

Ravenscote Junior School



Forest School Handbook
2020 – 2021

Health and Safety

The safety of all children and adults at Ravenscote is of paramount importance. Our Head of School and representatives of the governing body make periodic checks around the school with the Site Manager. There is a formal safety audit each year. If you have any concerns about health or safety, please bring these to the attention of the Site Manager, Amy Wells or David Harris.

The forest school leader has created a risk assessment for the nature trail, which will be specific to the activities being carried out during that session. This must be read and signed by all adults taking part in the session.

All forest school sessions will be carried out with a ratio of 15:2 (children to adult). There will always be at least 1 level 3 qualified forest school leader with the appropriate first aid qualification. At the start of each session a second lead adult will be the designated first aider and the appropriate adults will be informed of who this is. All adults taking part in forest schools must first read this handbook and sign to say that they have done so. (Appendix 2)

On Site Risk Assessment Procedure

- Our Forest School site must be safe and risk assessed before every session. During our assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level. Whilst doing this we will identify any hazards and implement the necessary controls. We will ensure all staff are provided with a copy of the risk assessment prior to an activity. 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 five steps to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards, such as windblown trees or litter.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
4. Record the findings.
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary.

Forest School Rules

Before every session the children will be reminded about our Forest School rules:

- No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick
- We always try to be kind to each other and look after each other
- We always listen to the grown ups
- We look after our tools and equipment
- We look after plants and animals
- We are sensible with tools and fire and follow the rules carefully
- We look after ourselves and clean our hands after touching plants or animals, after going to the toilet or before having our snack
- We don't pick any plants or flowers unless we are told we can
- We always come back when we hear "1, 2, 3 Come back to me"
- If the whistle is blown three times, there is an emergency and everyone must gather together Immediately and wait for an adult to tell you what to do next.
- We never wander off without a grown up

Parental consent

Before taking part in forest school parents and carers will be given information about the activities their child will be taking part in during forest school sessions. They will then be asked to complete a consent form (appendix 3) which allows their child to take part. As part of the consent form parents and carers will be reminded to update their child's medical records via the school office to ensure we can provide the most effective medical care. Returned consent forms will be held in the school office in folder marked "Forest School".

First Aid

Miss Herridge has been first aid trained and will always be running the forest school session. The first aid kit is in a green bag labelled first aid and will be worn at all times by the designated first aider for that session. The first aid kit will be checked regularly and refilled in accordance with health and safety guidelines by the forest school leader. In addition, the designated first aider will wear a red medication bag containing medication specific to the children in that session (inhalers, epi pens). Access to the first aid kit and red medication bag is only permitted for school staff and not volunteers or children. Any first aid that has been administered must be recorded in the red first aid book found inside the first aid bag. Entries should be dated with the name of the child and a brief description of the incident as well as the first aid administered.

If a child requires first aid during the forest school session the following procedures should be followed.

Feeling unwell

- If a child complains that they are feeling unwell whilst in the forest school setting they are sent to the office with either a note or a healthy friend to explain the problem. During class time the sick child is the responsibility of the Admin Officers and they will generally deal with the child in the office. Children should spend no more than 20 minutes in the office. A decision to return the child to class or contact parents is then taken. Please make sure pupils are genuinely unwell before being sent to the office to avoid time wasting.

Allergies and pre – existing medical conditions

- The forest school leader will be aware of any children in the group who have allergies that require an epi pen, or if they have an additional pre-existing medical need.
- All medication for specific children will be kept inside the red bag.
- The red bag will be collected by the forest school leader before each session and will be worn by the designated first aider at all times.
- The designated first aider will administer medication to these children if needed.

Scrapes and cuts:

- If a child receives a minor scrape or cut, they should be sent to the designated first aider.
- The designated first aider will then administer first aid from the first aid kit. (See appendix 1)
- Record the incident in the red medical book found inside the first aid kit.
- The child may re-join the forest school activity.

Burns

- If a child gets burnt the forest school leader should be notified immediately.
- A bowl and bottle of water should be collected from the first aid kit.
- The burnt area should be held over the bowl and the water slowly washed over it.
- The child should then be escorted back to the building with an adult then run the burnt area under a cold tap before wrapping the area in cling film and being taken to the school office.
- In the event that the burn is larger than the palm of the child's hand or on the face an ambulance will be called.

