



Halesfield Highwood's Forest School Handbook 2021



Halesfield Day Nursery Centre
Halesfield 22, Telford, TF7 4QX

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What is Forest School?

Forest Schools originated in Scandinavia as part of their education system. In the UK the concept placed at its core is a desire to build self-esteem and independence in children and young people, through their positive outdoor experiences in nature. Forest School is a long term program, delivered in a natural (not necessarily a Forest) environment by qualified practitioners. Each program is continually developed to meet the needs of individuals within the group, and enables the learners to grow in confidence, skills and understanding. Forest School is a unique and inspiring approach to outdoor learning. It encourages individuals to explore, to learn through play, at their own pace and in their own style, providing time and space to follow their own ideas and interests in a real and meaningful context.

Forest School Ethos

The philosophy of Forest School is to inspire and encourage individuals and families through positive outdoor experiences. It is complimentary, not separate to learning in a traditional classroom. Sessions are centered on and by the learners themselves, drawing on their imagination and interests.

Forest School aims to develop the learners' personal, social and emotional skills through participation in tasks and experiences which are both motivating and achievable.

These skills include:

- Independence
- Courage
- Self-discovery
- Communication skills
- Confidence
- Self-motivation
- Consideration, respect and responsibility for themselves, others and their environment
- Increased self- esteem

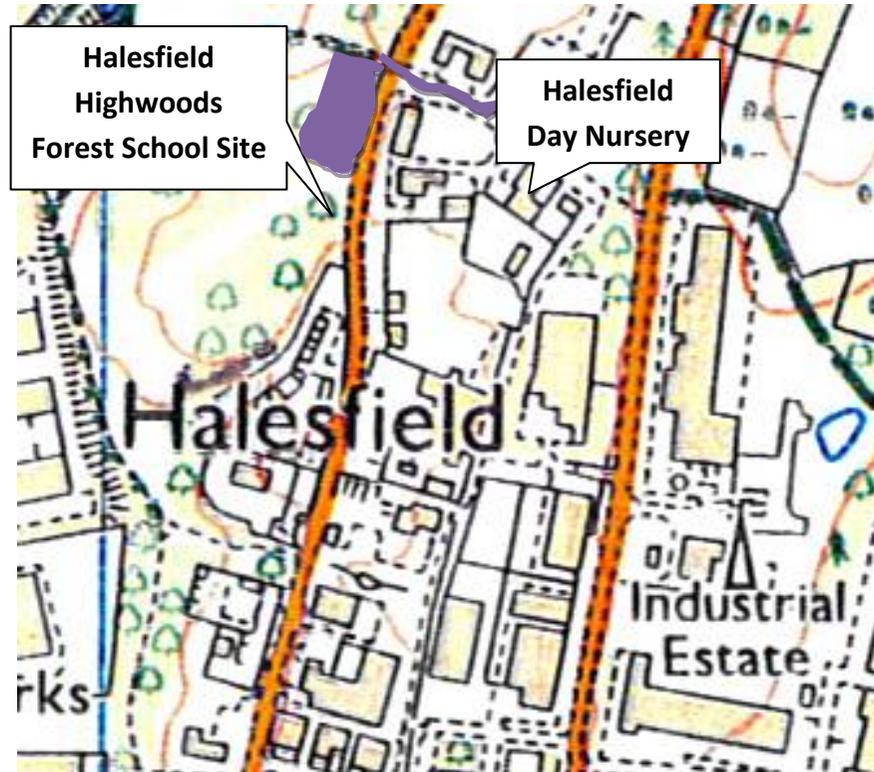
Forest Schools are successful with individuals of all ages who visit the same site on a regular basis. They learn through play, by following their own initiative and problem solving, through communication and cooperation with others. Individuals also learn early risk management strategies and about the natural environment in all weathers. They are also provided with opportunities to use full sized tools. Those who attend Forest School sessions have opportunities to experience different learning styles and techniques, enabling them to access learning at their own level and develop it further.

When provided with opportunities to explore their world, using all of their senses and emotions, a deeper understanding of the world and everything in it is created.

Where is our Forest School?

Our Forest School is based at Halesfield Woods leading off Halesfield 22, Telford. OS ref SJ 711053.

