



FOREST SCHOOL POLICY 2021-2022

Effective Date: June 2021

Last Reviewed:

Reviewed by: Miss H Hinson

Next Review Date: June 2022

Introduction

It is the mission of Moggerhanger Primary School to develop the full human potential of everyone at our school in an environment guided by our values of determination, courage, excellence and inspiration. We believe that providing Forest School sessions for our children supports them in fulfilling our school values and provides a host of benefits, including increasing cultural capital, supporting mental health and encouraging children to build a relationship with the natural world.

This policy has been specifically written so that all parents, staff, volunteers and governors at Moggerhanger 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 a member of staff, adult volunteer or bought in professional who holds a fully recognised Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification.

Intent

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School as operated at Moggerhanger. 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.

Moggerhanger 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 changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will be worn. During high winds or lightening it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods. 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 are 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. This will be achieved partly through long-term, medium-term and lesson planning linked to specific themes that all children across all age phases will experience. Where possible, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School site.

Health and Safety Considerations

In the first instance please refer to Moggerhanger 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, including a summary of the rules of Forest School at the beginning of all sessions. 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, and each session, including undertaking an inspection of the Forest School area before a session and identifying and minimising any risks.

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 incorporating Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and 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 Moggerhanger Primary School undertake Child Protection training. Any concerns are reported to the Executive Principal or SENCO, and 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 our school policy that staff do not apply sunscreen to children, they must do this themselves.

Assessing and Reducing Risk at our Forest School

One of the reasons for introducing Forest School to Moggerhanger 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, training and good practice, we aim to ensure that accidents are avoided and that risks are reduced to manageable and acceptable levels. We have written risk assessments in place for:

- Site weather conditions and general welfare
- Buildings and shelters
- Rope and string
- Fire
- Food
- Water
- Collecting natural materials
- Tools such as saws, loppers, pen knives.

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 Executive Principal'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 Moggerhanger.

Fire at Forest School

If a fire is lit at our Forest School, it is always supervised by a Forest School Leader. Fires will never be left unattended. Safe fire practice is always adhered to. There will always be a water bucket, fire gloves and fire blanket next to the fire. Children are taught and reminded of the fire circle rules from their first visit to Forest School. These are:

- Stand behind the fire line
- NEVER cross the fire circle
- When near the fire, always use the respect position

Cooking and Eating at Forest School

Forest School Leaders and other adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

- Open fire cooking is only permissible in the designated areas
- The respect position should always be used when near the fire
- Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink
- All food is stored in appropriate containers
- Only clean equipment is used
- Any dietary requirements are noted and catered for
- Food will be cooked correctly
- All equipment and waste are cleared away.

Tools

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.

First Aid

Level 3 Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid and many members of staff at Moggerhanger Primary School are first aid trained. All Forest School Leaders will be made aware of first aid trained personnel both outside and within the school. A small first aid kit is always available on the Forest School site and a full first aid kit available in the school. 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.

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 an attention-grabbing call which will be shared with the children at the start of the session. 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 Executive Principal 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 faxed 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 Executive Principal. A copy will then be sent to the LA. The original form will be kept in school.

Roles and Responsibilities

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
- Supervision of fires and cooking area
- Understanding the needs of children with SEND
- Emergency procedures