Serious and life threatening injuries:

- A whistle will be blown loudly and clearly twice.
- All children will immediately stop what they are doing, put everything down and evacuate the forest school area.
- Children will return immediately to the PE benches (basecamp) sit and await an adults direction.
- If an adult is available to accompany the children to basecamp then they will, in the event that there is not an adult available the forest school leader will walkie talkie the school office to ask for assistance.

Ticks

- Ticks are known to exist in proximity to a site. All participants need to check or be checked for ticks as soon as possible following any activity on site. Where a tick is found on a participant, the Forest Leader can remove the tick safely with the tick removal tool. The area should then be covered with a plaster and the parent/carer of the child informed after the session.
- If a tick has been removed it can be placed inside a plastic bag (found in the first aid kit) and returned to the parents for them to get tested if they wish.
- Information on safe removal of ticks can be found at:

<https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/your-health/seasonal-advice/health-advice/be-tick-aware>

Hazardous plants and fungi

- Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the group so that all members are aware of the 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, though giant hogweed may also be a problem. Both of these plants are easily distinguishable and if either is seen growing on site all members of the group will be taught how to distinguish and avoid coming into contact with it. Serious poisoning from ingestion of leaves, berries or mushrooms rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, we have implemented a “No lick or pick” policy.

Fire Policy

During forest school sessions we will be using open campfires. These campfires will be used for a range of purposes including to provide warmth and to cook with. The forest school leader will consider the following when using a campfire within a session:

- The emotional and physical readiness of the children to encounter a campfire.
- Wind direction and speed.
- Proximity of combustible materials (overhanging branches)
- Soil type (not too peaty)

The fire will always be set up in the same position with the following precautions in place:

- A square made up of logs marking a 1 metre perimeter around the fire which the children and other adults are not allowed to enter unless invited.
- All other seating will be placed a further **Minimum 1.5** metre away from the perimeter (2 metres total)
- A fire bucket filled with 5 litres of water and covered will be placed inside the fire perimeter along with a fire blanket and fire gloves.
- 1 adult will become the designated fire manager at the start of the session, they are the only person allowed to freely move in and out of the perimeter all adults and pupils must wait to be invited.

Starting the fire:

- In most cases the campfire will be started by a forest school leader either before the children enter the outdoor classroom or whilst they complete a separate activity.
- The fire will be started using wood from the wood storage area.
- The Firestarter kit can then be used to get it ignited and burning.
- The fire must be started inside the fire bowl to prevent it spreading across the school site.

Maintaining the fire:

- The fire will be the responsibility of the adult who has been appointed the designated fire manager for that session.
- They may invite children and other adults into the fire perimeter.
- When inside the fire perimeter fire safety gloves must be worn and long hair must be tied back.

Extinguishing the fire:

- The fire will be extinguished either by or under the supervision of the designated fire manager for that session.
- The fire will be allowed to burn out. This is done by not adding any further fuel to it.
- The fire will then be flooded with water from the fire bucket and allowed to cool for a minimum of 20 minutes.
- The ashes will then be emptied directly onto the ground away from the fire area.

In the case of an emergency involving fire:

- The designated first aider will enter the school building via the nearest entrance and raise the fire alarm.
- Children will stop what they are doing and await instruction from the forest school leader.
- Three short blasts will be blown by the forest school leader on a whistle.

- Everyone taking part in forest school will leave their belongings and proceed sensibly towards basecamp.
- The forest school leader is the last to leave ensuring the register is taken.
- The forest school leader will then collect the group from basecamp and take them to the line-up point with the rest of their class.
- The children stay lined up in silence until further instructions are received.
- Children who are separated from their class at the time of a fire bell are instructed to leave by the nearest exit and report directly to the tennis courts.
- Fire procedures are displayed in every classroom.
- There is a fire drill each term. These are run at varying times in the school day to allow for practice in several situations.
- A record book is kept indicating time taken to assemble and time taken to call the register. Recommendations for improvement will be listed.

Tool safety and maintenance

Whilst taking part in forest school children will be taught how to use of range of tools safely. To ensure this any adults taking part in forest school will first be trained in the proper use of a tool by the forest school leader before being able to use them with children. The safe use of all tools will also be modelled to the children by the forest school leader before they are allowed to use them. Ratios, guidelines on the proper use of tools and tool specific PPE that must be worn are outlined in the individual tool handling policies found in appendix 4.