Directions: Turn right out of the nursery car park, follow the footpath down under the underpass onto the field. Walk about 20 metres before proceeding up the bank on the left. Enter forest school site through tree opening. It takes less than 5 minutes on foot.



Who runs our Forest School?

The Forest school Leader is Helen Childs, manager of Halesfield Day Nursery since 2009. Helen already holds a Level 3 in Early Years and Education, Level 6 Early Years Professional status, as well as her Level 7 Masters in Early Years Education. She also has outdoor First Aid having completed her Level 3 Forest School training back in September 2013. Helen will be assisted during each session in the woods by one of the staff; the same staff member will go on the same session each week to ensure continuity of care for the children and allow the staff to document the full impact of the forest school.

Our Mission Statement

Through weekly visits to Halesfield Highwoods, Halesfield Day Nursery will instil a love of the great outdoors. Inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences will help develop children's self-esteem, confidence and responsibility. The use of the woodland setting, the various real tools and the natural resources will bring learning to life, creating an understanding of the balance of nature and the infinite resources around us. By identifying individual learning schema's we'll enable the children to learn most effectively and promote success. By planning for every child in the early session stages, and then letting the children lead the sessions through their own interests they will be taking informed, self-calculated risks and choices to ensure their groups safety, developing sympathy and empathy to the group around them. We intend to work as a team to solve problems to help foster communication and negotiation skills with the children being equal footing with the staff.

DAILY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Session routine and procedures

Each session will undoubtedly differ in many ways from each previous session in relation to experiences, learning, journeys and the environment and so on, but generally we follow the same structure for each session. This structure helps ensure that children (and adults) are physically safe, and also creates an environment in which children are comfortable and secure to learn with confidence.

Procedures to be carried out by the Forest School Leader before each session:

- A thorough safety sweep of the area that will be used during the session to identify and remove or restrict access to any hazards that might cause injury or illness
- A Risk Assessment form will be completed, on which any hazards that were identified will be documented, and how they were dealt with or will be managed
- Boundaries will be erected where necessary, and existing boundaries checked
- Check that trees, bushes and other foliage is safe, including the potential for falling branches or dead wood, thorns, protruding sticks at eye level, and hazardous berries or fruits
- Check the weather – If the weather is, or has the potential to become a risk, such as high winds or storms, the session will unfortunately be cancelled

Session routine

- Prior to any session Helen will check and risk assess the woods. This will entail Helen walking around the site and completing the appropriate paperwork. It is only after this formality and on the basis the woods are deemed safe that the session will go ahead.
- We aim to leave the nursery with the children around 10am. We will take the register before leaving the building and checking we have the necessary kit bags and the children have been toileted. We will then distribute the resources to instil a sense of ownership and being part of a team; these may be the snacks, tarpaulins for shelter making, rope, activity supplies etc. The route to Halesfield Highwoods takes approximately 5 minutes on foot. On the journey we will talk about what we hope to see and do in the woods and discuss what they remember from the last session.
- We will place a sign at the entrance to the woods to alert the public to our presence in the woods, advising them to keep their dogs under control, then make our way to our base camp.

- Helen will then set the boundaries for our play, staying within sight of base unless the whole group is exploring. If there is a specific activity planned then it will be shown to the children and explained, explaining any risks in age appropriate language and providing relevant safety equipment.
- At snack time the children will wash their hands with soap and warm water and after drying them, will sit down for hot chocolate, fruit and biscuits. It's hard work exploring so we need to keep the energy levels up! After snacks we will let the children lead the play, be it continuing with the activity or exploring a different part of the woods.
- During every session, photos will be taken to remind the children of the activities they have taken part in and the achievements they have made. They make up observations under the EYFS to enable the Forest school team to plan the children's next steps. These photos may be used for advertising purposes or be placed on our Nursery website and/ or Facebook. If this is not acceptable please let us know in writing.
- Children will be given a time signal when we are ten minutes away from departing the woods so they have warning that their session is nearing an end. This gives them chance to finish any projects off and tidy their surrounding areas. Everyone will meet at basecamp where a register will be taken before allocating kit bags for the journey back to nursery. On arrival at nursery the register will be retaken before the children change, wash hands and sit down for lunch.

