Rivington Foundation Primary School

Forest School & Forest Learning Policy

**Forest School Statement of Intent:**

Through Forest School activities we aim to provide a nurturing space that supports our children’s wellbeing and education by providing and implementing positive, outdoor, child centered experiences in a natural setting.

**What is Forest School?**

The roots of the Forest Schools movement can be traced back as far as the 19th century. These include the ideas of progressive educationalists such as Pestalozzi, Rousseau and Frobel, the woodcraft movements, the Native Americans, and the Quakers. In the UK in 1928 a Forest school was formed in the New Forest. The two founding organisations, ‘Woodcraft Movement’ and ‘Forest School Camps’ still exist today. In the 1950’s it was developed in Sweden, building independence and self-esteem through hands on play in a woodland setting. The Swedish concept was then further developed by Scandinavia and other European countries and established in Denmark in the 1980’s. It was then brought to the UK in the mid 1990’s after a visit by Nursery Nurses from Somerset and Early years professionals from other parts of the UK. Denmark has a similar climate to ours and this outdoor approach to learning had a huge impact on the development of children. A 13 month study of Swedish children found the Forest School children far happier to their urban cousins; more balanced with greater social capacity, fewer sick days, more able to concentrate and have better coordination, have higher self-esteem and self-confidence and be able to work as part of a team.

Forest School is holistic learning through play and exploration; children learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others. During Forest School children will build a shelter, light a fire and use green woodworking skills to create and build objects from the woodland around them.

They will use full size tools; learn the boundaries of behavior, both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

Through regular visits to “Rivington Woods”, Rivington Primary School will instill a love of the great outdoors. Inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences will develop 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 resources around us. Identifying individual learning schema’s to enable the children to learn most effectively and promote success. Planning for every child in the early session stages, then letting the children lead the sessions through their own interests. Taking informed, self-calculated risks and choices to ensure their groups safety, developing sympathy and empathy to the group around them. Working as a team to solve problems, fostering communication and negotiation skills.

# Location

Our Forest learning environment is based in the Woodland at Rivington which is part of the West Pennie Moors. The woodland itself is owned and managed by United Utilities.

# Staffing and Ratios

In school we have one qualified level 3 Forest School practitioner, Amanda Davies who is also the EYFS teacher at Rivington Foundation Primary School.

In the Early Years, Mrs. Davies will be assisted every session in the woods by one of the EYFS staff; the same staff members will go on the same 6 week block to ensure continuity of care for the children and allow the staff to document the full impact of the forest school. We may also take a work placement student or other staff members to let them see the benefits of Forest Schools in addition to parent helpers to ensure a sufficient child / adult ratio.

Other year groups in school also use the forest for “forest learning” activities which are led by class teachers and supported by teaching assistants, students and parents. Although Mrs. Davies is not leading these sessions, all teachers have received guidance from Mrs. Davies prior to starting the sessions. .

Lancashire County Council advice on ratios on outings is as follows:

“The staffing required to run the visit safely needs to be identified through the Risk Assessment rather than by a simple numerical calculation of ratios. It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils/young people for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

• gender, age and ability of group

• pupils/young people with disabilities, special educational or medical needs

• nature of activities

• experience of adults in off-site supervision (NOTE: if adults are less experienced in the activity, then more of them may be required to ensure adequate supervision.)

• competence of staff, both general and on specific activities

• requirements of the organisation/location to be visited

• competence and behavior of pupils/young people

• first aid cover

The following are regarded as the minimum ratios acceptable on any visit:

* 1 adult for every 6 pupils/young people in school years 1 to 3 (under 5s in reception/foundation classes should have a higher ratio); During our Forest School Sessions at Rivington Forest we have chosen a minimum of 1:3 ratio. For EYFS.

# A typical session

We aim to leave school by 1.30pm. Parents are asked to ensure children have clothes that are appropriate for the weather. If a child is uncomfortable due to being too hot/ cold they will not be able to fully enjoy the experiences around them. We provide a waterproof suit for when the weather is wet.

