‘respect position’ should be used when kneeling by the fire

• Water will be available to put the fire out

• A fire glove will be available nearby

• The fire will be lit with a flint and steel

• The fire will never be left unattended

• A burns kit is available

• If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.

• If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.

• Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire without checking with an adult

 • All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.

• Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.

• Forest School Leaders should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.

 • At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

• Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Reference Activity Risk Assessment (Fire)

**Welfare Policies**

**Clothing** - ‘Det finns inget dåligt väder, bara dåliga kläder’ There is no bad weather, just bad clothes.

• All children to wear sensible footwear, ideally wellies, snow boots or trainers. No sandals, crocs or other open shoes to be worn during sessions. Socks to be worn to protect legs.

• Children to wear long thick trousers to protect their legs from scratches and stings.

• During cold and damp weather children to wear waterproof tops and trousers. Staff to assess whether they think the children are wearing sufficient layers of warm clothing and provide spares when necessary.

• Children to wear sun hats or caps during hot weather.

• If a child is not wearing the appropriate clothing and spares cannot be found the child will need to remain in the hammock area supervised by a member of the team. In cases like this the parents should be informed at the end of the session so that they are able to provide the appropriate clothing for the next session.

**Toileting**

• Children will use toilets or ‘wild wee’ independently with DBS checked member supervising at a distance.

• Children use the toilet on site.

• Water and soap and paper towels are available in the toilet block to clean hands.

**Food and Drink**

At Wild Kids, we operate a strict no eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by one of the team to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready, they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities.

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

Bullying is an action taken by one or more person with the deliberate intention of hurting another person, either physically or emotionally and where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying is not an isolated incident but continual or repetitive. At Wild Kids we aim to create a positive environment and develop relationships between children. We do not tolerate bullying of any kind. (see behaviour policy for further details)

**Insurance Policy**

Our insurance is with Saua and covers us for Forest School activities with the following requirements:

Forest School Activities Guidelines and Requirements are:

• General Policies, procedures and risk assessments for each location and activity must be completed.

• Leaders must have a Level one Forest School qualification for basic Forest School (FS) activities. For certain activities – e.g. Fire making and use of tools – a level 3 qualified leader must lead the session. See below for further details. You should obtain written parental consent for “forest school activities”, giving parents examples of the type of activities that would be included.

Approved and Agreed Activities A. The following activities are automatically covered subject to normal statutory adult to child supervision ratios:

• Digging, Exploring, Hikes, Woodland Walks, Treasure Hunts, Orienteering, Map Making, Bug Hunting, Hide and Seek, Shelter Making, Den Building.

The following are automatically covered subject to enhanced conditions as specified below.

• Whittling 5+ only. Whittling to be by suitable knives. 1:1 supervision ratio Glove to be worn on non-tool hand. Use of Saws 5+ only Hand saws only, no power saws and must be type and age appropriate. 1:1 supervision ratio for children 5-8, 1:2 supervision ratio for over 8s. If working in pairs, then 1: one pair for under 8s and 1: 2 pairs for over 8s. Glove to be worn on non-tool hand.

**A Forest School Skills level 3 required for supervision of use of saws**.

Fire Making 5+ only A Forest School Skills level 3 required for supervision of making and using fires. Fire to be lit and extinguished by adults only, children to be kept outside a one metre fire circle. (See NB below)

Supervision ratio 1:4 NB: If children are to light fires and/or put them out, this to be referred to Morton Michel. The minimum age and supervision ratio requirements will be increased in these circumstances.

• Cooking on Fires 5+ only

• A Forest School Skills level 3 required for supervision of making and using fires.

• Children not cooking to be kept outside a one metre fire circle.

• Tree Climbing 3+ only

• Supervision ratio 1:1 for under 8s with adult standing directly below child. Supervision ratio 1:2 for over 8s with adult standing directly below child. Maximum height 5ft for under 8’s, 6ft for over 8’s. Other Activities Underwriters may consider other activities but will require full details of the type of activity, supervision ratios and ages of children involved before considering them on a case by case basis.