As tools are prepared for the beginning of a session, tool safety checks are completed by the Forest School Leader. If any tools are deemed unsafe for purpose, they are marked with fragile tape and are moved to the designated damaged tools area, in the locked shed so they are not used. During the modelling of safe tool use children and volunteers will be taught to take a tool to the forest school leader if they feel it is broken or unsafe to use. All participants in forest school will be taught that a tool marked with yellow fragile tape is unsafe to use and should be returned to the Forest School Leader.

Counting tools in and out:

Kept inside the locked tool box will be a copy of the tool checklist. This lists all of the tools contained in the box. When a tool is collected or given out the forest school leader will mark it on the checklist. At the end of each session the forest school leader will count the tools back in using the tool checklist.

Using tools safely:

When using tools learners should ensure they are a safe distance from others and that others are aware they are using tools. 'Blood bubble' is the deliberately grim name for the area around a tool where there is a greater probability of injury should someone wander in to the area the tool is being used. Learners should be aware of the blood bubble around any tool they are using. "Two arms and a tools distance" apart is the widely recognised safe working distance for tool use. Some learners will be able to visualise this and intuitively work at appropriate distances. Others will need support with this. This can easily be facilitated for younger or more vulnerable learners by marking out work stations appropriately to ensure safe working distances

Clothing

Forest school will take place in all weather conditions and therefore children and adults are expected to turn up for sessions with the appropriate clothing. If a child or adult is not dressed appropriately they will not be permitted to take part.

As a school we will provide shelter from the elements (tarpaulin) and there is some spare waterproof clothing available. It is the responsibility of the pupil to ensure they are wearing appropriate clothing for the weather and that arms and legs are fully covered to protect from cuts and scrapes.

Be aware that it is sometimes cooler in the forest school due to the shade provided by the trees.

Rainy weather:

- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Wellington boots
- T-shirt or vest
- Warm fleece
- Thermal socks, or two pairs of normal socks
- Warm hat

Sunny weather:

- Waterproof coat and waterproof trousers in bag
- Walking boots, trainers or wellington boots - sandals are not suitable
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen
- Long-sleeved top or light shirt - to protect shoulders and arms
- Light trousers - shorts/skirts are not suitable

General clothing

- Long hair must be tied back
- Protective gloves must be used by each child.

Drinking water policy

As a school we encourage all children to bring in a filled water bottle for use throughout the day. We consider it important that they have the chance to re-hydrate themselves as often as they want.

- Participants water bottles will be refilled before leaving their classroom and carried with them to the forest school area.
- Children will be reminded that they can take a drink of water when they need one.
- If their bottle needs refilling during the session they must alert an adult before being permitted to refill it at the water fountain on the school playground.

Some children do not like drinking water and try to bring other drinks. This is to be discouraged.

Toileting policy

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before starting a forest school session. Should a child or adult need to use the toilet during a session the following procedure will be followed:

- The child or adult will alert the forest school leader.
- They will re – enter the school building via the nearest entrance and use the toilet.
- They may return to the forest school session once they are ready.

In the event of a toilet incident happening in the forest school area an adult in the session will escort the child to the school office. They may return to the forest school session when they are ready. It is essential that the forest school leader is alerted should an adult leave the session as the forest school leader will need to check ratios to ensure it is still safe to continue with the activity.

Lost child policy

In order to prevent a child from leaving the forest school group or area and/or getting lost the following steps will be taken.

- **Headcounts:**

At the beginning, during a session and at the end headcounts take place. The number of children and adults participating, can be found at the top of the daily risk assessment where the ratio of adults to children has been calculated for the session. It is the responsibility of all adults participating to ensure they are aware of the headcount for the session and to be involved in the monitoring of this.

- **Boundaries**

The forest school area has three exits. All are fenced and gated. Children will be reminded that should they wish to move outside the designated forest school area than an adult should be told. It is the responsibility of all adults to monitor which children are leaving the site and when they return. Please inform the forest school leader when a child asks to leave the forest school area.

- **1-2 -3- where are you?**

Children will be taught a game from the beginning of Forest Schools which is similar to hide and seek. Children are asked to hide and then when they cannot be found on the call of "1-2 2-3 where are you?" children have to make themselves seen by an adult and praised for hiding so well. Throughout the sessions this can be played and also used as a call back to the base at the end of the sessions.