Procedures to be carried out by the Forest School Leader at the end of each session:

- Clear everything away
- Ensure the fire is completely extinguished
- Check all the tools against the tick-list and store them away
- Check any other resources (books/ identification sheets etc.)

Fires

Fires are part of the forest school delivery and Helen will be working towards lighting a fire with the children. All children must be safe and confident enough before this can happen though! Each week the area will be set up with a fire and seating area. The rules surrounding the fire area should always be carried out; even when there is no fire.

Essential equipment needed at each forest school session

The Forest School leader will provide and be responsible for the 'Essential Equipment' rucksack containing the First Aid bag, wellbeing pack and so on. Other children and adults should not use anything from this bag unless instructed to do so, or if implementing emergency procedures. The rucksack will always include these items:

- First Aid kit
- Drinking Water
- Symptoms checklist/ medical advice information
- Register with Emergency contact numbers, medical information and mobile phone
- Location details, including grid reference
- Map of the area
- Spare children's clothes and carrier bag (in case a child gets wet)
- Thermal/ Emergency blanket and sleeping bag (in case of hypothermia)
- Wind proof matches and fire lighters
- Newspaper for fire lighting and insulation

Clothing requirements for forest school sessions

Please dress your child in old clothes that are appropriate for the weather. If it is cold then it is best to have several thinner layers that will trap air and insulate your child, coupled with hats and gloves. If it is hot then a thin long sleeved top and long trouser/ leggings will protect against sunburn, mosquitoes and ticks. If a child is uncomfortable due to being too hot/ cold they will not be able to fully enjoy the experiences around them. We can provide a waterproof suit to help keep them clean and dry but we only have a limited number of these- so please ask us if you require one.

During the winter months, children and adults should come prepared to each session with:

- Woolly hat and scarf
- Gloves
- Jacket/ Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers/ salopettes, if possible
- Fleece/ sweatshirt
- Spare socks
- Wellies/ walking boots/ sturdy shoes
- A complete spare set of clothes and a carrier bag for wet or dirty clothes

In the summer months, children and adults will need to come prepared to each session with:

- Sun hat
- Sun block
- A thin, long sleeved top and jumper
- Trousers
- Sturdy shoes/ walking boots or wellingtons
- A spare pair of trousers and socks
- A waterproof coat

This clothing list applies to everybody involved in Forest School sessions, and is important for a number of safety reasons. Please be aware that sandals/ flip flops are never suitable for Forest School sessions, and that not wearing appropriate clothing may be a barrier to participation.

Toileting Procedures

Before each forest school session, children will be given the opportunity to use the toilet. When on site at Halesfield Highwoods we have no toilet facilities. Should the children require the toilet whilst out they will be allowed to use a secluded area in the woods. A member of staff will accompany the child so ensure they are safe and assist where necessary. All toileting matter including toilet paper will then be buried in a shallow hole away from the forest school site.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Forest school rules

Children are encouraged to be involved in the decisions about their environment and safety; however, there are a few rules that the children will be made aware of at the start of their involvement in Forest School sessions. Behind each rule, there is a range of learning opportunities that will encourage children to engage with and understand these rules. They are:

1. Look after the natural environment

This will involve learning about sustainability, how our actions impact on the Forest School, and how we can look after it to make sure it is around for others to enjoy in the future. One example of this might be encouraging children to distinguish living things from dead things, and agree that anything growing shouldn't be picked. Children will also be encouraged to consider the impact of their actions, and be mindful of what they are bringing to the site, and if they need to take it home.

2. Only use tools if you are with an adult and they have said it is okay to do so

Children will be encouraged to develop a respect for tools, and understand their potential and uses. However, even if children feel confident in using them independently, they must never help themselves.

3. Stay within the stated boundary

Children will begin to learn and understand that whilst there are risks involved in Forest School, careful steps have been taken to make them manageable. In many cases, children will be involved in recognising these hazards and thinking about what action may need to be taken. However, this is only the case inside the agreed boundary – outside the boundary, there may be hazards that children and sometimes even adults are unaware of, or if they are known, are too dangerous to go near. Children will be involved in setting the boundaries as and when appropriate.

It is important that the adults involved try to help children understand the importance of these rules, and support children in understanding that Forest School will become too dangerous if these rules aren't followed, which may mean that Forest School sessions have to end.

