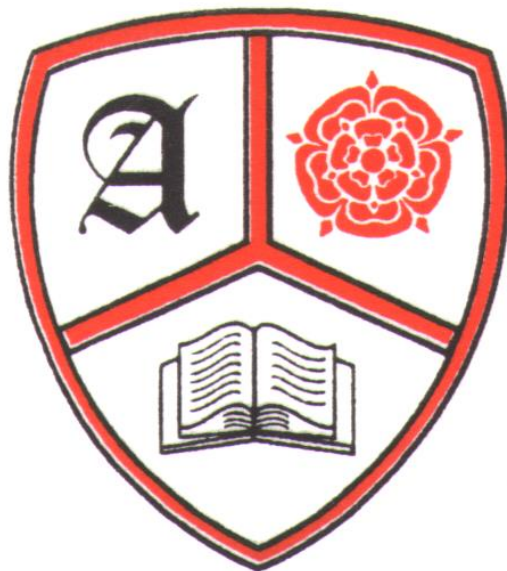


Anderton Primary School



Forest School Policy

Introduction.

It is the mission of Anderton Primary School to develop the full potential of everyone at our school in an environment in which 'We Explore, We Create and We Innovate'. To help fulfil our mission, we have introduced Forest School provision in order to help educate the whole child.

This policy has been specifically written so that all parents, staff, volunteers and governors have a shared understanding of the Forest School ethos and its implementation at our school.

The contents of this policy should be read alongside the following policies:

Health and Safety Policy

Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Special Educational Needs Policy

Within this policy, the term 'Forest School Leader' refers to the member of staff who holds a fully recognised Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification.

Aims.

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School as operated at Anderton. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risk, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

- Our Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:
- Develop self-esteem.
- Develop self-confidence.
- Form positive relationships with others.
- Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others.
- Learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults.
- Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.
- Learn specific skills which link into the curriculum.
- Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a forest environment.

Anderton Primary School's Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children will go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will be worn. During high winds or lightening it will be considered unsafe to go into the woodland. The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development, all under the premise of 'play.'

Environmental Considerations and Conservation.

One of the principles of our Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children will be taught respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them. We aim to promote respect for wildlife and our woodland environment. We want children to enjoy the outdoors and have freedom to explore and learn. This will have an impact on our outdoor setting. Through our management plan we aim to have no long-term impact and will adjust our sessions as necessary to achieve this. Disposal of food or other such waste is also important – if waste is compostable it will be out into the compost bins on site, if not it will be removed from site and disposed of correctly (recyclable items will be recycled). Bin bag(s) will be taken to site for every session.

Assessing and Reducing Risk at our Forest School.

One of the reasons for introducing Forest School to Anderton is a belief that children are sometimes overly and unnecessarily protected and cossetted from risks and that, ironically, this makes them less safe in the long run. At our Forest School we undertake a range of activities which contain a theoretical degree of risk. Through careful supervision, full training and good practice, we aim to ensure that accidents are avoided and that risks are reduced to manageable and acceptable levels. We have full written risk assessments in place for:

Buildings and shelters
Rope and String
Managed Fire
Collecting natural materials
Being off the ground
Blindfolds
Tools and equipment
Site

All these Risk Assessments can be found on the school server and in the Forest School section of the Risk Assessment Folder stored in the Headteacher's Office. Written Risk Assessments are the starting point for our safe practice and procedures in Forest School. They are constantly reviewed and regularly updated in order to reflect the safest practice possible at Anderton.

Health and Safety Considerations.

In the first instance please refer to Anderton Primary School's Health and Safety Policy. The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times throughout any Forest School activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders. The Forest School programme provides children with opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst being independent in their learning, they will develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their actions have consequences.

The Forest School Leaders will carry out risk assessments at the beginning of each term which will take account of seasonal changes. In addition, a site sweep will be undertaken before each session by the Forest School Leader who will assess the area for any dangers.