In the event that a child leaves the forest school area without asking, the school site itself is secure during school hours, with all exits off the site locked. Should you witness a child leaving the forest school area without asking permission alert the forest school leader immediately.

Behaviour

The following three school rules underpin and uphold our beliefs in our behaviour policy: 'Ready, Respectful and Safe'

1. We are ready to learn
2. We are respectful to everyone and everything
3. We make safe choices

Ravenscote Values: We want our children to experience the following values, to enable them to thrive in our learning community:

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Excellence
- Happiness
- Teamwork
- Honesty

Rewards

Praise is the most important aspect of the Teacher-Pupil relationship at Ravenscote. Teachers should look to offer praise to children at every opportunity – a 'catch them being good' philosophy is in operation. Our emphasis on rewards is to reinforce good behaviour, rather than focus on failures. We believe that rewards have a motivational role, helping children to see that good behaviour is valued. The commonest reward is praise, informal and formal, public and private, to individuals and groups. It is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as particularly noteworthy achievements. Rates of specific praise for behaviour should be as high as for effort and achievement in work. Specific and detailed praise is appropriate and motivating. Eg. 'I like/appreciate/admire how you....' is more effective than a more general comment such as 'Well done.'

Sanctions (see Behaviour Policy for further detail.)

Whilst always trying to create a positive learning environment, we recognise that sometimes there will need to be interventions and consequences. In all disciplinary actions, it is essential for the pupil to understand that it is the behaviour that is unacceptable and not the child as a person. Any sanction given for poor behaviour must be in proportion to the behaviour and must be reasonable, considering the pupil's age, any SEN or disability they may have, safeguarding issues and any religious requirements affecting them.

School staff use a restorative justice approach when discussing behaviours with children. The Restorative 5 (adults choose 5 of the following questions to support children):

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought since?
4. How did this make people feel?
5. Who has been affected?
6. How have they been affected?
7. What should we do to put things right?
8. How can we do things differently in the future?

Cancellation policy

Weather conditions;

There are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather;

- In the case of high winds of 25mph or more determined by the met office online.
- In the case of extreme temperature determined by a met office amber weather warning.
- In the case of extreme cold of below '0' a session will be cancelled if it is near to this we will ensure children are appropriately dressed, sessions will be made shorter and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

Staff ratios:

A session may need to be cancelled due to staff illness or other circumstances if this is going to compromise the adult to child ratios. If a staff member is unable to attend a session for any reason they should inform the forest school leader ASAP. If volunteers cannot attend a session for any reason please alert the school office as soon as you can.

Cancellation decisions may be on the morning of the session, but the forest school leader will endeavour to give as much warning as possible to supporting staff and helpers. In the case of a cancellation, consultation with the class teacher will determine whether an indoor nature or skills related session takes place instead.

Child Protection Procedures

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This means that we have a Child Protection Policy and procedures. All staff (including volunteers) must ensure that they are aware of these procedures, which are summarised below.

If you are concerned about a child's welfare:

- Record your concern, and any observations or conversations heard, and report to the DSL as soon as possible **the same day**. Concern forms are found in the red medical bag. Please ensure all forms are signed and dated (including the year). Use extra paper if necessary.
- Do not conduct your own investigation.
- Do not promise a child that you will keep secrets.
- Refer to the document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018' displayed in the staffroom.
- If you are concerned that a child may be at risk of **significant harm**, such as sexual or physical abuse, do NOT discuss your concerns with the parents, or with anyone else aside from the DSL.
- If in any doubt, seek advice from the DSL.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) are:

Rebecca Jukes
Amy Wells
Davis Harris
Natalia Nicholson
Anna Webster

If your concerns relate to the actions or behaviour of a member of staff (which could suggest that s/he is unsuitable to work with children) then you should report this to one of the DSLs in confidence, who will refer the matter to the Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors if the concern relates to the Headteacher) – who will consider what action to take.

The Chair of Governors can be contacted by email at

Appendix 1

First aid kit contents

- Large plasters
- Small plasters
- Antiseptic wipes
- instant ice packs
- eye irrigation solution sachets
- triangular bandages
- large self-adhesive wound dressings
- small self-adhesive wound dressings
- pairs of protective gloves
- eye pads
- CPR face shield
- Foil Blanket
- Hand wash gel
- Fresh water in a sports cap bottle

Appendix 2

Declaration of consent

I have read and understood the policies and procedures outlined in the forest school handbook.