**Risk Management and Assessment**

Risk management is an important part of Forest School. It is concerned with the identification of significant risks of harm and is based on the likelihood of an incident occurring and the severity of any injury or harm if it does.

**There are four different types of risk assessment used:**

**Site assessment** - This assesses the risks associated with the Forest School site itself. Each layer of the woodland site is assessed at least once each half term and more frequently following adverse weather conditions.

**Daily assessment** - This is carried out before the start of each Forest School session and includes a review of the site and current weather conditions.

**Activity assessment** - An assessment of each planned activity will be carried out before the activity takes place. This will include activities using tools or fire.

**Ongoing assessment** - This is a dynamic, on-the-spot, assessment carried out continually during each session to take account of changing situations such as a change in weather conditions or a change in planned activities.

Risk is worked out by first identifying a hazard, the potential accident. The severity of the consequence of the hazard is then graded 1-5. The likelihood of it occurring is also graded 1-5. Risk is likelihood multiplied by the severity as shown in the table below:



Once the risk factors have been worked out. Steps will be put in place to reduce risk. Where the risk factor still remains high the activity will not take place. The process of risk assessment and management should be shared with the children so that they can develop the awareness skills and decision making required to assess and manage risk independently. Supporting and enabling children to take responsibility for their actions and choices can empower them to care for themselves and each other.

 **Communication Policy**

Excellent communication is at the heart of a well-run Forest School. Prior to each Forest School session, there will always be a meeting with all volunteers to check ratios, share the plan for the session, daily risk assessments and any other health and safety issues. All adults volunteering for Forest School will be given a copy of the Emergency Action Plan, which will also be kept in the Wild Edges Forest School Handbook. All children and adults need a clear understanding of all safety rules in order for the sessions to be successful and enjoyable for all. Therefore, prior to each Forest School Session there will be reminders for all adults and children of the agreed safety rules for Forest School sessions.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection** at Forest School All discussions with participants of Forest School are confidential and must not be discussed with anyone outside of the Forest School establishment unless there is a Child Protection issue. Any discussions of participants at Forest School are confidential and must not be discussed with anyone outside of the Forest School establishment. When publishing evaluation forms of participants all names are changed to protect the individual’s identity. All parental consent forms and medical details for each group are held by the Forest School Leader in charge of every session and accompany the group for each Forest School session. When the group are not attending Forest School their medical details and parental consent forms are kept within a locked cabinet within the Wild Edges office. All other documents (i.e. evaluations) containing young people’s personal details are kept within a locked cabinet within the Wild Edges Forest School office at all times. The general rule is that staff will make clear at the beginning of the conversation that there are limits to confidentiality. These limits relate to ensuring children’s safety and well-being. The young person will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and will be encouraged to do this for themselves whenever this is possible. When concerns for a child or young person come to the attention of the team, for example through observation of behaviour or injuries or disclosure, however insignificant this might appear to be, this should be discussed with Rachel Smith, the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible.

**Safeguarding, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**

Given that in the Forest School environment, children are often more relaxed and open to sharing with the adults around them, we recognise that disclosures may occur during Forest School sessions. As such, and in addition to our safeguarding policy, at Wild Kids, we will ensure that all Forest School volunteers read our policy and understand what to do in the event of a child making a disclosure. All regular adults assisting with our Forest School will have an enhanced DBS check prior to volunteering. In accordance with the policy, any adult who receives any disclosure from a child will be asked to report the disclosure to Craig Johnson, the Wild Kids Designated Safeguarding Lead who will decide if a referral is necessary. All volunteers at Wild Kids will be fully DBS checked prior to joining the team.

Child abuse is never acceptable and a commitment to children’s rights in general also means a commitment to safeguarding the children who attend any Wild Kids Forest School sessions.

We aim to:

• provide a safe yet challenging space in the natural world with Forest School activities that enable participants to flourish and thrive

• provide Forest School Sessions in schools or as community well-being events

• enhance well-being in individuals and the collective group

• encourage environmental awareness and stewardship Wild Kids Forest School is committed to safeguarding all children that attend any Forest School sessions.