Risk management of tools and equipment used at forest school

When using tools, a designated area should be marked for tool use. This should ensure that children not using tools do not go in this area. Using tools with children should be carried out on a 1:1 basis. Tool safety should be taught throughout session, before tools are used. Tools should be made safe and returned to the secure box immediately after use.

General rules for tools:

- Children must only use tools under the supervision of the Forest School Leader
- Tools will be kept in a secure box or tool bag
- Always sit down when using penknives
- Ensure that penknives are closed and locked when not in use, and kept in the lockable tin
- Always open penknives away from you
- Always use penknives away from your body, with nobody within an arms-length from you
- Ensure guards/ sheaths are in place when tools are not being used
- Do not help yourself to tools
- Always return tools to the tool box after use
- Tools must only be used in the designated tool area
- Do not walk around with tools

*All tools will be sharp. A blunt tool is dangerous. Blades should be re-oiled after sharpening. Blades on saws should be checked regularly and replaced when wear is evident.

For individual tools and their use please see activity risk benefit assessments.

Risk assessment and risk management of the forest school site

Any outdoor learning involves elements of risk. The benefits of appropriate risk are vital to children's development. Forest school develops learners understanding of risk, involves the learners in the risk management process and supports learners to take acceptable risks.

At Halesfield we undertake 3 types of risk assessment for forest school these are:

1. Safety sweep and daily risk assessment

Before each session, the forest school leader will conduct a risk assessment to identify any hazards and reduce or remove them if possible. Occasionally In order to encourage children's awareness of safety, the children will also walk the boundary of the site to

identify any hazards or risks that they think may need to be taken into consideration. A template of the daily risk assessment can be found at the back of this handbook.

Any considerations will be pointed out to adults and children beforehand to help manage risk. All adults involved will be given a copy of the completed risk assessment for that site, and are obligated to manage or report risks under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

2. Termly Site Risk Assessment

Each term, a 4 step Risk Assessment will be conducted on the site used for Forest School sessions.

These steps are as follows:

1. Identify the Hazards
2. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
3. Record findings and implement measures required
4. Review the Risk Assessment and update termly

A template of the site risk assessment can be found at the back of this handbook.

3. Experience and Risk Assessments

These assessments are carried out as and when required. Usually activities involving tools and fire use will be planned; in these circumstances a risk benefit assessment will have been completed. These types of assessments are used to highlight the risks that may be involved to the learners but importantly also the benefits that undertaking such an activity can have on the learners. An example format is available at the back of this handbook.

Emergency and major incident procedures during forest school sessions

On-site Forest School sessions:

For Forest School sessions that take place at Halesfield Highwoods the following procedure should be implemented:

In case of a medical emergency (i.e., serious injury, poisoning or illness):

Helen Childs will co-ordinate the emergency procedure. Any adult who witnesses or is involved in an emergency, such as a serious injury, or suspects themselves or another person to have a serious illness, should immediately alert Helen or another member of staff, who must immediately inform Helen.

Stage One:

The assisting adult will gather children away from the casualty but nearby so the group remains together, whilst Helen administers First Aid. The assisting adult will instruct the other children to remain sitting, and will be available to support Helen if necessary. The assisting adult will be responsible for summoning help using the mobile phone in the emergency rucksack. Any other adults will remain with the children at all times.

Stage Two:

The Forest School leader will decide what action is appropriate and put this into effect. The assisting adult will call the emergency services first, then call the casualties 'emergency contact'. Helen will remain with the patient from the moment she is made aware of the incident so that any symptoms can be effectively monitored. Helen will be responsible for the administration of First Aid. If the fire is lit, it should be extinguished by an assisting adult. Any tools will be gathered and put in a safe place. Resources and other materials will be left.

Stage Three:

Extra assistance will be sought – there are a number of people nearby in Halesfield who will be available to come and help upon request. Their contact details will be kept in the Contact file in the emergency rucksack under 'Extra Assistance'.

Given the location of the forest school site, there is only one route to the nearest road to meet the ambulance. The whole group will need to make their way back towards nursery. The casualty can be stretchered from Forest School if necessary. The ambulance should be instructed to meet us on the adult training centre car park (Halesfield 22, Postcode TF7 4QX). The 'extra assistance' will be informed to meet us at this point. The assisting adult will accompany the casualty to hospital in the ambulance. Once this has

happened, the 'extra assistance' will walk the children back to the nursery to carry on their morning session there. Helen will return to the forest school site, pack away and tidy up before returning all the kit to nursery.

