

Policy statement

We recognise that the outdoors is an amazing and inspirational place for young children to learn. Children are proven to show higher levels of well-being and self-confidence, deeper levels of interactions with peers and abilities to problem solve. We aim for all children attending Avenue Nursery to be able to access the Forest School and the following policy and procedures are in place to do so with the child's safety as paramount.

Clothing.

Children will be expected to dress appropriately on their designated Forest School day.

Summer: School top, legs covered and safe shoes. Sun cream and a hat will be provided.

Winter: School tops with one or two layers underneath, legs covered again with extra layers in colder weather. Two pairs of socks, wellies or walking boots. Hats, scarves and gloves. Nursery will provide weatherproof jackets and trousers. If a child is dressed in appropriately more than three times, parent/carers will be asked to collect their child and will only be able to access the Forest School if dressed appropriately.

Weather.

The Forest School will be attended in most weathers, however if winds are registered as 30mph or more (including gusts) on the wind meter before we leave for forest school, alternative venues will be used, due to Covid restrictions we can no longer use local amenities (library, museum etc) therefore we will find a venue in the nursery itself, the crèche room or the toddler cabin, depending on numbers, space etc. If the winds are registered at over 30mph while we are already at forest school, 2 members of staff and all the children will find shelter in the forest school cabin until safe to reenter the forest school site or we will use the forest school cabin until the forest school leader has finished packing away and tidying the site, where all staff members and children will walk to the minibus, then we will return and use a venue at nursery, as previously mentioned. Similarly, Forest school will be closed during, storms and lightning strikes, temperatures of or below 4degrees centigrade as well as torrential rain and snow. Weather will be checked before the session by the forest school leader.

Fire Pit.

Forest School leaders have completed camp fire practical skills. For all fire activities the following items will be in place. Fire retardant gloves, a bucket of water and cloth, for burns and extinguishing the fire. Fire blanket and first aid kit including burns kit. The children will be shown how to sit and walk around the outside of the seating logs and to never enter the fire circle itself. Once it is assessed that children have understood the basic rules, they will be able to sit or kneel towards the fire, always with full adult supervision, to toast marshmallows at arm's length and eventually meals. The Forest School leader will remain tending the fire throughout the activity and ensure it is fully extinguished, doused with water and cool to the touch at the end of the activity. Refer to Avenue Nursery and Forest School Fire safety and emergency evacuation policy in the event of an emergency.

Tool Pit.

We will use tools to develop children's gross and fine motor skills, build their self-esteem and extend their imaginative games. Children will wear a safety glove on the hand not holding the tool and be shown how to safely use specific tools, children will learn to push away from the body, kneel on the floor with space between each child using the tools, children are not to walk around with any tools and children will be reminded to be aware of others around them while using the tools. All staff are first aid trained and a first aid kit will be readily available in the storage chest in the white tent (see first aid section of this policy for more details). Staff to child ratio whilst using tools will differ depending on the tool being used. Screwdrivers, hammers and peelers can be used in small groups of up to 3 children to 1 staff supervising, the use of saws or any blades will be supervised 1 to 1. Tools will be safely kept in locked storage when not in use. Tools will be counted out of the box and checked all are accounted for at the end of the activity.

Climbing.

Children will be encouraged to take risks and challenging goals including climbing trees, ensuring adult can reach the child, with one to one supervision.

Shelters and dens.

We will be using ropes and tarpaulins to build shelters and dens. This will be done under the direct supervision of Forest School trained staff. Children will be supervised at all times if using ropes. All hanging ropes will be checked to make sure they are not a choking hazard and to make sure they are secure and tight. Dens and shelters will be checked daily for strength and stability. Dens will be taken down or fixed where possible if deemed unsafe by forest school leader or other staff members.

Pond

We have a small pond at our forest school site. Forest school leader will check the depth of the pond to make sure it remains shallow. Children are aware of the pond and there is a wooden barrier around the edge to stop children falling in. staff ratio is high and staff will be constantly vigilant in accounting for the children at all times.

Bites, stings and rashes

In our forest school site and local area we are aware of the following that may cause sting, bite or rash: mosquitoes, caterpillars, stinging nettles, brambles, ticks, wood ants, bees, wasps and spiders.

As part of our daily risk assessment a forest school leader will check the site is safe before the session starts. Plants will be cut back or areas roped off with red rope if deemed a risk. Staff educate children on the insects and plants listed above and explain how to be safe and aware as they move around the site. We also suggest that children and staff wear full length trousers to reduce the risk of bites, stings or rash. In summer months when mosquitoes are active, staff will use bug repellent on the children and around seating areas. Repellents are only handled by staff and kept out of reach from children.