**How will we achieve this?**

**Awareness**: Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, members, and officers are aware of the problem of child abuse.

**Prevention**: Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.

**Reporting**: Ensuring that staff and others are clear of what steps to take where concerns arise regarding children’s safety

**Responding**: Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect children To meet these standards, the following procedures will occur:

• Ensure that all staff and volunteers are subject to satisfactory enhanced checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

If concerns and issues are raised as a result of such checks:

 a. The person in question will be informed in writing.

b. No appointment will be made until such time as the issues and concerns can be addressed in full and to the satisfaction of the necessary authorities.

• Staff and volunteers will be subject to careful selection and vetting process that includes identity checks and references.

• Take seriously any concerns raised.

 • Take positive steps to ensure protection of children who are the subject of such concerns.

• Support children, staff and other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns.

• Act appropriately and effectively in instigating or cooperating with any subsequent process or investigation. • Guide through the child protection process by the principle of “best interests of the child”. • Listen to and take seriously the wishes of and views of children.

• Work in partnership with parents/guardians and/or other professional to ensure the protection of children.

• All activities are planned beforehand to ensure appropriateness, meeting of health and safety standards, and staff awareness of necessary precautions.

• All staff and volunteers sign an agreement that among other responsibilities ensures that they read, understand, and follow the Policies and Procedures, including Health & Safety, Equal Opportunities, Code of Conduct, Child Protection and Confidentiality included in this Handbook

• Policies and procedures will be reviewed on a yearly basis. It is generally accepted that there are four main types of abuse:

1. Physical Abuse

2. Emotional Abuse

3. Sexual Abuse

4. Neglect

Dealing with Disclosures and how to raise concerns: If you are concerned about the safety of a child, see or suspect abuse, an allegation of abuse is made, or a child discloses abuse you must do the following:

• Discuss your concerns with your line manager/person in charge/main contact.

• the next most appropriate person, e.g., a senior staff member, school head or other management committee representative, Local Authority.

Discussions should focus on:

• Nature of concerns

• Risks to child/children

• Action/next steps

1. Disclosures made to staff by participants will be reported to the Lead Forest School Facilitator on the day who shall ensure that the appropriate persons/agencies are informed in line with the child protection policy and as required by law.

2. Concerns should normally be reported within the same day.

3. Ensure detailed written records are made of all events and what the child has said (where this applies). 4. Records of concern will be kept in a locked box and remain confidential.

5. The person in charge/ main contact must:

• Inform the most senior staff or representative of the management committee of the concerns and then... • Act locally in line with the action plan agreed with the management and established local procedures.

6. Where possible the matter should be discussed with the management as a way of assessing staff concerns, accessing support, and planning any subsequent action.

7. Where serious concerns exist and there is immediate risk to the child, ACT! It is essential to avoid delay as inaction may place the child at further risk.

8. Where for any reason it is not possible to discuss the matter with the management, or where it is essential to take immediate action due to the risk to the child/children, the management should be informed as soon as possible after the event.

9. If any staff has continued concerns, then it will be reported to social services.

**Your DSL is Craig Johnson**

craig@oakbrookfarm.org.uk

Tel: 07474227928

1. If your concerns relate to anyone named as a SL or you have any doubts of who to report to, report to Craig Johnson craig@oakbrookfarm.org.uk
2. All serious reports will be recorded on a secure database by the DSL.
3. If your concerns relate to anyone named as an DSL please contact the safeguarding Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gscp/

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

01452 426565

E: childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk

**Physical Contact with Participants Policy**

Physical contact is an essential human requirement. Positive, safe, and appropriate touch and closeness between a child and their primary carers is necessary for the development of self-confidence and assurance.

• During Forest School sessions all staff are to be aware of providing appropriate physical contact with participants whilst remaining vigilant around child protection.