In case of fire:

Stage One:

If a fire spreads or becomes out of control and attempts to extinguish it have failed, the Forest School Leader or assisting adult will blow the whistle and shout "Fire". Upon hearing this, all adults and children should immediately stop what they are doing, leave any tools, resources or belongings, and follow instructions given by the Forest School Leader (i.e., "walk to 'name'/ place" or "walk to me") guided by supporting adults.

Stage Two:

Staff will account for the presence of all children and adults, and assemble the group ready to evacuate.

Stage Three:

A final head count will be made, and upon all children and adults being present, evacuation will begin immediately, taking the safest (not necessarily the quickest) route. Adults will lead the group swiftly, with Helen leading and the session assistant following behind the last child. The Fire brigade will be called en route. After meeting with fire brigade staff and children will make their way back to the nursery.

In case of a missing person

If anybody suspects a person may be missing, they should immediately alert Helen or another member of staff.

Stage One:

The fire will be extinguished immediately and tools gathered to a safe place by supporting adults.

Stage Two:

If after an initial sweep of the site, the person is not found, the group should assemble and find out where and when the person was last seen. Helen will continue to search for the child while the group is assembled in a safe place, preferably basecamp.

Stage Three:

If the child is not found within 5 minutes, then Helen will alert the Police and begin to organise a search party. Any supporting adults will lead the group to the nursery, while Helen undertakes a search of the site. Helen will keep the emergency rucksack with her during the search. Extra assistance will be sought and asked to meet at the entrance to the underpass.

If there is a reason to believe that a child has been abducted, the group will remain together and return to the nursery immediately, staff having ensured that any fires are extinguished. Personal belongings will be collected on the way if it is safe to do so. The police will be called en route. Once safely at the car park, the emergency contact of the missing person will be informed. The advice of the police will be followed in relation to searching for the missing person.

Insurance requirements

Our Public Liability and Employer's Insurance is provided by 'Royal Sun Alliance, and runs from 9th May annually. We are also insured with the Preschool Learning Alliance who specifically covers for Forest School sessions. The landowners also have the necessary Public Liability Insurance to enable public to use the site. A copy of the insurance certificate and confirmation of cover can be found in the Appendix.

Safeguarding policy

Values, principles and beliefs

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- Halesfield Day Nursery has a commitment to protecting the children with whom it cares for.

Meeting this commitment

Staff at Halesfield will meet this commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

Awareness: ensuring that staff are well informed, with relevant safeguarding knowledge, qualifications, or through attending training to ensure they can identify the signs of abuse and promote the safeguarding of children.

Prevention: ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that they and others minimise the risks to children. The Forest School Leader and other helpers will try to avoid situations where they may be left alone with children. Helpers will be informed of this before the session. See also our 'Suitable Persons' policy.

Reporting: ensuring that appropriate steps are taken where concerns arise regarding the safety of children – i.e., reporting incidents or concerns to designated safeguarding person.

Responding: ensuring that disclosures are responded to sensitively and appropriately, in line with current best practice and the settings policy. This means adults will:

- take seriously any concerns raised by adults or children
- take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of children
- work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

Responding to disclosures:

Disclosures may happen directly or indirectly, and *must* be recorded on the same day by the adult who witnessed the disclosure. It must include the date and time of the disclosure, the child's name, and the witness's signature to state that the document is a true and accurate reflection of the disclosure.

Children must not be questioned about disclosures, and adults should respond sympathetically, never in disbelief or shock. Adults should never promise to keep secrets – it is best to tell the child that you will tell 'only the people you think that will be able to make sure you are safe'.

Safeguarding policy reviewed in 28 September 2021, by Helen Childs on behalf of Halesfield Day Nursery.

Signed:

Name of signatory: *Helen Childs*

Role of Signatory: *Nursery Manager and Forest School Leader*

Review date: *September 2022*

Suitable person's policy

Appointing of staff and volunteers:

All Halesfield Day Nursery all staff have current and valid DBS checks to determine whether they have any criminal convictions that may make them unsuitable to work with children. Only staff with suitable DBS checks will be employed by Halesfield Day Nursery.