Flora & Fauna

We have identified harmful species of flora and fauna, we will remove if necessary. We teach the children safe practices around all species of flora and fauna, we continue to identify and educate throughout the year. Our policy is nil by mouth.

Food and Drink.

Food will be nutritious, varied and plentiful because of the physical nature of the forest school. All staff will undertake food handling training and food will be prepared by staff and packed in suitable bags, using ice packs when necessary. Warm drinks will be taken during colder months. A drink and healthy snack is offered before leaving or at Forest School and on return to the nursery. Lists of allergies and dietary requirements are put up in the kitchen so all staff are aware of specific children's needs. This information will also be available when attending the forest school in the forest school folder.

Minor accidents/incidents/Emergency Details & Documents

It is expected due to the higher level of risk at the forest school, that children may suffer minor injuries such as scratches or small bruises more often than in the setting. Therefore, parents will be informed on returning to the nursery and written documentation may be completed if deemed necessary.

Staff have copies of emergency contact details, medical care plans, risk assessments, policies and procedures, a register (of children, staff and visitors to the site with times of arrival and departures), accident/incident form, major incident book, fire drill book and a Forest School phone. If the forest school leader or another staff member is injured then a member of staff will need to phone the main nursery setting to send someone to replace the staff member that is injured as soon as possible.

All first aid equipment is stored in a storage chest in the white tent at the Forest School site. There is also a first aid kit kept in the forest school back pack. Accidents will be reviewed termly (roughly 3 months).

Fire drill/emergency evacuation

In the event of an emergency where the site needs to be evacuated a whistle will be blown by a member of staff to alert the children and staff so they can gather in a safe area away from the hazard/threat. The register will be taken for children and staff members. In the event of an emergency the forest school leader or other staff members will phone emergency services if deemed necessary or the nursery setting. Fire drill/emergency evacuations will be practised with all children and staff termly (roughly 3 months).

Supervision, roles and responsibilities.

The ratio at Forest School is 1 adult to 4 children for 3 & 4 year olds, some allowances will be made for children who are 2 years old approaching their 3rd birthday if it's in the best interest of the child's wellbeing and they are considered to have good understanding of basic rules this decision will be made by the forest school leader and the nursery managers on the day. Each forest school session will be lead by a trained forest school leader who will supervise the session. All staff are trained level 3 or above nursery practitioners with first aid certificate and are DBS checked. The forest school leader will make sure registers, daily risk assessments and all other necessary documents are complete and available for each session. Forest school leader will be

responsible for checking the weather before and during the session to make sure it is safe. All staff members are responsible for the safety of the children and to be a good role model during each session. All staff are aware of the forest school ethos and allow for child led learning, risk taking and learning about nature whilst promoting self-esteem and self-confidence.

Safe guarding – all staff have attended safeguarding training. Disclosures made by children will be recorded in the specific Child protection forms (Kept in the FS rucksack) and then transferred to file when back at the main nursery. Ensuring confidentiality throughout. Safe guarding leads are Nikki Finnis and Sally Moody-smith and Safeguarding Deputy is Fleur Drury. Personal mobile phones are not to be used in forest school sessions and should be put away in personal bags, only to be used in emergencies. Refer to Avenue Nursery and Forest school safeguarding policy for more details.

Behaviour – All staff are aware of and have read the behaviour policy. Nikki Finnis is the named member of staff who deals with behaviour and any children's PSED issues. All staff are required to be positive role models for children. All staff are aware of the forest school ethos regarding children's behaviour and how to support children with challenging behaviour at forest school and giving the children an outlet for the emotions in the forest school sessions.

Key person and Key buddy system is in place so that staff, children and parents form a good relationship and staff have good understanding and knowledge of their own key children. Refer to Avenue Nursery and Forest school Emotional wellbeing and resilience policy.

Inclusion – all staff are aware of and have read the inclusion policy. Staff are to be good role models and will not discriminate against any children or staff members. Staff do not discriminate against religion, lifestyle choices or disabilities. Refer to Avenue Nursery and Forest School inclusion policy for more details.

Risk assessment

Risk assessments have been carried out and written by forest school leaders for activity, general and daily risks. The daily risk assessment is to be carried out by the forest school leader at the beginning of each forest school session. Any hazards or risk are to be recorded and reported to managers of nursery and the site owner if deemed necessary. All risk assessments will be reviewed termly (roughly 3 months) by all forest school leaders and changed/amended if necessary.

First aid

All staff are first aid trained and are responsible daily for first aid practice if needed.

A first aid kit is readily available in the forest school back pack carried by staff member to and from nursery and forest school, there is also a first aid kit situated in the storage box in the white storage tent on the forest school site. First aid kits are to be restocked after any items are used. First aid kits are checked termly (roughly 3 months) by forest school leaders to check all items are in date and accounted for.