

# Stephenson Memorial Primary School

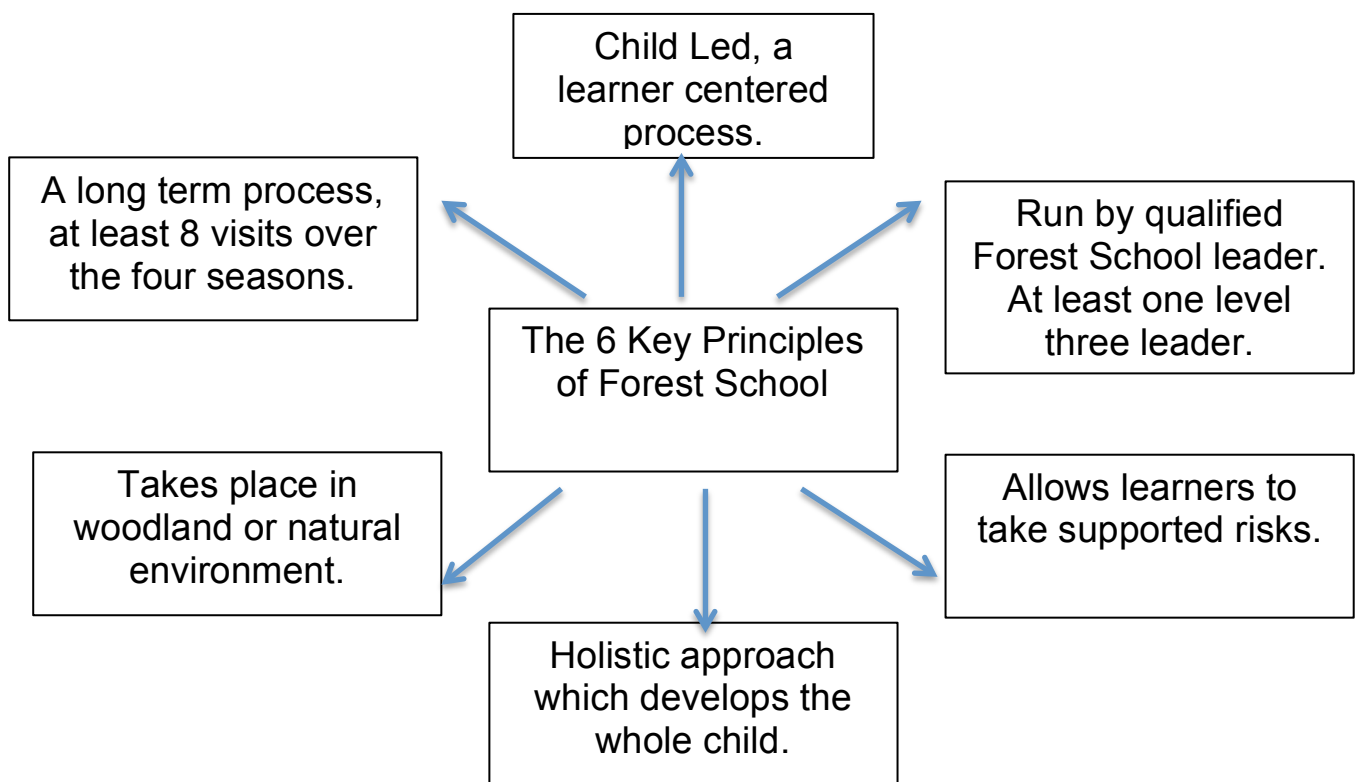
## Forest School Handbook

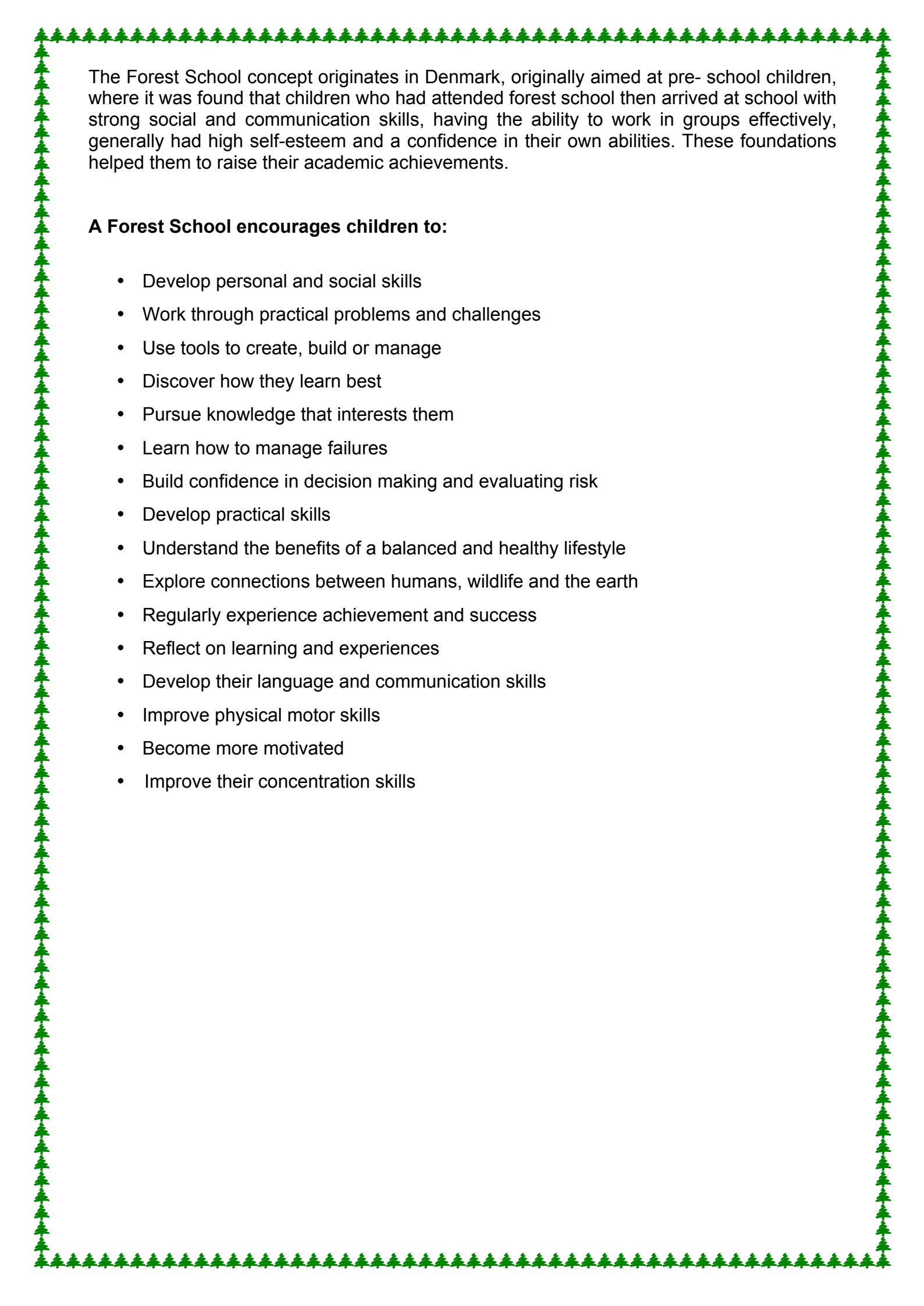
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## 1.The Forest School Ethos

Forest School is a unique educational experience and process that offers children the opportunity to succeed, as well as developing confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment. Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers. Children will work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self- esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world.





The Forest School concept originates in Denmark, originally aimed at pre- school children, where it was found that children who had attended forest school then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. These foundations helped them to raise their academic achievements.

**A Forest School encourages children to:**

- Develop personal and social skills
- Work through practical problems and challenges
- Use tools to create, build or manage
- Discover how they learn best
- Pursue knowledge that interests them
- Learn how to manage failures
- Build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- Develop practical skills
- Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- Regularly experience achievement and success
- Reflect on learning and experiences
- Develop their language and communication skills
- Improve physical motor skills
- Become more motivated
- Improve their concentration skills

## **2. Our Forest School Code of Conduct, Promises!**

### **Entering the Forest**

We will enter the Forest respectfully and know that when at Forest School specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.

### **Boundaries**

Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. If you lose sight of a child the leader will blow their whistle twice, as a signal to return to base. The children have been taught to respond to this signal, through games that are practised regularly.