Volunteers will be asked to produce DBS certificate if they have one, but this is not a prerequisite as they will be accompanied at all times, and be restricted in the types of activities they may support. Volunteers will never be left alone with children, regardless of whether they have a DBS or not, and will never help children with toileting.

Suitable Persons policy reviewed 28 September 2021 by Helen Childs on behalf of Halesfield Day Nursery.

Signed:

Name of signatory: *Helen Childs*

Role of Signatory: *Nursery Manager and Forest School Leader*

Review date: *September 2022*

Adverse weather conditions policy

Our diverse weather! The wonderful thing about nature is that it is always changing, and the weather is often a very clear example of this! The aim of these sessions are to introduce children to as much of what nature has to offer as possible, including the range of weather that makes nature work so well! This being said, however, sometimes the weather can prove pretty powerful, and on some occasions it may not be safe or practical for a planned session to go ahead, but wherever possible, weather will be a feature of the sessions rather than a barrier to them.

Shelter: During wet weather a shelter will be erected over base camp to provide protection from the ailments.

Clothing: Children will need to be adequately protected against the different weather conditions in order to fully participate and enjoy the sessions. Wherever possible, children should arrive with suitable clothing, such as sun hats, waterproofs, or gloves and scarves as appropriate. Please see the clothes list for full clothing recommendations.

Weather dependent activities: Some activities that are due to take place may be dependent on the weather – Climbing trees, for instance, may not be safe in high winds! Similarly, the use of tools may be limited through the winter if it becomes so cold that hands become numb and coordination is affected. A contingency plan will be made for such activities to ensure that the session still goes ahead and children can get involved in a task.

Extreme weather: It is unlikely that sessions will take place in stormy conditions. As sessions last 2 hours, very cold temperatures may mean a session has to be shortened or cancelled to avoid illness and discomfort. Heavy rain or strong winds may also cause cancellation, as will heavy snowfall.

Adverse Weather Policy reviewed 28 September 2021 by Helen Childs on behalf of Halesfield Day Nursery.

Signed:

Name of signatory: *Helen Childs*

Role of Signatory: *Nursery Manager and Forest School Leader*

Review date: *September 2022*

Inclusion statement

Learning occurs naturally and is most effective when children have the freedom to 'be', without some of the limiting social expectations that children encounter, such as stereotypical views. Children can get a fresh start from outdoor lessons, and learn to learn without restriction. In order for this potential to be realized however, it is important that the adults that support these sessions reinforce this ethos.

Halesfield Day Nursery actively promotes the inclusion of all children and adults into Forest School sessions, and will endeavour to ensure that the opportunities for learning, development and participation are available to everyone, irrespective of race, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation or age.

Forest School sessions are underpinned by a set of Equal Opportunities Values, which are intended to ensure that children can fulfil their learning needs and reach their potential.

Equal opportunities values:

- Every child will be valued, enjoyed and celebrated
- Inclusion will be a thread that runs through all Forest School activities
- Forest School sessions will create a secure, accepting and inclusive environment, in which children can flourish
- Stereotyping will be actively discouraged to ensure that children feel free to explore and play as they choose, without being restricted by the boundaries that stereotyping creates
- Discrimination and exclusion will always be challenged

A vast majority of the activities and experiences on offer can be adapted to suit the different needs of children, and in order to do this effectively, it is sometimes necessary to work in partnership with parents to decide on how best to meet individual children's needs. Due to the nature of the site, we are unable to support children with physical disabilities during normal sessions, but we will make every effort to support children with disabilities in accessing this beautiful site and enjoyable experience through specially organised

sessions. To ensure the full involvement of a child in the session, we will seek to employ extra staff to fully support the child, and will also limit the group size.

Confidentiality statement

- Information about participants and staff will be handled and stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998
- This information will not be shared or discussed with anybody who does not have the right or the need to access it
- Confidential information will be kept in a file marked 'Confidential' in the essential equipment rucksack, which only the forest School Leader or other Halesfield Day Nursery staff should access
- Confidential information will be kept for 1 year since the last date that child attended.