The Forest School site at Anderton Primary School is situated in the far right-hand corner of our school playground.

The Forest School Leaders and other practitioners regard their duty of care when working with pupils as extremely important. For the safety and protection of all individuals – children, staff and volunteers - we ensure the following:

- Everyone involved in Forest School is briefed on health and safety and risk assessment of the site.
- Staff and volunteers are made aware of the Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan. This is undertaken as part of induction and orientation of all staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers must undertake to adhere to the guidance contained within all these policies.
- All members of staff at Anderton Primary School undertake Child Protection training. Any concerns are reported to the Head Teacher or SENDCO, the named Child Protection Officers, to ensure the school's child protection policy can then be followed.
- The Forest School Leaders and other school staff delivering sessions all have an enhanced level CRB check.
- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. During winter months pupils are expected to wear sturdy footwear or wellington boots, hats scarves, gloves and waterproof outerwear. Sunscreen and hats should be worn in the summer months. It is part of school policy that staff do not apply sunscreen to children, they must do this themselves.

First Aid.

Level 3 Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid. A First Aid Kit is always available on the Forest School site. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that the First Aid Kit is brought onto the site at the commencement of the session and returned to school after each session. In cases of minor injury, such as cuts and grazes the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and complete a first aid note for the injured person to take home.

Dealing with strangers, members of the public and dogs.

Anderton Primary School incorporates the Forest School site. It is surrounded by a perimeter fence and is secure by design. However, there is always the possibility of these measures being breached. The following procedures will be adopted:

- Children will be informed to never approach any person or animal (living or dead) within the forest or school grounds.
- Staff will look for dog/animal owner and ask for its removal. If the dog is stray, the situation will be risk assessed and it may be determined by staff that children should be taken indoors until the dog is under control.
- Children will be told to inform a member of staff who will challenge any stranger on the site.

Emergency Procedures.

It is vital that emergency procedures are adhered to. These are in place to safeguard pupils and adults alike. If a serious incident takes place, it will be essential to carry out an investigation promptly. Should a serious incident or accident occur, the Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of other participants by adopting different whistle calls (whistle blown once means children are to freeze, whistle blown twice means children are to come together as quickly (but calmly and safely) as possible. Participants will be made aware of this procedure for calling everyone together in initial sessions of Forest School.

In cases of emergency the Forest School Leader or other trained adult will administer first aid to the casualty. They will inform the school office who will alert parents and/or emergency services if necessary. They will inform the head teacher if the incident requires further medical treatment.

If an accident occurs to a pupil, member of staff or visitor that requires help in addition to first aid e.g. Fire, Ambulance and Police then the LA must be informed of the circumstances as soon as possible. An accident form will be completed and a copy sent to the LA. In the event of serious injury (this includes amputation, serious burns, acute illness, fracture, loss of sight or consciousness, or if detained in hospital over 24 hours, or death); the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must be informed. These notifications are a legal requirement. The 'Accident Report Form' requires a written statement to be made with reference to the sequence of events, actions taken and responses and times of these actions. Names of witnesses should be recorded. The statement should then be signed, dated and given to the Headteacher. A copy will then be sent to the LA. The original form will be kept in school.

Tools.

An important part of using tools is to take responsibility for the maintenance and storage of these tools. The children need to be involved in the checking, cleaning and safe storing. They need to be made aware that their safety depends on the regular maintenance of the tools. Routine inspections and organised storage is good practice and provide guidance to the children. The safety of all participants is of paramount importance. Participants ensure that tools are used safely by adopting the following:

- Tools are stored correctly in school and checked after each session.
- Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of the tool use session.
- Leaders ensure that 'tool talks' are given before any tools are used.
- Children are supervised at all times whilst using tools of any description.
- Inappropriate use of tools will not be tolerated and will result in immediate withdrawal from the task.