### **Lighting a fire**

When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire pit. (Fire risk assessments)

### **At the Fire Circle**

An open fire will be lit within a fire pit. A fire circle using log sitting stools will be established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There may be no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit. (Fire risk assessments)

### **Using Tools**

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use, which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. (See tool use guides and risk assessments).

### **Picking up and playing with sticks**

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living tress.

### **Picking up and playing with stones**

Stones may be picked up and transported. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?



## **Digging**

Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made.

## **Collecting wood**

Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

## **Eating and Drinking**

‘Nil by mouth policy’ for anything found in the Forest, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session (e.g. blackberry picking). Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use soap & water to clean their hands before consumption.

## **Rope and String Use**

We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has an idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

## **Carrying and Transporting Materials**

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

## **Toileting**

Children are asked to use the toilets before we leave the school buildings.

## **Leaving the Site**

We work according to the ethos ‘take only pictures, leave only footprints’. If we are working on a wild site, shelters should be taken down, imported materials need to be removed. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions on our school site. All rubbish items will always be removed. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult.

## **Tree Climbing**

An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for ‘sharp objects’ and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children’s exploration.

### 3. Suggested Activities for Forest Schools

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying wildlife
- Playing team and group games ○ Sensory activities
- Tracking games
- Cooking on an open fire
- Using a Kelly Kettle
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities

### Typical Session

On arrival we will gather around the fire circle, to discuss the plan for the session. They will start with an exploring game and then set boundaries that give the children the freedom to explore, but so the adults can still see them at all times. The teacher will introduce an activity, after which the children will be given their own time to explore their fascinations and interests.

To finish the session we will all have a moment to reflect on the day and share what we enjoyed or how we are feeling.

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. These photos will be placed onto a Forest Seesaw account and may be put onto our school website and/ or Twitter.

#### 4. Equipment for Forest School Off-site Visits

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the Forest School leader will always take an **emergency bag** with them.

The contents of the **emergency bag** will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment. There are of course also **essential items that should be carried out for every session**.

##### ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

- First Aid Kit
- Emergency Procedures chart
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Devices (mobile phone and/or walkie talkie – checked for working order and signal strength)
- Clean Water
- Emergency whistle
- Medication for individuals (clearly labelled – First aid trained staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)
- Appropriate clothing
- Sharps box and gloves
- Forest ruck sack containing all essentials.

##### Other Possible Equipment:

- Wet wipes, hand gel
- Sun cream (parental permission required)
- Spare Clothing
- Thermos of hot water
- Chocolate/sugary food
- Plastic bag
- Roll Mat and Blanket
- Fire blanket
- Torch
- Bucket of water
- Emergency fire kit
- Knife
- Burns kit
- Tick remover
- Bivi Bag

## ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

### Clothing

No person will be permitted to go to Forest School without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold, keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes, that fits appropriately for comfort, and that meets any religious requirements. School will provide waterproofs.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session. In the forest it can often be cooler than expected under the shade of the trees.

### Clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood.
- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers
- Wellies
- Warm Socks
- Gloves and Woolly hat – Cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility– sunny weather

We work on the principle that **“there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”**. **We will not be able to go out when the wind speed is 40 miles or above.**

We do have a selection of spare clothing but this will need to be matched to the child prior to the session and checked for suitability. Ask our staff for help.

## ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: First Aid Kit

- Latex Gloves
- Bandages
- Plasters
- Burn dressing
- Dressings
- Eye bath
- Scissors
- Cotton wool
- Medication for individual children
- Tick removers
- Sterile water
- Cling film
- Blood bag (disposal sack for medical waste)
- Credit card for bites and stings
- Inhaler
- Vital signs checklist, record chart and permanent pen

## **ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:**

When having a fire we need

- Flame retardant Gauntlet gloves
- Fire Blanket
- Bucket of water
- Fire steel
- Cotton wool
- Matches or flint

## **5. Using and Storing Tools**

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked shed. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order.

Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group, in a 'blood bubble' and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool. Only wear a glove when using a bow saw and only on your bracing hand. A glove will be used on the 'non-tooled' hand.