Print Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 3

Forest School

April 2019

Name of Child.....

Dear Parent or guardian,

Following on from our very own Forest School being created, we are now officially ready to invite groups of children to our 'Forest School'. On Monday 29th April, Forest School sessions are being offered to a group of year 3 children and your child has been chosen to be part of the group. The session will offer an exciting opportunity for children to learn and develop skills using the outdoor environment. Forest school activities may include walking, craftwork, tool use, flint fire lighting skills, den building, campfire cooking and more. As a school, we have had to complete rigorous risk assessments, as well as detailed training, in order to teach in this exciting way.

In order for your child to take part in forest school, they will need to be provided with the appropriate clothing.

During warm weather they should have:

- A light long sleeved top
- Long trousers
- Wellies or sturdy walking boots
- Sun hat

The school do have some spare waterproof clothing for your child to borrow if needed.

Medical Information

Medical information will be obtained from the medical information you provided at the start of the school year. However, if there is further information that you would like to make us aware of that might affect your child's involvement in Forest Schools or any other allergies (e.g. material, food, pollen, dust, etc.) Please update your records by contacting the school office.

Please return the slip below to your child's class teacher by Thursday 25th April.

Kind Regards
Miss Herridge

I give permission for to take part in forest school sessions.

Signed:.....Date:.....

Appendix 4

Tool	Use	Safety
Bow Saw	<p>Used for cutting branches greater than around 1 ½ inches in diameter. The blade can be removed and replaced when worn or broken.</p> <p>You can purchase two types of blade to use with a bowsaw. A raker toothed blade is best for green wood and a peg toothed blade for dry wood.</p>	<p>Generally the bowsaw will be used by two children at a time. One holding at the hand guard and the other the handle at the opposite end. Older children may be supervised using the bowsaw alone.</p> <p>Gloves can be worn on the helper hand but should not be worn on the hand holding the tool.</p> <p>When making the initial few cuts each child's helper hand should be placed through the centre of the saw and on the wood opposite. This will prevent the blade from jumping onto one of their hands. Once the blade has bitten into the wood and formed a groove they are safe to hold the wood adjacent to the saw.</p>
Loppers	<p>Used for cutting branches smaller than around 1½ inches in diameter. Loppers with a gears, make it less effort to cut the wood and are a worthy investment if they are to be used with younger children.</p>	<p>Loppers are generally used by one person at a time and are a relatively safe tool to use and a good introduction to using tools in the woodland. Children should ensure they have a good footing and that the branch they are cutting is not bearing weight before cutting.</p> <p>Co-operative work between two children can be encouraged by them using the loppers together, one holding the stick or branch to be cut and the other operating the loppers.</p> <p>It is not necessary to wear gloves when using loppers.</p>
Knife	<p>Multi purpose tool that can be used for everything from batoning wood to a makeshift spatula. In forest school knives are primarily used to cut cord and for whittling.</p>	<p>Fixed blade knives should be used instead of folding knives. Folding blades present a chance of accident when folding the blade and have a weak point at the hinge making them more likely to break. Folding knives also hold dirt and consequently potentially water both of which will damage the folding mechanism.</p> <p>Size of the knife should be considered. Knives with smaller blades, smaller handles and even rounded blade ends are available and may be a sensible choice for children.</p> <p>Gloves should be available for use on the helper hand. No glove should be worn on the hand holding the knife.</p> <p>Children should be taught the correct position to sit and you should ensure they are always cutting with arms over their legs and away from the body. It can be useful to use a small log next to them to carve onto. The log should be positioned to catch the blade at the end of the stroke.</p>
Bill hook	<p>Traditionally used for cutting shrubs and bushes in forest school the billhook is used primarily for splitting wood.</p>	<p>In forest school the billhook will generally be used by two people though older children may be comfortable using it alone.</p> <p>To split wood one person should hold the billhook with one hand firmly on the handle and pinching the hook</p>

		<p>with the other. The blade should be placed at the top of the log to be split. The second person will use a mallet or piece of wood to strike the top of the billhook and drive the blade into the wood. This is repeated until the wood splits.</p> <p>It is not necessary to wear gloves when using a billhook.</p>
--	--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------