Requirements of the forest school leader

It is the duty of the Forest School Leader to:

- Provide users and staff with the relevant information relating to Forest School before sessions are implemented
- Ensure that all equipment and resources are safe to use, with the accompanying personal protective equipment
- Undertake a risk assessment and safety sweep before each session
- Brief the adults involved on the health and safety considerations before each session
- Ensure that staff have read, understood and signed the Risk and Responsibility Acceptance form
- Come prepared with a First Aid kit and the other items listed in the 'Essential equipment' section of this handbook

Notes for supporting adults

Thanks for offering your help – it's really useful to have an extra pair of hands! Hopefully this information sheet will give you some insight into how you can best support the children, and also point out some of the necessary do's and don'ts! By the way, this is a discovery session for the children, where they can be in control of their learning and experiences as far as possible, so please try not to direct them too much or demonstrate how to do things, but by all means, feel free to get involved and extend their learning if they are happy for you to do so!

Before the session takes place, please ensure that you have read the risk assessment for the session.

Please reinforce and abide by these Forest School Rules throughout the session:

- Look after the Forest School site (includes not picking living things and respecting the environment)
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth (to prevent disease or poisoning)
- Only use tools if the Forest School Leader has said it is okay to do so, and follow the safety rules for tools (this rule applies to adults too)
- Stay within the boundary (this also applies to the adults, except where it is necessary to leave the site, but please inform the forest school leader first).

As well as these rules, please be aware of the following:

- It is very important that children do not eat anything from the Forest School site, except what is provided by the Forest School Leader – please inform me immediately if you notice a child put anything in their mouth
- Only school staff and the Forest School Leader are permitted to take photographs
- Please do not tend to the fire, except to extinguish it in an emergency
- You are duty-bound under the Health and Safety at Work Act to work safely, take responsibility for your own safety and the implications of your actions, and report or remove hazards as they occur
- Please avoid situations where you may find yourself alone with a child
- You should demonstrate best practice in terms of safety, including tool use, staying within the boundaries, and moving around the fire
- Alert me immediately if anyone (adult or child) requires first aid, or has had an accident – no matter how minor
- Let me know if you need to leave the activity or area you are supervising

And lastly;

This is a discovery session for the children – please allow them to play and learn as independently as possible, and try to resist the temptation to demonstrate or suggest ideas! Keep your distance (except when using tools!), get involved if children invite you, but don't feel too bad if you find yourself standing and watching for much of the session!

Forest school risk assessment

This outlines some of the more commonly faced risks associated with the outdoor classroom. Staff must actively implement the measures outlined, and remain vigilant to the potential for risk arising throughout the session.

Hazard

Poisonous berries/ fungi

Low or dangerous branches

Children going out of sight or missing

Insect bites and stings

Allergies

Disease or infection – i.e.,
Toxicara canis (dog faeces),
tetanus (soil), Lyme disease

Behaviour

Food

Clothing & weather

Measure to control risk

Give verbal warning not to touch or eat berries or fungi.

Wash hands before eating and at the end of the session.

Seek medical aid if ingested.

Handbook available to identify poisonous/ hazardous flora

Give verbal warning to take care (especially of eyes).

Remove damaged branches at risk of falling.

Uneven ground, holes and slopes

Advise children of hazardous areas and to take appropriate care

Advise children of the boundaries and give verbal warning. Adults should remain aware of the group. Children will be instructed that if they become lost or separated from the group, they should remain where they are and wait for us to return to them.

Risk-assess the area, looking for harmful insect nests, hives, and plants. If these cannot be removed, they should be avoided, and children and staff advised of the hazard.

Staff should consider whether any measures need to be taken for children with allergies – i.e., severe asthma sufferers may need to sit upwind of campfires, take regular breaks etc. Epi-pens and other medication should be at hand.

Cover broken skin on hands.

Risk-assess the area before each session.

Advise staff of symptoms and seek medical advice a.s.a.p. if an infection is suspected.

Advise staff of symptoms and seek medical advice a.s.a.p. Tuck socks into trousers if in potential tick area.

Staff should decide whether individual children are capable of undertaking tasks responsibly and safely.

Children will be made aware of the behavioural expectation.

Children must demonstrate knowledge of safe working practice and understanding of the rules outlined before they can participate in higher risk activities – i.e., around the campfire, using tools, etc. Ensure that children are calm and attentive before participating in tasks.