### **Potato Peelers and Knives – for peeling or sharpening sticks (whittling)**

A ratio of 1 adult to 2 children will be observed. This tool must be used seated on a log, working to the side of the body and using the tool in a downward motion. A 'blood bubble' space must be determined ensuring a safe distance away from others. If someone wished to pass through your bubble they must verbally ask and you must stop whilst they pass. When carrying peelers you must walk with them held down by your side, but only an adult will walk with this tool.

Once a child is deemed to be competent by the forest leader they may be allowed to use a fixed blade knife to whittle. The same rules as above still apply. When carrying a knife return it to its sheath. Tools must be returned to the locked storage container when no longer in use.

### **Bow Saws – for cross cutting wood up to 12cm diameter**

Children may be taught how to use a bow saw with 1:1 supervision, or with a 'buddy' helping in a 'push-pull' fashion. Adults must always supervise closely and should place their hand (gloved) between the child's hand and that of the saw blade. The safest method of use is to brace the wood through the bow saw itself. The saw blade must be covered when not in use. When being carried the bow saw blade (in its' cover) should be pointing downwards, and to the back. When not in use blades should be loosen off by an adult.

## **Palm Drills/Bit and Brace – for making holes**

The item to be drilled should be placed and held (by the adult) securely on a firm flat surface. Work in a safe space being aware of others moving around you, think 'blood bubble'. Carry these tools by your side facing downwards and remember only to walk.

## **Kelly Kettle**

The Forest leader may use this to heat water. Never leave the bung in whilst heating water. This is only to be in place during storage so as to keep the chamber clear from forest debris or insects and minibeasts. Once the fire is going in the Kelly Kettle base carefully add the chimney top to it by holding the handle parallel to the ground, and supported on each side by your hands. When lit, do not stand directly over, or look straight down the chimney. Never blow into the top. When pouring out the water support the base by holding the bung chain in one hand and the handle with the other. To put the fire out, pour the remaining water into the base.

**When not in use all tools will be securely locked away in the tool shed. Tools should be checked and cleaned before they are put away. Half termly the Forest Leader will ensure that each tool is thoroughly cleaned and oiled. Wear and tear will be monitored daily.**

## **6. Health and Safety Policies**

Stephenson Memorial's Health and Safety Policy sets out clear statements of intent regarding the Whole School's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School and the School Site. Provided below is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our Forest School sessions.

- 1) The Trained and Named Forest School Leader is always the person in charge of Forest school sessions.
- 2) The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.
- 2) All adult helpers **MUST** sign and date a form to show that they have read and understood this handbook and the risk assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping. They must sign and date the form stating that they comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School (code of conduct).
- 4) The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry and take a first aid kit on forest visits, but when on school grounds this is stored in the learning lodge.
- 5) The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag on forest school, 'off-site' visits.
- 6) The Forest School Leader will ensure that the Emergency Bag contains:  
Essential survival equipment
- 7) The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone when 'off-site'.
- 8) In the event of an emergency, The Forest Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services. If contact with the school is lost the Leader will



contact the emergency services.

9) The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every trip into the School's Forest Site.

10) When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1, however mallets may be used by children when they are proven to be able to follow 'tool rules'.

11) There is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.

12) The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.

13) The Forest Leader is responsible in training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.

14) The Forest leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

## **7. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School**

Everyone at Stephenson Memorial has a responsibility in relation to child protection.

We are committed to:

taking all reasonable measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child and young person (pupil) in our care the practice of safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children and young people protecting each pupil from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another pupil .

**See School Handbook, Safeguarding Policy**

## **8. Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School**

We are committed to giving each child every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, attainment, age, disability, gender or background. We actively seek to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude individual children or groups of children. We aim to provide all our children with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement.

We will:

Ensure equality of access for all children

Employ a range of styles, including collaborative learning, so that children can value working together

Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education

Take account of the performance of all children when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets

Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of children.



Our teachers ensure that our children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Appreciate and value the differences in others
- Take responsibility for their own actions
- Participate safely, in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs ○ are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
- Have challenging targets that enable them to succeed
- Are encouraged to participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Forest School does mean Forest School FOR ALL. We do have a stock of extra all weather clothing but ask that both parents and children think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware that they are likely to take home muddy and wet clothes after a Forest School session. We encourage a level of risk-taking, always under close adult supervision, and actively foster friendships and collaboration between all children and adults. Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment, even when this appears to be of a transitory nature. The Forest environment is an environment to which we are all entitled and we strongly believe that the experiences we will have there will linger in the memory for years to come. Children with medical needs or disabilities will be helped so that they can take part fully in each Forest School session. Those children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need one to one supervision, but their entitlement to participate in Forest School remains the same.

