

HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

Reviewed: April 2026

To be reviewed: April 2028

Statement of intent

At Holy Family Primary School, we appreciate the value of a holistic approach to education. Through our Forest School, we aim to imbue within our pupils an appreciation and respect for the natural environment through hands-on experiences and exploration, to develop their confidence, social and communication skills, and to encourage teamwork by engaging in outdoor activities.

This policy is designed to ensure that the Forest School is a beneficial experience for pupils by making staff aware of their duties and expectations, and ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils is considered at all times and appropriate safeguarding measures are in place for all Forest School activities.

Roles and responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff adhere to the relevant policies and that pupils are aware of their responsibilities.
- Contacting a play inspector to certify that the chosen location is safe to use, where necessary.
- Liaising with the location's landowner or the site manager to ensure that staff and pupils are aware of any potential hazards.
- Ensuring that a separate Forest School Activities Risk Assessment is conducted to identify, evaluate, and manage the specific risks associated with the Forest School, its location and the activities planned.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements in place for monitoring and reporting incidents associated with the Forest School.
- Ensuring that parents are informed with sufficient notice about planned Forest School activities and any requirements, e.g. clothing and equipment needs.
- Liaising with the SENCO, where necessary, to ensure the Forest School is inclusive for pupils with SEND and reasonable adjustments are made to ensure additional needs are accommodated.
- Appointing a Forest School leader with the relevant experience and qualifications, e.g. a Level 3 Certificate from the Forest School Association.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy on an annual basis and communicating any changes to staff, parents, and pupils.
- Arranging the procurement of any equipment or clothing required for the Forest School.
- Ensuring value for money when arranging the procurement of equipment or clothing for the Forest School.
- Ensuring that the school's insurance covers the Forest School and all planned activities.

The Forest School leader is responsible for:

- Conducting a detailed health and safety check before Forest School activities.

- Adhering at all times to the Forest School Activities Risk Assessment.
- Carrying a fully stocked first-aid kit during all Forest School sessions.
- Holding an up-to-date Outdoors First Aid certificate and leading first aid arrangements.
- Inspecting equipment and tools before use to ensure they are safe for use, and that damaged or defective items are not used.
- Keeping and maintaining an incident log to record any incidents that occur during Forest School activities.
- Planning and delivering Forest School sessions, in collaboration with the headteacher, that are engaging, informative and develop pupils' skills and appreciation of the environment.

The Forest School Lead in conjunction with the SENCO is responsible for:

- Assessing additional individual needs of pupils with SEND prior to Forest School activities and promoting measures to ensure pupils with SEND can participate safely.
- Ensuring the SEND Policy is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Liaising with the headteacher to ensure additional provision is available for pupils with SEND as required.
- Ensuring that the provision put in place for pupils with SEND is monitored for effectiveness throughout the duration of the Forest School activities.

The Forest School Lead in conjunction with the DSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Consulting the headteacher and Forest School leader on measures necessary to ensure pupils are safeguarded adequately during activities.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy at all times during Forest School activities.
- Reporting any concerns and incidents to the Forest School leader and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting any safeguarding incidents to the DSL and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting concerns regarding the provision for pupils with SEND to the SENCO.
- Ensuring that pupils are always respectful to each other, staff and the natural environment.
- Managing pupils in line with the Behaviour Policy when necessary.

Safeguarding

Volunteers for the Forest School will only be allowed to supervise pupils alone if they have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

Volunteers without an enhanced DBS check will be supervised by a member of staff at all times.

Measures will be implemented to ensure that pupils' exposure to members of the public during Forest School activities is minimised as much as possible.

Pupils will be instructed and reminded frequently to remain close to the group, and to avoid leaving the sight of staff and interacting with members of the public.

All members of staff will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL immediately.

The DSL will deal with safeguarding concerns in a timely and appropriate manner in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Travel

The route to and from the site will be suitably risk assessed before the school's first Forest School session at the beginning of the year.

An attendance register will be taken of pupils upon arrival and before leaving the location – the class will not leave unless all pupils are accounted for.

Staff ensure that the security of the school and the Forest School location is not compromised whilst unattended, e.g. by locking any entrances and exits as necessary.

Location

The location chosen will be suitable for allowing pupils to explore the natural world and build their confidence in an outdoor environment.

Pupils are reminded of the hazards of the site prior to entering and are reminded to remain vigilant throughout.

The location will be surveyed weekly by the landowner or the responsible site manager to ensure it is safe for pupils to use.

The landowner or site manager will remove or control any minor hazards. Any areas that are deemed to pose a substantial risk and cannot be adequately controlled or removed are clearly marked and staff and pupils will not enter them for any reason.