Procedures

As the tools are taken out there needs to be set steps established so the children learn the importance of self-organisation. A numbering system should reinforce this message. The children will participate in cleaning and storing of the tools and realise the importance of keeping them in dry conditions. The Forest School Leader can demonstrate knife sharpening using a sharpening stone (whetstone), emphasising the effort and time needed to keep the knife and tools in general in good condition. The children will witness a before and after situation with the tools. Their understanding of a care and safety regime during maintenance is very important. They will be encouraged to describe the tools and their conditions through close observation and be introduced to the tool maintenance log. All sharp tools will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or tool box with a padlock inside a locked shed.

Weather

Whenever planning a Forest school session consideration of the weather conditions is crucial to its success. There are particular conditions that would necessitate cancellation or changes of plan. The Forest school Leader is responsible for continuing, cancelling or suspending any sessions in the woodland. The up to date weather forecast needs to inform the plans for the session. Reference to BBC local weather forecast to inform decision-making. Weather can be the most influential element in what and how things happen.

Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn and it is the responsibility of the Forest school leader to appraise this and if necessary provide them, eg. Gloves, Warm hats, Scarves, Socks, Rain Coats, Sun hats, Long sleeved t-shirts and/or jumpers, Long trousers, Wellington Boots, Trainers. A 'just-in-case' box of clothes needs to be available.

'There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.' Planned activities for the sessions will be flexible and so can be adapted to weather conditions. When the weather is cold children will be encouraged to be more active. In the warm/hot weather slower activities will be encouraged. The effect of the weather on the woodland environment will be the prominent factor in the live risk assessment carried out by the Forest school Leader. It is at their discretion as to whether the conditions are acceptable or unacceptable.

Roles and Responsibilities.

The Forest School Leaders hold a fully recognised Level 3 Practitioners qualification; have fully enhanced CRB and outdoor first aid qualifications. Forest School Leaders have the overall responsibility for:

- Safety and risk assessment
- Planning of sessions, evaluation and feedback
- Liaising with school staff and governors

- Administration of first aid
- Responsibility for first aid kit, accident book, etc.
- Supervision of tool use
- Understanding the needs of children with SEND
- Emergency procedures
- Volunteers and trainees
- Supervision of fires and cooking area

With support from the Forest School Leaders volunteers and trainees are responsible for:

- Modelling good practice
- Supporting and talking to pupils to extend their learning as appropriate
- Additional support when Forest School leader is supervising tools or fire activities
- Additional delegated jobs

Insurance.

Insurance for activities within Forest School are included within the school's insurance policy.

Equal Opportunities.

In the first instance please refer to the school Equalities Policy.

All people involved in Forest School sessions will be treated with respect and equality. Our priority is to ensure that children and adults have access to a safe and secure environment. We believe that any contributions made by staff, volunteers and participants in our sessions will be listened to and appreciated.

Evaluation Procedure.

The Forest School Leader has developed a long-term progressive plan. They undertake to reflect and evaluate each session after its completion. At the end of each term the leader will reflect on current activities, take into account feedback from all participants and then use this to inform future planning.

Anderton Primary School Sustainability Plan.

It is important to bear in mind the ecological impact of running a Forest School in the woodland at Anderton and with that in mind consideration will be given to the following:

- Children will be educated not to pick up anything still growing
- There will usually be only two or three Forest School sessions per week to allow the ground to recover between visits.

Woodland Management Plan.

Year 1

Coppicing and removal of undergrowth on the site

Use the above to create a natural hedge around the perimeter fence

Staff and volunteers remove rubbish, deadwood and brambles

Establish a fire pit and fire circle

Lay bark chippings in muddy areas

Year 2

Area to be extended; internal fence to be moved to incorporate more of the playing field at the top of the playground.

Begin planting trees around the perimeter fencing

Erect a shelter above the seating/fire circle to provide shelter from the weather

Establish a cooking area

Year 3

Continue further planting around boundary fencing

Create a natural pond and meadow in front of the new trees to encourage wild life

Build a storage shelter

Erect a wood store from natural materials