## **9. Risk Assessment Guidelines**

**A SITE risk assessment is undertaken each month and a DAILY risk assessment and check is made, sometimes the children may be involved in this procedure. In addition, an ACTIVITY risk assessment will be established prior to any activity that may require it. These will include: whittling, cutting wood, shelter building, fire lighting and cooking on an open fire, and palm drilling. Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them.**

**The risk assessment process is detailed below:**

**We look for potential hazards.**

**We decide who might be at harm.**

**We think about how harm may occur and the worst outcome that we could face.**

**We evaluate the current level of risk.**

**We decide on a course of action or set of precautions that will be put in place to minimise the potential risk.**

**We then re-evaluate the level of risk once our course of action and precautions have been put in place.**

**We create a risk assessment and collate them in the Forest School file.**

**We inform all adults with accompanying the group and require them to sign each relevant risk assessment to show that they have read and understood the assessments**

## 10. Accident and Emergency Procedures

<b>First Aid</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Follow Policy and Procedures Document. Any illness or injury to be treated by a qualified first aider. Check Drs -A-B-C, Administer First Aid.</li><li>2. Remove others in group from the situation, ensuring they are safe.</li><li>3. Notify school office. And if necessary call for further assistance, or notify emergency services.</li><li>4. Have medical details available in office, and notify parents/guardians as appropriate.</li><li>5. All accidents must be reported to the Head Teacher. The adult will complete an accident report form.</li><li>6. Follow up to parents as usual and a red letter is given to the child's parent</li></ol>
<b>Missing Child</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. On discovery of missing child use 'whistle to call back' rest of the group.</li><li>2. Immediately search the vicinity.</li><li>3. Immediately notify school office.</li><li>4. Secretary will notify the Head and a decision will be made on whether to notify the police, then the parent or guardian.</li></ol>
<b>Death or serious Incident</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Follow First Aid procedures</li><li>2. Remain with causality and remove others in group from the situation, ensuring they are safe.</li><li>3. Immediately notify school office</li><li>4. School to inform emergency services, specifically the police</li><li>5. The police will notify the parents/guardians/next of kin.</li><li>6. Gain advice on follow up from the police</li></ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report to RIDDOR and Ofsted.</li></ul>
<b>Stranger or Uninvited Person</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Challenge intruder, asking them to leave immediately. Escort them from the site.</li><li>2. Inform the School's Office and Child Protection Liaison Officer.</li><li>3. If a child is involved the police must be called, and the child/children involved are to be removed from situation and made to feel safe.</li><li>4. Parents/guardian should be briefed by Forest School Leader ASAP or in accordance with advice of the Police, ASAP.</li></ol>

**Behaviour**

**Problems**

1. Talk child involved down.
2. Remove other children from the area of risk, if it is deemed to be necessary.
3. Inform office and call for help as needed.
4. Debrief child after calm down period.
5. Log incident, if necessary.
6. Inform parents/guardian
7. Create risk assessment, if necessary
8. Close supervision and monitoring of behaviour.

## **11. Poor Weather Procedures**

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds or during thunder storms. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions.

When it is wet, we will use the learning lodge or polytunnel for shelter.

Many of our activities can be carried out inside, such as our tracking, sensory and team games so no child will miss out if conditions do not allow us to go out into the Forest.

## **12. Designated Person Responsibilities**

Forest School Leader: Melanie Jones

First Aider 1: Melanie Jones

Additional First Aiders are in the school.

Designated Child Protection Staff: Emma Overton, Jan Browne, Clare Garrett, Caroline Tindell as well as other members of staff-see display outside staffroom.

## **13. Insurance Requirements**

Insurance details are held in school office with L Mole, Business Manager

I \_\_\_\_\_(volunteer at Forest School) have read and understood all that is stated in this handbook and had the opportunity to have any questions answered about its contents or my role.

I understand that the Forest Leader is in charge of the activities within the session, and have read the relevant risk assessment for the activities to take place during my session. I have provided my medical and emergency details to the Forest leader.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_