

Person Responsible:	G. Rughoobee (DSL/Head of Compliance) ratified by Beth Elkins, Head Teacher
Last reviewed on:	September 2023
Next review due by:	September 2024
Created:	September 2017
Revisions:	November 2020, November 2023

Gretton School is owned and operated by Newcome Education, a subsidiary group of Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each and every one of its learners and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside all of these policies in order to ensure an awareness of the bigger picture. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy, the Health and Safety Policy and the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

In all the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. [Department for Education guidance](#) considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not*
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative*
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person*

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- Peninsula HROnline
- Peninsula BusinessSafe (Health and Safety)
- Carecheck (DBS)
- Educare (online CPD)

Contents

1. Section - Introduction

- a. What is Forest School?
- b. Why Forest School at Gretton?

2. Section - Policies/Procedures

- a. Missing Persons Policy
- b. Positive Relationships (Behaviour) Policy
- c. Safeguarding
- d. Staff, helpers and volunteers
- e. Management of risks
- f. Clothing
- g. Getting to/from the site
- h. Cancellation
- i. Toileting and hygiene
- j. Accident and emergency

1. INTRODUCTION

a. What is Forest School?

Through Forest School and other environmentally-based initiatives, children attending Gretton School are able to develop a lifelong love and understanding of the natural environment, whilst developing the core purposes of the Forest School ethos, namely, development of self-esteem, confidence and social skills. With carefully planned activities, children from many year groups at the school take part in Forest School which enables them as learners to excel in all areas of their personal, academic and spiritual development.

The philosophy which underpins the Forest School movement is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age from 5 years upwards, and any groups, through mastery of small, achievable tasks in a woodland environment, to grow in confidence and independence so that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth.

Learners will acquire new skills as they are ready for them so that activities can maintain a degree of challenge and excitement, whilst remaining safe and supported.

b. Why Forest School at Gretton?

Forest School was introduced at Gretton School in September 2017. The Forest School approach is child led and offers our learners time outside, following their interests. They have the freedom to guide their own learning whilst developing skills which are transferable in the classroom. Many of our learners can feel anxious while offsite and will avoid situations where they feel at risk or challenged; whether this is physical, mental, emotional or sensory. Therefore we feel this is even more important for the learners to have the opportunity to experience a positive and rich time in a natural and outside space.

Forest school is a perfect opportunity for our learners to be in an environment outside where they may be faced with a risk but where they will be supported to assess and manage this risk. The learners at Gretton will be exposed to activities using fires, tools, pond life, habitats, wood work skills and more. They will be able to learn that risk is not always a bad thing and that risk is all around us. It is naive to try to protect them from all risk as they need to develop and have the confidence to assess and evaluate risks to be able to make judgements as individuals. Risk taking is a fantastic method of increasing confidence, the learners will be exposed to activities and environments where they will need to follow instructions, listen to others and use their observation skills to judge a risk and react appropriately. As the learners are guided through this process their confidence that they are able to do this will increase and they will gradually feel the ability to assess and manage risks themselves, something which is a crucial life skill to have as an independent individual.

2. POLICIES

a. Missing Persons Policy

Forest School's overarching priority in everything it sets out to achieve is to keep all children safe. This policy shall be applied whether the group are working in the on-site Forest School Base Camp or in Girton woods.

If it is discovered that a learner is missing from the group, the school policy for Missing Persons will be followed.

b. Positive Relationships (Behaviour) Policy

Forest School aims to:

- Build self-esteem, independence, motivation to learn whilst always maintaining a safe environment
- Promote awareness, respect and care for other individuals and for the natural environment
- Reinforce collaborative behaviour
- Develop awareness of acceptable behaviour and responsible behaviour in an outdoor environment
- Develop in learners a pride in their achievements.

In order that these aims are achieved, certain standards of behaviour must be sustained and reinforced as a continuum of expectations within conventional school time and are aligned to the whole school relational practice approach and Positive Relationships (Behaviour) Policy.

The Role of the Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader will:

- Create a positive environment which encourages and reinforces caring, nurturing and acceptable behaviour towards one another, the environment and equipment.
- Promote effective relationships in which all are accepted, valued and treated equally.
- Be mindful of the need to maintain safety at all times.
- Establish clearly defined standards of behaviour.
- Provide a positive role model for all learners.
- Involve school staff, parents, learners and outside agencies in the establishment of acceptable standards of conduct.
- Place the needs of the learners, including needs linked to their preferred learning styles, social and behavioural needs at the centre of the Forest School curriculum to maximise individual success and raise self-esteem.
- Give verbal praise to learners demonstrating good work, positive engagement, cooperation and good group work.