We will leave school and set off walking to the woods. The walk will take around 5 minutes as it is right on our doorstep. On the walk we will talk about what we hope to see and do in the woods, sing our Forest Song, look and talk about our surroundings and just enjoy the walk up to the site.

On arrival one of the adults will do a site risk assessment whilst the others gather together in the seating circle with the children to discuss what the plan for the day is. We will set boundaries that give the children the freedom to explore but so the adults can still see them at all times. We will usually play a game with the children to start off with for example “1,2,3 where are you.” Then we will move on the exploring and activities. 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. They form part of our observation and assessment procedures in the EYFS and enable the Forest school team to plan the children’s next steps.

# Typical activities

# 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

# Tool use

# Studying wildlife

# Playing team and group games

# Sensory activities

# Tracking games

# Rope and string work

# Art and sculpture work

# Woodland and traditional craft

# Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters

# Physical movement activities

# Code of conduct during Forest School Sessions

# 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 shout ‘1,2,3, where are you?’ The children have been taught to respond ‘1,2,3, I’m here’ through classroom games that are practiced regularly.

# Fire lighting: We do not have permission to fight fires in the forest so unfortunately fire lighting, although a popular “Forest School” activity will not be a feature of forest learning at Rivington Foundation Primary school.

# 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 may be collected for various purposes eg. Creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

# Eating and drinking: Children are not allowed to eat anything they find in the forest. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.

# Use of rope and string: We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good 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. 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.

# Leaving the site: We work according to the ethos ‘leave no trace’ that we were in the forest as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters should be taken down, imported materials need to be removed. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish and toileting 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.

# Climbing trees: An adult must be present when children are climbing 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.

# The responsibilities of the Forest School leader, teachers and assistants.

* Create an environment that is as safe as it can be and without undue risk to health. Use, maintain and store equipment safely.
* Ensure that all staff are competent in the work in which they are engaged.
* The identification, assessment and control of hazards within the Forest School is vital in reducing accidents and incidents to eliminate or control any such risk identified.
* The Forest School team will constantly monitor the Health and Safety policy and amend it as necessary; providing resources as required. All accidents/incidents will be recorded in the Accident book which will be reviewed after each terms sessions to ensure policies are effective.

# Insurance

The Children Act 2004 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 place a number of legal responsibilities on the school. Rivington Foundation Primary School has insurance cover appropriate to its duties under this legislation, including Employer's and Public Liability. (With Lancashire County Council and Zurich insurance.

Responsibility will in most cases rest with Rivington Foundation Primary School, but staff will take reasonable care, both for themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. Our certificate of insurance is attached to the back of this handbook. All activities are covered. (50,000,000.)

# Forest School Policies and Procedures

Rivington Foundation Primary School will follow all its usual policies and procedures to fulfil our first priority to keep each child safe. Risk assessments will be to determine whether the possible risk of a child injuring themselves, eg using a saw offers the lifelong benefits of higher self-esteem, risk management, safety awareness, physical skills, communication and teamwork. There will always be risks but if we can teach the children these skills when they are young, they will be much better equipped for the future.

# Forest Site Policy

The Forest School Leader / teacher in charge will visually check site upon arrival. Rivington Woods are very popular with dog walkers so there will possibly be excreta in the woods. If a child or adult steps in excreta the adults will wipe the excess using a stick, leaves etc. If any excreta comes into contact with children’s hands it will be immediately washed away using antibacterial products. Forest School Leader / teacher in charge will keep a check on the conditions and the site.

If the Forest School Leader / teacher in charge deems the site unsafe for any reason the following action will be taken:

* Forest School Leaders / teacher in charge to gather the group ensuring head counts
* Forest School Leaders / teacher in charge to gather equipment if safely accessible
* Forest School Leaders / teacher in charge to exit the children via the safest route
* In the event of a fire the Emergency services will be alerted
* Forest School Leaders / teacher in charge will contact the school and if safe, return.
* The group will stay together.

