

*“At Hilltop Infant School, everyone will work together in a nurturing environment to provide each child with challenging opportunities that encourage a desire for life-long learning.”*



## Hilltop Infant School Forest School Policy

Ratified by the Governing Body Summer 2015

Signature John Young  
Chair of Governors

Due for Review Summer 2017

## **Aims**

Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest school learning environment provides opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others, to learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults and to develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.

Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environment changes. Appropriate clothing will be worn.

The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our 'woodland' are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development.

## **Environmental Considerations and Conservation**

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and careful reference to our sustainable management plan and ecological impact assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Hilltop Infant School will work closely with the community and Essex County Council to maintain, improve and promote the local area. Different areas of the woodland may be used to ensure that continued use of the same area does not cause damage to the understorey of the woodland.

## **Health and Safety**

The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times throughout any activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders and from adults showing good practice. 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 Leader will carry out risk benefit assessments at the beginning of the year, beginning of each block of sessions which will take account of seasonal change and in addition, a daily risk assessment will be undertaken before each

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forest school session. These will include assessments for activities that are planned and for any individual.

The Forest School Leader and other involved practitioners regard their duty of care when working with young persons as extremely important. To ensure all individuals (children, workers, and volunteers) are safe and protected the following is recommended:

- Staff and volunteers should be made aware of the school's Health and Safety, Child Protection, Equal Opportunity and First Aid policies and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.
- All members of staff and volunteers undertake Child Protection training. Any concerns are reported to the headteacher, the school's named Child Protection Officer, to ensure the school's child protection policy can then be followed.
- The Forest School Leader, School staff and volunteers will have a full DBS check
- Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of site and activities.
- At least 2 mobile phones will be taken to the site (different networks) and phone numbers and a map of the site with grid ref. will be left in the office.
- All volunteers and staff will be aware of our Forest Schools "In case of emergency plan". This will be explained in the induction meeting and is written on the back of our Forest Schools risk assessments.

## **Supervision**

There will always be at least 1:4 ratio of adults to children during Forest School sessions for our EYFS children. Key Stage 1 will be assessed for children's needs and requirements.

Children will be taught to use tools in a safe and controlled manner on a 1:1 basis and will be taught by an adult. Adults will be trained in safe tool use for Forest School.

## **Hygiene**

Children will be taught to understand the importance of staying safe and will be reminded regularly about not putting anything in their mouths. Hand gel will be provided in the toilet area and warm water for hand washing before snack time will be provided.

There is no toilet nearby so an area will be set up for each session for the children to use. This will be made up of wind breaks for privacy and set up just outside of our boundary. Children will be accompanied by an adult to ensure privacy and safety.

## **Travel to site**

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Children will walk to the woods. The children will become confident in road safety.

### **First Aid**

The Forest School leader will have an up to date Paediatric First Aid in the Outdoors certificate and will have a first aid and emergency kit on site at all times. This however does not cover Ofsted requirements for EYFS children so in addition to this there will be a member of school staff with paediatric first aid who accompanies the group.

### **Weather**

Forest school will take place in all weathers unless it is assessed to be unsafe to visit e.g. high winds and stormy weather. Children must wear suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times depending on weather. Waterproof trousers can be provided by the school if a child is not dressed appropriately. No sandals, shorts or short sleeves will be permitted for safety.

### **Protecting a child suffering from heat illness**

- Move child to a cool area and encourage them to drink cool water
- Spray child with cool water to cool down body.
- Place cold pack around neck and armpits.
- If child does not respond to treatment within 30 minutes then call 112
- If child loses consciousness, or has a fit, place in the recovery position and call 112.

### **Site Management**

The management of the woodland is the responsibility of Essex County Council. Hilltop Infant School will endeavour to work with them to manage the woodland.

### **Fires and Tools**

Fires in the woodland are not permitted by Essex County Council. Any celebration fires will take place on the school grounds and children will be talked to about safety agreements prior to this activity, as set out in the Forest School file.

All tools will be checked by the Forest School leader before use and will be cleaned and maintained after use.

## **Insurance**

Insurance for all activities is included within the school's insurance policy and risk assessments for risky activities have been submitted.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Child Protection Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Volunteer helpers guidance
- Transport Arrangements
- Health and Safety Policy
- Forest Schools Policy (Autumn 2013)

**POLICY REVIEW** This policy will be reviewed annually by Forest School Leader.