The Role of the Learners

The learners, to the best of their abilities and with or without support will:

- Listen with care and respond to instructions and requests, especially those concerning safety
- Develop and maintain an acceptable attitude towards one another, the environment and all equipment.

Rewards

In Forest School, rewards are intrinsic. We encourage the learners to achieve for the intrinsic feeling of success, achievement and because they feel proud for what they have achieved, rather than doing something for an extrinsic reward. At the end of each session we reflect together and the learners have the opportunity to share what they have achieved, feel proud of or have enjoyed. This intrinsic motivation and reward is what we encourage.

Sanctions

We are a natural consequences school and do not apply sanctions. Where the Forest School Leader or supporting staff class member is concerned about behaviours exhibited by a learner, they will communicate with class staff to discuss the appropriate next steps. Class staff will also ensure that IBP targets are communicated to the Forest School Leader.

1. The Forest School Leader will address the presentation of the learner where this is of concern and communicate this verbally to the learner offering opportunity to understand what needs to change to render the situation safe. Depending on the presentation, distraction techniques or encouragement to re-engage the learner will be attempted.

2. A verbal/visual reminder will be given by the Forest School Leader by taking the child to one side and reminding them of the importance of acceptable behaviour and the forest school agreements that they had made when they started forest school.
3. If the child continues to show challenging or inappropriate behaviour a decision will be made in line with their IBP on the next strategy. If the child's behaviour or actions are placing the group or an individual at risk, the child will be escorted back into school.
4. If a child needs to be escorted back into school or if there has been an incident, an incident form and physical intervention will be completed in line with the Positive Relationship Policy and parents will be informed.

c. Safeguarding

All Gretton Forest School sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by an assistant and school TAs.

Everyone involved in the forest school sessions are fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them. All staff have current CRB checks and have all had training in safeguarding and child protection. All staff are aware of who the Designated person at school is to report any safeguarding or child protection concerns to and the procedure of how to do so.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy and a concern logged on MyConcern raised as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times.

d. Equal Opportunities

All children will be treated equally and fairly. No child will be excluded from Forest School unless their behaviour during the session becomes too unsafe and they are too heightened. If their safety or others safety is not satisfactory they will need to return to school. The school Equal opportunities and inclusion policy will be implemented.

e. Staff Helpers and Volunteers

There will be a trained Level 3 Forest School leader present during every Forest School session. There will be additional adults to support this session and the ratios will be at or below 1:2. This ratio changes where the risk is higher such as if there is a fire lit, if tools are being used or if there is open water. All staff will have current enhanced DBS certificates.

The Forest School Leader will plan and run sessions, taking into consideration all the Health and Safety issues that could arise and inform teachers and class staff clearly of their role. The role of the Forest School leader is to boost and develop children's self-esteem, self-belief and confidence by suggesting small, manageable tasks and ensure that they have time and freedom to learn at their own pace without pressure. They will model appropriate behaviour at all times and encourage learners to develop a greater awareness of their own and other's emotional needs. In addition, the Forest School leader will be responsible for liaising with all interested parties, completing health and safety and risk assessments; following policies and procedures, administering any first aid and maintaining the first aid kit, counting equipment in and out and maintaining tools. The Forest School Lead will always take into consideration the specific needs of a particular group or individual. The Leader will ensure that every learner is respected as an individual, that bullying is not tolerated and that the rules and guidelines are followed. In the event of an emergency they will direct the group to safety.

Adults assisting the Forest School Lead need to become familiar with the Forest School Handbook and all procedures contained within it. This will enable them to fully support the group leader.

They will promote the ethos of forest school to raise self-esteem and confidence as an overarching aim. Assist in monitoring learners when walking to and from Forest School activities, assisting learners with their kit, including waterproofs. Staff will also be expected to read and sign daily risk assessments, site risk assessments and activity risk assessments. After each session staff will be expected to reflect with the forest school leader and pass on any information which will help guide the future sessions.

f. Management of Risks

Risk assessments will be completed. Every day the site will be risk assessed by the Forest School Leader and any risks will be evaluated before the group enters the site. During the assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level, and if necessary these will be highlighted to the learners and staff entering the site so that they are also aware.

Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities.

There are various risk assessments which will be regularly completed; these include daily site assessments, activity risk assessments and overarching site risk assessments.

There are six steps to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards, such as fallen branches or open water.
2. Decide who might be harmed and the probability of this.
3. Predict the level of consequence.
4. Evaluate the risk rating and decide whether the risk severity is adequate with the existing precautions or whether more should be done to reduce this risk and whether it is safe for the children to enter the site.
5. Record all of the findings on a risk assessment form.
6. Review the assessment and carry out necessary actions.

All safe tools and fire procedures will be followed and all staff will be familiar with these.

g. Clothing

We will work on the principle that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”.

All staff will be expected to wear appropriate clothing for Forest School. This will involve appropriate footwear: preferably warm/waterproof walking boots or wellies, waterproof trousers with full length trousers underneath, waterproof jacket, warm clothing in the winter such as a hat, scarf and thermals and a long sleeve top. For the warmer months the staff a sun hat is encouraged..

Due to learners sensory issues and rigidity associated with their Autism the rules around clothing will need to be flexible. Although it will be very clear to the learners and parents that we advise they have the following clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood
- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers
- Warm boots (wellies can be very cold during the winter)
- Warm Socks, and a spare pair
- Gloves and Woolly hat – Cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility– sunny weather

We will educate the learners around this clothing list and highlight to them why it is important they are dressed appropriately for forest school. Parents will also receive a clothing list to ensure their child has the appropriate clothing on the day their class does forest school.

A learner will not be automatically excluded from a forest school session for not wearing the above, however, if they are not dressed in a way which ensures their safety then they will be asked to wear some of the spare kit. If a learner is not wearing appropriate clothing we will explain to them and the adults that they are going to be restricted this session. This will mean they cannot use tools, approach the fire and if they are not wearing appropriate footwear they will not be able to climb trees.

If the temperatures become extremely cold or hot and the learner is not dressed appropriately they will be encouraged to borrow spare kit, if they refuse and the Forest School Leader believes they are not physically safe for example are at risk of hypothermia or sun burn they will be asked to return to school.

Parents will be encouraged to think about the practicalities of their clothing for outdoor activities and to be aware they are likely to take some mud home with them after a session.

Practicalities will need to be weighed up against a learner’s sensory issues around their clothing but ultimately if a learner is at risk and the Forest School Leader believes this risk is too high they will either be restricted during the session and will not have access to the full session, will be asked to borrow spare kit or as a last resort, will be asked to return to school.

h. Getting to and from the site

Each class will get dressed and ready in their classroom. Their two class staff and class teacher will walk the class over to the school field to the Forest School site accompanied by the Forest School Lead where required. The Forest School Lead and assistant will already be on site waiting for them to arrive. The class teacher may leave the class with the Forest School Lead and return to school. At the end of the session the class teacher will come to the Forest School site to collect their class.

i. Cancellation

Forest School sessions will very rarely ever be cancelled. However there may be times the forest school leader may cancel or abandon a session, these scenarios may be due to:

1. If a site risk assessment concludes the site is unacceptable or substantial.
2. If the wind is so severe that the site becomes unsafe for the learners and adults.
3. If there is a storm or lightning which causes the risk of harm to increase to an unsafe level.
4. If there has been a behavioural incident which has led to a physical intervention and either there is not enough staff to support and allow the session to continue or if the incident has caused distress to the rest of the group. Although an incident will be managed so that it has as little effect on the rest of the group as possible, and this should be very rare.
5. If the Forest School leader is absent.

j. Toileting & Hygiene

Before a Forest School session, children will be given the opportunity to go to the toilet. Whilst working at the Forest School, children will be allowed back into school if the toilet is needed and will be escorted by an adult.

The children will wash their hands using either the soap and water available to alcohol gel before preparing, cooking or eating any food or snacks during forest school.

k. Accident & Emergency

There will be the relevant risk assessments in place (site, daily, activity and individual) to prevent accidents and emergencies. The forest school Leader will hold an outdoor forest school qualification.

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the group leader should maintain or resume control of the group overall. She will, however, delegate responsibility when necessary, so all adults who use the forest school site also need to be aware of the Accident and Emergency procedures.

In the event of an Accident of Emergency the "Accident and Emergency" procedure will be followed.

Forest School Statement & Policy



This document should be used in conjunction with the Forest School Handbook held on Google Drive.