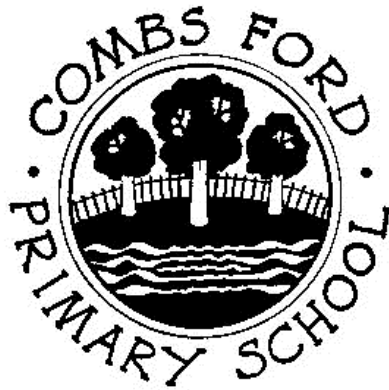


# Combs Ford Primary School

## Health and Safety Code of Practice

### Forest School



Successful Learners ~ Confident Individuals ~ Responsible Citizens

#### Declaration

This Code of Practice is for all adults who support regularly Combs Ford Primary School Forest School sessions and must be read as part of their induction process. A copy is always available in the woodland for reference. This Code of Practice is based on documentation from Suffolk Wildlife Trust as recognised experts in Forest School training and delivery.

<b>Updated On:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
<b>Updated By:</b>	Kathryn Day (Headteacher and Forest School Leader)

## *Introduction*

Forest School is an experiential educational approach which is one branch of the outdoor education family tree. It is a unique experience where children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the seasons and in all weathers. Children work with tools, play, learn, and begin to understand the boundaries of their behaviour (both physical and social). Forest School offers the opportunity to take supported risks which encourages children to grow in confidence, build self-esteem and develop motivation while understanding and appreciating the natural world. Forest School creates a community where development and learning can take place and promotes the holistic development of all involved.

## *Essential Requirements*

- Adhere to the adult to child supervision ratios based on the age, ability and behaviour of the group.
- Qualified First Aider present (refer to the *Accident and Emergency Procedures (Including First Aid)* in the *Combs Ford Primary School Forest School Handbook* and the [First Aid Policy \(CET\)](#)).
- Hand-held radios for calling for support and the Emergency Service are always charged and in the woodland during Forest School sessions.
- Follow the *Health and Safety Codes of Practice*.
- Appropriate *Risk-Benefit Assessments* are in place and adhered to.
- Guidance in the [Health and Safety Policy \(CET\)](#), [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy \(CET\)](#), and [First Aid Policy \(CET\)](#) must be followed.
- Staff and volunteers must have received relevant training and be suitably experienced in the activity.
- Where necessary, appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be supplied and used.

## *Forest School Must Not Take Place*

- Unless Forest School trained leaders and a qualified First Aider are present
- Unless age and task-appropriate supervision ratios can be met.
- If conditions on site are unsafe or increasing in danger – refer to *Forest School Risk Assessments for: Daily Site Sweep; Forest School Site; Weather*.

## *Staff and Volunteers*

- Forest School must be led by a Level 3 Forest School Leader.
- The Forest School Leader must be DBS checked.
- All Forest School volunteers must have undergone the checks and induction expected by the Children's Endeavour Trust (CET).
- All adults should be made aware of the Forest School ethos and principles and of the importance of the child led process, free play and facilitation rather than direction.
- Supervision ratios must be appropriate to the needs of the group and tasks involved.

- 1:1 assistants for individual children must not be counted in the adult to child ratios.
- All adults should read the *Forest School Handbook*, *Risk Assessments*, *Risk-Benefit Assessments* and any *Codes of Practice* relevant to the session or activity.
- Evaluations of each session and an assessment of individual learners' needs and interests will inform future session planning.

### *Care of the Forest School Site*

It is inevitable that Forest School sessions will affect the Combs Ford woodland. Impact will be determined by the number of people on site and the frequency of visits. An ecological impact assessment will be carried out continually to assess impact.

- Agreement must be obtained from the Headteacher for activities using the woodland and other areas of the school site.
- An ecological impact assessment of the site must be completed to identify sensitive areas or species and to plan routes and activity areas accordingly.
- Children and adults will be involved in the management of the site including making informed decisions and carrying out maintenance.
- Children and adults will be involved in monitoring species and increasing the biodiversity of the woodland and other areas of the school site.
- The woodland and other areas of the school site must be returned to nature at end of session – use biodegradable materials and remove litter.
- Nature connection and a caring outlook in the group should be encouraged.
- Session to session impact must be monitored and activity areas moved if they are having a negative impact.
- The woodland and other areas of the school site will be rested during school holidays.
- Risk assessments must be reviewed before each session.
- Sensitive areas of habitat should be avoided.
- Temporary shelters may be built on site as required to protect from the elements, for example sun or rain.