**All Wild Kids Forest School staff and volunteers are to adhere to the following:**

• Acknowledge/praise by placing a hand on a child’s shoulder/upper arm (between shoulder and elbow)

• Shake hands with children as a form of meeting and greeting or recognition

• If a child is clearly distressed, ask permission or gesture for a hug, when engaged by the child we keep our hands around their shoulder and our waists apart

• Place our arm around the shoulder of a child to provide support following an injury or incident.

**Code of Conduct**

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

• Be aware of situations, which may present risks and manage these

• Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks

• As far as possible, be visible in working with children

• Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed

• Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged

• Talk to children about their contact with staff/others and encourage them to raise their concerns

• Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

**In general, it is inappropriate to:**

• Spend excessive time alone with children away from others

 • Take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

**In general, appropriate conduct is to:**

• Avoid physical expressions of emotion with children such as kissing or hugging

• Avoid intrusive forms of play (e.g., tickling, rough and tumble)

• Avoid any physical contact when alone with a child

• If a child persists in physical contact that is inappropriate, it must be explained that staff should not kiss/hug people that they work for or with and the matter should be brought to senior staff.

**Staff and others must never:**

• Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children

• Develop physical/sexual relationships with children

• Develop relationships with children, which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive

• Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.

Staff and others must avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, they should never:

• Use language, make suggestions, or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive

• Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative. Avoid initiating physical contact with children

• Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised

 • Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working

• Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves

• Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive

• Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse

• Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others. Disclosure/Accusation Procedure Wild Kids Forest School is determined to make all efforts to prevent discrimination and other unfair treatment against any of its staff, potential staff or users of its service regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical disability or offending background that does not create a risk to children and vulnerable adults

**To that end we will ensure that:**

• any criminal record information given by an individual is kept confidential and according to the requirements of the Data Protection Act, and where appropriate, DBS Code of Practice.

• All recruitment will follow our set policies and procedures and according to our recruitment Code of practice.

• Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with Wild Kids Forest School. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences.

**Social Media Protocols**

Social media refers to online technologies and practices that are used to share opinions and information, promote discussion, and build relationships. Social media is an accessible tool that enables anyone to publish or access information. It is a way to network with other people and companies with similar interests. Social media is a platform to reach a vast audience. Do not be afraid to use social media for its positive benefits for communication and interacting but do be aware of the consequences of its inappropriate and negative use. The number one priority of Wild Kids, with regard to social media is to respect the privacy and anonymity of staff and participants when posting any information.

**The Do’s and Don’ts of the world of Social Media:**

 **Do:**

• Post positive, interesting, articles that will engage your target audience regarding Forest School and deep nature connection

• Think before you post

• use your common sense

• take a moment to think about how your comment might be received

• Report any comment or post that you think is inappropriate immediately

• Get involved in interesting discussions that are appropriate

• Ensure that, if posting a photo, that consent has been given

**Do not:**

• Post or respond to anything that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, or sexist

• Disclose any confidential information

• If posting about a child participating in a programme, do not use their full name

• Post any photos of children or young people without their permission

• Post or comment on any material that could damage the reputation of Wild Kids

 • Rush to respond to a comment that you feel is inappropriate, consider the situation and report it to a member of staff if you feel it needs attending to

• Respond to a young person or child who may have posted a worrying comment, report the comment to an appropriate adult/teacher/parent/guardian

• Exchange social media information with the young people you have been working with, for example, do not add them as a friend on Facebook.

**Cancellation Policy**

At Wild Kids, we will endeavour to run sessions if possible, but on the rare occasion sessions may need to be cancelled. All cancellation decisions will be made as early as possible, however may be cancelled on the day. Sessions may be cancelled for the following reasons:

• Staff illness (which would affect staff/client ratios)

• Severe weather conditions that create a Health and Safety issue

• Any unforeseen situation, which creates a Health and Safety issue. The client group and all staff and volunteers will be contacted by phone.

Monies will only be refunded if at least 24 hours is given.

 **Staff Declaration Form**

Staff will be required to read the Wild Edges Handbook prior to working and sign that they fully understand policies and procedures and agree to follow them at all times.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Name and role | Date | Signature  |
| Craig Johnson, Lead/Manager  | 05/07/2024 |  |
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