# Poor Weather and Shelter Policy

Forest School sessions will go ahead in all weather conditions with only a few exceptions:

* Strong winds that make woodland areas hazardous for use due to falling debris.
* When it is dangerous to get to the woods by foot due to snow, flooding or ice etc.
* Extremely wet cold conditions.

Exposure to the elements is part of the magic of nature and therefore an integral part of forest school. In inclement and or cold weather we will erect temporary shelters to enable us to take shelter. These shelters will consist of large and small tarpaulins and suitable rope for securing are part of our general Forest School equipment. These can be erected quickly and easily in a manner suitable to the layout and orientation of the Forest site being used. We will take ground tarpaulins to provide comfort in the cooler months.

In the summer the trees in the forest will provide good sun cover. We will also erect shelters from tarpaulins if required.

# Toileting Policy

Children are instructed to use the toilet before leaving the setting. If the children need to go to the toilet in the forest one adult would have to take a group back to maintain an adequate ratio of adults to children, as it is only a couple of minutes walk we deem this not to be too much of an issue. If we have enough helpers to release one staff member we will take a child back to school. After toileting the child/staff must wash their hands with water or use antibacterial gel.

# Clothing Policy

To ensure that the children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the forest environment we require children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Clothing will get muddy so some waterproof suits can be supplied for the younger children in school. We request to parents that children are suitably equipped with their own waterproofs if possible. We require children to have long sleeves and long trousers in both winter and summer. This is particularly important in the summer to protect from tick bites, sun burn, stinging nettles and thorns.

# Winter Clothing

The general rule is to wear lots of layers which keep in the heat and can be removed if needed. Children require:

Thermal underwear Vest

T-shirt

Jumper/fleece

Warm hat

Gloves (not mittens)

Wellies with warm socks or hard shoes

# Summer Clothing

Sun hat

Sun cream applied before session

Lightweight long sleeved top Lightweight long trousers Wellies or hard shoes

Forest School leaders and staff will ensure all the children are appropriately dressed before leaving for the woods.

# Spare Clothes

As we do get muddy/ wet, a change of clothes is very useful.

# Hand Tool Safety Policy

We are committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development, both indoors and outdoors.

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School / Forest Learning as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. To enable this is safety carried out:

Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader. The Forest School leader / teacher in charge will inspect the tools before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased depending on the tool in use. The ratios will vary from 1:1 to 1:3. Tools will be kept in the tool box and only removed by the Forest School team. Adult and child sized gloves will be available and are only to be used for the “helper” hand. It is not advisable to use any hand tools with gloves on as it detaches the user from the tool. Running with tools is prohibited Pointing with tools is prohibited

Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed. All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked shed. 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 and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use.

**Types of tool**

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

A ratio of 1 adult to 1 child will be observed. This tool must be used seated on a log with elbows placed upon knees and using the tool in a downward motion to the side of the body. A space must be determined ensuring a safe distance away from others. If someone wished to pass through your space they must verbally ask and you must stop whilst they pass, Safe, very temporary, storage is to store the blade end of the peeler in the soil. When carrying peelers you must walk with them held down by your side. Once a child is deemed to be competent by the forest leader / teacher in charge 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 and tie it in securely using the strings. Carry the knife either by your side or with the string around your neck. Tools must be returned to the 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. Wood being sawn must be supported on a saw horse or a natural sawing break - hands must be kept away from the blade. Adults and children must be given instruction and demonstration on the appropriate and safe position with which to saw.

Bow saws must have a blade guard on them when not in use. Blade guards to be removed and put back only by Forest School staff. When being carried the bow saw blade (in its’ cover) should be pointing downwards, and to the back. When not in use (shed storage) blades should be loosened 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’. Safe, very temporary, storage is to store the blade pushed downwards into the soil. Carry these tools by your side facing downwards and remember only to walk.

**Secateurs and Loppers –** Secateurs areused for cutting twigs and small branches, loppers are used forbigger branches (less than 50p coin diameter.)