### *Safety Games and Woodland Password*

Establish in an age-appropriate way to catch children's attention which can be issued by adults or children – “*Wolf Call*”, “*1, 2, 3... Where are you?*” and “*Sticky Elbows*” (refer to the *Combs Ford Primary School Forest School Activities Handbook* for details).

### *Safety Briefing*

Each session must start with a safety talk. It should be kept to a minimum with responses being drawn out of children. It should include:

- Site hazards;
- Site boundary;
- Activity hazards;
- Behaviour agreement – Rainbow Rules and Forest School Promise;

- Further task-specific safety advice should be given as necessary particularly relating to tool use and fire.

### *Setting the Boundaries*

On the first introduction to the woodland it is important to set the boundaries within which the group is to work. The boundary will be reinforced each session.

- The children should always be in sight of the leader and base camp unless they have asked permission and have an adult with them.
- The boundaries must be set and agreed with the children.
- Rainbow flags will define the site boundary.
- A lost and found procedure must be established by playing “1, 2, 3... Where are you?” and reinforced by playing at the start of every session.

### *Hazardous and Poisonous Plants*

Woodlands can contain potentially hazardous plants. Part of the ongoing risk assessment and Daily Site Safety Sweep includes the Forest School Leader identifying and pointing out these to children and adults so that everyone is aware of the potential dangers.

The sap or hairs from some plants can cause rashes and blistering when in contact with skin or after the skin is then exposed to sunlight. Most rashes are caused by stinging nettles although giant hogweed can also be a problem. Both of these plants are easily identified (see images below) and if either is seen growing on site all children and adults will be taught how to identify and avoid coming into contact with them.

	
<p><i>Giant Hogweed</i></p>	<p><i>Nettles</i></p>
<p>Images from the <a href="#">Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)</a></p>	

Serious poisoning from eating leaves, berries or mushrooms rarely occurs even when curious children are involved. However, eating even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps, and large amounts are potentially fatal. We do not allow anyone to forage and eat anything that has not been agreed safe by a Forest School Leader.

If a child or adult is exposed to a hazardous plant or fungi and have a reaction, the Forest School Leader must be informed and appropriate First Aid given. If the nature

of the reaction is more serious the *Accident and Emergency Procedures* must be followed.

### *Practical Activities*

It is important to make sure that children are supervised well, introduced to any equipment used gradually and safely, and that tasks are appropriate for their age and ability.

- The Forest School Leader must assess the readiness of each child on each occasion.
- The Forest School Leader is responsible for all equipment by
  - Checking tools out and in at the start and end of each session (especially knives and fire-lighting items);
  - Making sure that all equipment is left clean, tidy and properly maintained at the end of every session.
- Risk assessments must be updated to include all activities to be undertaken and adults should be briefed on safe use of equipment and of their roles during the session.
- The Forest School Handbook contains all relevant Codes of Practice and are available to all staff and volunteers including:
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Campfire Cooking*
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Coppicing and Tree Work*
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Den Building*
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Fire*
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Forest School*
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Ropes and Knots*
  - *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Tool Use*
- The Forest School Handbook contains all relevant Risk Assessments and are available to all staff and volunteers including:
  - *Risk Assessment – Coppicing and Tree Work*
  - *Risk Assessment – Daily Site Safety Sweep*
  - *Risk Assessment – Forest School Site*
  - *Risk Assessment – Forest School Dynamic Risk Assessment*
  - *Risk Assessment – Manual Handling*
  - *Risk Assessment – Weather*
- The Forest School Handbook contains all relevant Risk-Benefit Assessments and are available to all staff and volunteers including:
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Campfire Cooking*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Den Building*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Fire*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Invertebrate, Animal and Plant Detectives*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Kelly Kettle*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Ropes and Knots*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Tool Use*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Tree Climbing*
  - *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Using Natural Materials*
- All staff and volunteers must be made aware of the key points, safety concerns and safe working methods for activities before each session.