Staff will communicate clearly to pupils the areas they are permitted to explore and issue frequent reminders, where necessary.

Pupils will be taught to show respect for the environment, e.g. they do not litter and leave the area clean and tidy.

Areas of open water, excluding beaches, will have a suitable barrier, e.g. fencing, that is in good condition to prevent the danger of pupils falling in.

Staff will ensure pupils remain a safe distance from the edge of the water at all times.

Supervision

Staff and volunteers will supervise pupils at a **minimum ratio of 1:8** at all times.

Head counts will be conducted regularly to prevent the risk of pupils going missing or leaving the sight of staff and volunteers.

Supervising staff and volunteers will be adequately trained to ensure they can safely assist pupils during Forest School activities.

Supervising staff will be informed of any hazards present by the Forest School leader and ensure mitigating measures are in place and adhered to by pupils.

Tools

Pupils will be taught how to use tools and equipment independently and safely during activities.

Staff will demonstrate the safe use of all tools before pupils are allowed to use them.

The Forest School leader assesses the risks posed by particular tools and consequently implements suitable staff: pupil ratios to supervise pupils using these tools.

All activities planned, including those using tools, will be risk assessed by the Forest School leader.

All tools will be kept clean and fit for use; tools which are damaged or defective will not be used.

An inventory of all tools is kept to ensure they can be accounted for and any lost or misplaced items identified.

If a member of staff, volunteer or pupil suffers an injury during the use of a tool, the activity will be suspended, and the injury will be handled in line with the First Aid Policy.

Materials

Pupils will be encouraged to interact with the environment, which includes touching and moving materials, e.g. rocks and sticks safely and are warned about not ingesting poisonous plants and berries.

Pupils will be allowed to carry sticks, providing they maintain a suitable distance from others when carrying the stick to avoid injury.

Staff will supervise and encourage pupils to work together to move larger materials, e.g. branches.

Pupils will be asked to return any materials to the environment before leaving the Forest School, with the exception of sustainably sourced crafting materials.

Staff will supervise all interactions with the natural world, e.g. climbing, and intervene where there is a substantial risk posed by the pupil to themselves or others.

Pupils will be taught about the importance of not damaging or defacing living nature, e.g. trees and plants, when interacting with the environment and its materials.

The Forest School leader will provide materials during sessions, e.g. rope, and encourage pupils to use them to interact with their environment.

Wildlife

The Forest School leader will plan sessions in order to allow pupils to engage with wildlife as much as possible while considering safety at all times.

Pupils will be encouraged to discover and learn about the variety of wildlife that lives within the Forest School.

Pupils will be taught the importance of not disturbing natural habitats and respecting wildlife.

Staff, volunteers and pupils will be instructed by the Forest School leader about potential risks from local wildlife and the necessary precautions to take, e.g. how to spot and avoid stinging nettles and poisonous plants.

Pupils will only be allowed to get close to, touch, move or pick up plants or wildlife where it is safe to do so.

Instances of deliberate harm or damage to wildlife will be managed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Pupils will be instructed that they are not to consume any food they find, e.g. berries.

Fire

Fires will only be lit in designated areas surrounded by a safe zone and under the direction of the Forest School leader. A suitably trained member of staff who is equipped to manage fire safety is on site at all times when fire is being taught about or is present.

Lighting fires

The fire will only be lit once it is confirmed that all safety equipment, e.g. a sand bucket, is in place. The fire will be supervised by an adult at all times.

The fire will be created using safe fire-lighting equipment with no accelerants used. Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a sand bucket, will be located nearby in the event of an emergency.

Cooking at a campfire

The Forest School leader will consider what food can be cooked and eaten by pupils using the fire, with any allergies of staff and pupils considered in addition to other dietary requirements. The forest school leader will ensure that food is transported and stored safely, e.g. ensuring meat is chilled.

Food that is to be eaten by pupils will be inspected by a member of staff to ensure it is fit for consumption, e.g. it is thoroughly cooked.

Extinguishing fires

Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a sand bucket, will be located nearby in the event of an emergency. A fire blanket will be available at all times.

The Forest School leader will ensure the fire is extinguished safely before the session ends. The fire will be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased. Whenever possible, all fuels will be burnt off to ash.

Fire safety

Fire areas will be surrounded by seating logs at least 2 metres from the edge of the fire pit. The logs represent the campfire boundary. Seating on tarpaulins will be organised around the outside of the fire boundary. Once the fire is lit, staff will ensure that pupils move safely around the outside of the seating circle.

When the campfire is in use, pupils will not be permitted to access the area without permission. Activities taking place near to the fire involving pupils, e.g. cooking, are supervised at a ratio of 1:4.