Choking Children must sit when eating

Sessions will take place in most weather conditions, except extremes.

Children may only participate in outdoor sessions if they are appropriately dressed – waterproof clothing if necessary, sturdy footwear (no open-toed footwear), sun hats, sun block, etc.

Moving and lifting

The moving and lifting of logs or large sticks must be done in pairs.
If the work isn't light enough for one, another person should assist to make sure it is done safely.

Cuts, burns & other injuries

Safe lifting advice will be given, including lifting technique, the environment, other people in the area, etc.

Tools

A first aid kit will be to hand or nearby.

People who require medical attention should be referred to the first aider (Helen Childs)

Tools will be used under close supervision.

The facilitator will introduce by demonstration how to use tools safely.

Safety instructions will be given before children use any tools.

Safety equipment will be worn when using tools.

The behavioural expectation will be reinforced and children made aware of the potential for injury.

Tools will be stored away safely when not in use, and children informed not to use them unless accompanied.

Fire

Campfires will be in a designated fire pit or fire bowl, and introduced by demonstration.

Children will be informed how to move safely in the fire zone.

All people in the area will be informed when the fire is lit.

A restriction zone will be created around the fire.

Behavioural expectations and potential danger reinforced.

The fire will be closely supervised at all times.

The fire will be strategically placed to minimize the risk of setting surrounding foliage alight.

Burning sticks must not be removed from the fire.

Water must be immediately available throughout as well as a fire blanket, and the fire doused thoroughly when finished.

Fire lighting equipment will be stored safely away when not in use, and children instructed not touch them.

Unanticipated emergencies

A mobile phone will be available throughout the session. **Dial 999 or 112 for emergency services**

Requirements of the forest school leader

It is the duty of the Forest School Leader to:

- Provide users and staff with the relevant information relating to Forest School before sessions are implemented
- Ensure that all equipment and resources are safe to use, with the accompanying personal protective equipment
- Undertake a risk assessment and safety sweep before each session
- Brief the adults involved on the health and safety considerations before each session
- Ensure that staff have read, understood and signed the Risk and Responsibility Acceptance form
- Come prepared with a First Aid kit and the other items listed in the 'Essential equipment' section of this handbook

Notes for supporting adults

Thanks for offering your help today – it's really useful to have an extra pair of hands! Hopefully this information sheet will give you some insight into how you can best support the children, and also point out some of the necessary do's and don'ts! By the way, this is a discovery session for the children, where they can be in control of their learning and experiences as far as possible, so please try not to direct them too much or demonstrate how to do things, but by all means, feel free to get involved and extend their learning if they are happy for you to do so!

Before the sessions takes place, please ensure that you have read the risk assessment for the session, and have read and signed the 'risk and responsibility acceptance' form.

Please reinforce and abide by these Forest School Rules throughout the session:

- **Look after the Forest School site** (includes not picking living things and respecting the environment)
- **Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth** (to prevent disease or poisoning)
- **Only use tools if the Forest School Leader has said it is okay to do so, and follow the safety rules for tools** (this rule applies to adults too)
- **Stay within the boundary** (this also applies to the adults, except where it is necessary to leave the site, but please inform me first)

As well as these rules, please be aware of the following:

- It is very important that children do not eat anything from the Forest School site, except what is provided by the Forest School Leader – **please inform me immediately if you notice a child put anything in their mouth**
- Only school staff and the Forest School Leader are permitted to take photographs
- Please do not tend to the fire, except to extinguish it in an emergency

- You are duty-bound under the Health and Safety at Work Act to work safely, take responsibility for your own safety and the implications of your actions, and report or remove hazards as they occur
- Please avoid situations where you may find yourself alone with a child
- You should demonstrate best practice in terms of safety, including tool use, staying within the boundaries, and moving around the fire
- Alert me immediately if anyone (adult or child) requires first aid, or has had an accident – no matter how minor
- Let me know if you need to leave the activity or area you are supervising

And lastly;

This is a discovery session for the children – please allow them to play and learn as independently as possible, and try to resist the temptation to demonstrate or suggest ideas! Keep your distance (except when using tools!), get involved if children invite you, but don't feel too bad if you find yourself standing and watching for much of the session!