Loppers should be carried at the side holding on to the bottom handle, making sure

that the blade has a smiley face. Always have both hands on the handle and set up a secure working area and keep at a safe distance from others. Squeeze or pull the handles together to cut the wood. (No glove needed.)

**Loose dog Policy**

Children will be instructed to stand still when a dog approaches and instructed NOT to pet the dog. When the dog has passed children may then carry on. Owners may be asked to put the dog on a lead if the dog is particularly excited.

**Food hygiene Policy**

All perishable food must be stored in a cool box / bag and wrapped in appropriate packaging to avoid attracting insects and vermin. Food must never be left uncovered at any time. All unused food stuffs and packaging must be disposed of appropriately.

All cleaning products must be kept out of the reach of children. Hands must be cleaned before handling food and utensils. All drinking water must be fresh i.e. provided in sealed containers. All products used must be within the ‘use by’ date. People must not handle food items if suffering from colds or similar infections. All cuts and grazes will be covered in the appropriate manner. All food utensils must be cleaned and placed in storage. Children are only permitted to eat at designated times.

**Missing Child Policy**

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, use ‘1,2,3, where are you?’ procedure and recall rest of the group.
* Carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
* The headteacher is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
* The headteacher contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
* The headteacher contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the headteacher. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
* Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.

**Essential equipment**

In addition to tools suited to the planned activities, the Forest School leader / teacher in charge 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, and the planned 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 (including burns dressings)
* Emergency Procedures
* Mobile phone with school’s number so that medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children) can be obtained.
* Risk Assessments
* Clean Water
* Accident forms
* Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled – staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)
* Appropriate Clothing
* Toileting items

Other Possible Equipment:

Wet wipes, hand gel

Nappy sacks and toileting things

Sun cream (parental permission required)

Spare Clothing

Thermos of hot water

Chocolate/sugary food

Plastic bag

Roll Mat and Blanket

Torch

Knife

Emergency shelter

Bivi Bag

Emergency Life Blanket

# Emergency Action Plans

# In the case of an injured child.

* Secure area and make safe.
* First Aider to carry out first aid and remain and monitor casualty.
* FS Leader/ teacher in charge to call emergency services and give location.
* An ssistant should gather all other children do a head count and keep the calm.
* Headteacher to be called to call parents and send staff to collect other children to return to nursery
* FS Assistant to guide Services to casualty and either assist, or return children back to nursery

# In the case of an injured Adult ( assistant/ Parent/ Visitor)

* Secure area and make safe.
* First Aider to carry out first aid and remain and monitor casualty.
* FS Leader/ any other adult to call emergency services and give location
* Headteacher to be called to send adult to collect children and contact next of kin.
* An assistant to gather other children do a head count and keep them clam until help arrives.
* Keep the Forest school group together, insulate casualty and if necessary provide shelter until the children are collected
* FS Leader / teacher in charge waits and monitors casualty until Emergency services arrive.

# In the case of injured FS Leader / teacher in charge

* Assistant to secure area and make safe
* Assistant to carry out first aid.
* Assistant/ other adult to call Emergency services and give location
* Headteacher to be called to send adult to collect children and contact next of kin.
* Forest School group stay together away from casualty if possible, insulate and if necessary provide shelter until children collected.

If an accident occurs this must be documented in the accident or incident book then depending on the severity inform the Health and Safety Executive. We follow the guidelines of the Reporting Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR) for the reporting of accidents and incidents. Near misses will be recorded in the school incident book.

Our nearest 24 hour Accident and Emergency hospital is the:

Chorley and South Ribble Hospital

Preston Road

Chorley

Lancashire

PR7 1PP

**Equal opportunities – Forest Learning for ALL**

Rivington Foundation Primary School and Rivington Childcare 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 staff 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 and Forest Learning does mean Forest Learning 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 or Forest Learning 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 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 session. Those children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need one to one supervision, but their entitlement to participate in Forest activities remains the same.

Policy – Amanda Davies September 2019