If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke will be avoided. If wind direction is variable, staff will rearrange seating where possible. Pupils will be advised on how to handle fire smoke in an appropriate way, e.g. by turning their head to one side, covering their face and closing their eyes. Asthma sufferers will be seated in positions well away from the line of smoke.

The Forest School leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.

Participants working with the fire will ensure that long hair is tied back and loose clothing is fastened and secured.

Appropriate arrangements will be made for pupils with SEND within their Personal Education Plan on how to approach and deal with campfires.

Clothing

The headteacher will communicate to parents at least one week in advance of Forest School sessions the pupils' clothing requirements.

Clothing requirements are subject to change and weather dependent but will include the following:

- Long sleeved t-shirt
- Trousers
- Waterproof trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Wellington boots
- Trainers
- Sunhat

- Winter gear, e.g. fleece jacket, leggings, gloves

Pupils will bring their clothes in a named bag to minimise the risk of misplacing or losing items. In order to make Forest School accessible to all pupils, the school will ensure spare clothing in multiple sizes is available to be lent to disadvantaged pupils where necessary.

Clothing and footwear appropriate to the Forest School environment, activity and weather will be worn at all times. Pupils will not take part in Forest School activities if they do not have the appropriate clothing and the school is unable to provide its own; alternative arrangements will be put in place for the pupil.

Clothing will be worn to suit the weather; in cases of severe weather, the Forest School leader will decide if it is safe for the session to begin or continue. Parents will be asked to provide sun lotion for pupils where necessary, and the school will keep a spare supply of sun lotion to be provided when required.

Toilet and hygiene facilities

Pupils will be encouraged to use the toilet at school before the Forest School session begins. Any accidents will be managed in line with the school's Intimate Care Policy.

The Forest School leader will make staff aware of the toilet facilities available for use during sessions. Pupils using the toilet will only be supervised by a member of staff where necessary and not by volunteers. Anti-bacterial wipes or hand sanitiser will be available to allow pupils to clean their hands when necessary. Clean drinking water will be supplied.

Behaviour

Pupils will be informed of their behaviour expectations and that poor behaviour may result in them being unable to participate in the Forest School. The Forest School leader will establish set rules which are repeated during each session in order to promote pupils' ability to explore independently while keeping safe and behaving appropriately.

Positive behaviour, e.g. teamwork and consideration for others, will be promoted through planned activities. All staff will model good behaviour, e.g. co-operation and caring for the environment, during Forest School activities. Pupils will be made aware that positive behaviour, e.g. displaying respect for the environment, means they will be trusted to explore and lead sessions with greater independence.

Challenging behaviour is managed in line with the Behaviour Policy. Challenging behaviour will initially be dealt with by one-to-one adult support, where possible, to identify its cause. Pupils persistently displaying challenging behaviour, or acting in a manner that places themselves or others at risk of harm, will not be allowed to participate in the rest of the Forest School session; they will be escorted away and supervised away from other pupils.

The headteacher will decide if it is necessary to exclude a pupil indefinitely from Forest School activities due to persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy.

Inclusivity

Forest School activities will be planned in line with the school's SEND Policy to ensure that pupils with SEND can participate as much as possible.

The headteacher will liaise with the SENCO and the parents of pupils with SEND to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.

The headteacher will liaise with the school nurse and the parents of pupils with medical conditions or allergies to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.

The headteacher will identify if the location poses accessibility issues to any pupils and whether any accessibility means will be required, e.g. accessibility ramps.

Pupils with SEND will be provided with supervision during Forest School activities where required; this supervision will not count towards other relevant staffing ratios.

A variety of materials will be used that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping.

Sensitivity to the religious and cultural beliefs of pupils will be displayed at all times, e.g. in regard to their clothing or foods they may not wish to eat.

All pupils will be encouraged to participate and will be made to feel that their experiences and contributions are valued in order to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Incidents and emergencies

At least one trained first-aider will be present during all Forest School activities.

The Forest School leader will create and explain to staff and pupils the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident, e.g. the area where all pupils are to gather in order to be easily supervised.

The Forest School leader will carry a fully stocked first-aid kit at all times during Forest School sessions. All incidents, injuries and illnesses will be managed in line with the First Aid Policy.

Staff will be aware of any allergies pupils may have and carry suitable medication, e.g. an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) as part of the first aid kit.

Staff will carry mobile phones to be able to contact each other, School office, the landowner or the emergency services in the event of an incident.

In the event of a missing pupil, staff will gather all pupils together at an agreed point. An adult will supervise the group while the remaining staff conduct a search of the area and call the missing pupil's name.

In the event of an injury, staff will provide immediate assistance and a trained first aider will remain with the injured person until the situation is resolved.

The Forest School leader will assess injuries and decide if further medical attention is needed; the emergency services will be contacted immediately where necessary.