



Belmont Academy

Forest School

# Health and Safety Handbook

Date of policy	February 2020
Review Cycle	Annually
Review Date	February 2021
Signature of Chair of Governors	Janet Saunders
Ofsted Unique Reference Inspection number	101422 10045437



**Declaration:**

This hand book has been compiled by Joanne Richardson (Forest School leader) taking into account The Forest School ethos and Belmont Academy's policies and procedures. With this in mind detailed risk assessments including the risk benefits have been very carefully put together.

All adults attending the sessions must read and understand the handbook. Any queries please ask Joanne Richardson (Forest School leader) to clarify.

You will need to sign this declaration that you understand and will adhere to the content thoroughly as Forest School sessions are a great opportunity for all to take the Natural environment as a wonderful learning tool.

Print Name:	Signature:	Date:

Forest School is an inspirational educational ethos that focuses on developing children's personal, social and emotional development through regular outdoor woodland experiences.

The Forest School programme provides all learners with opportunities to achieve and through hands-on learning experiences in a natural or woodland environment, the opportunity to develop self-esteem and confidence. The aims of Forest School are set out by the Forest School Association and aim to ensure that all participants are:

- Viewed as equal, unique and valuable
- Able to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- Able to develop positive relationships with themselves and others and the natural world
- Able to develop competency to explore and discover
- Experience regular success
- Choosing and initiating their own learning and development.



#### Forest School Ethos/Definition

***“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees.”***

***Forest School is a specialised approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland learning.***

#### Principles with criteria for good practice (bulleted – FS = Forest School)

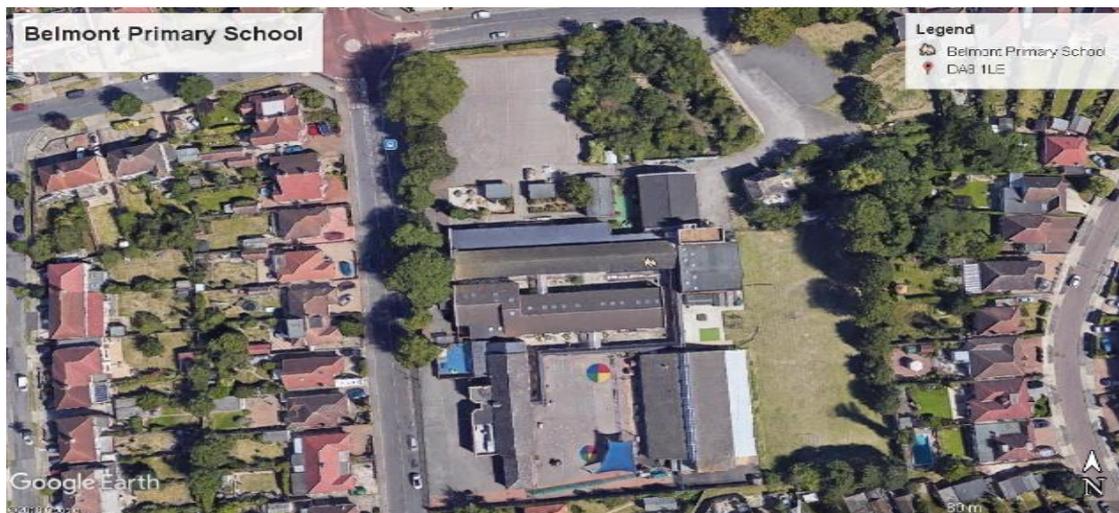
- 1. Forest School is a long term process with frequent and regular sessions in a local natural space, not a one-off visit. Planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements.***
  - FS takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons
  - A FS programme has a structure which is based on the observations and joint work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
  - The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.
- 2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world***
  - **Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for FS, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good FS practice.**
  - The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
  - A FS programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager and the Practitioner and the learners.
  - FS aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in a local woodland/wooded site to help develop long term environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
  - FS uses the natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and encourage intrinsic motivation.

- 3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.**
  - Where appropriate the FS leader will aim to link experiences at FS to home, work and/or school/education.
  - FS programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.
- 4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.**
  - FS opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
  - FS uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and is dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
  - Any FS experience follows a Risk/Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.
- 5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously develop their professional practice.**
  - FS is led by qualified Forest School Practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an equivalent Forest School Level 3 qualification.
  - There is a high practitioner/adults to learner ratio.
  - Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
  - Practitioners need to hold an up to date first aid qualification which includes paediatric and outdoor elements.
  - FS is backed by relevant working documents which contain all the relevant policies and procedures required for running FS and establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
  - The FS leader is a reflective practitioner sees themselves as a learner too.
- 6. Forest School uses a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.**
  - A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed that is responsive to the needs and interests of the learners.
  - Play and choice are an integral part of the FS learning process and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at FS.
  - FS provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
  - Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
  - Practitioner observation is an important element of FS pedagogy. Observations are used to 'scaffold' and tailor learning and development at FS.
  - The Practitioner models the pedagogy which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.

The Forest School Association  
www.forestschoolassociation.org  
Email: enquiries@forestschoolassociation.org

## Forest School location

The Dell is a small woodland area that is located within Belmont Academy's secure grounds.



At Belmont Academy the focus of Forest School is to provide an enriched and extended learning experience to our pupils outside of the classroom. The school recognises the importance of ensuring pupils develop the key skills required to be successful learners and citizens. In line with our school aims and learning goals, Forest School enables our pupils to develop self-esteem and confidence; the skill of working and learning both collaboratively and independently whilst also ensuring pupils' develop an element of risk taking and self-confidence, all of which can be transferred to the wider learning environment. Forest School provides pupils with practical learning experience in a fun and enjoyable environment that supports pupils' in developing a positive attitude towards the natural environment and their learning.

## Environmental Impact

At Belmont Academy we aim to teach children the importance of caring for the environment in a variety of ways from creating habitats to using non-native species for craft activities. There is a plan in place to minimise the impact of Forest School activities on the woodland and natural environment. We are committed to ensuring that the benefits of Forest School and woodland learning do not destroy the natural environment.

### Three Year Sustainable Management Plan – The Dell

Factor	Possible issue	Solution	Preventative measure	Managed by	Timescale
Bulbs	Bulbs that emerge, particularly in spring may be trampled on.	Flowers are not damaged when growing or in bloom.  Teach children to respect Dell and keep to natural pathways.	Explore alternative sites.  Plant bulbs in other areas to encourage growth.  Design the Dell to ensure minimal impact on current wild flowers.	Forest School staff  Premises Staff  Beck Ground staff  Children	<b>Year 1:</b> Children are taught about bulb care, not picking flowers.  <b>Year 2:</b> Bulbs are replanted in different areas of the Dell to create new habitats.  <b>Year 3:</b> Plant in areas where not much growth or footfall takes place.
Wild flowers	Seeds trampled on before able to grow.	Planted in an area of the dell with no trees/plants clear area of nettles and brambles. Scatter seeds and wait.	Mark it out and place borders and pathway through to indicate where there will be growth.	FS staff  Children	<b>Year 1</b> Clear area of rubbish.  <b>Year 2</b> In Winter when growth is minimal clear growth.  In Spring mark out area scatter wild flower seed to encourage pollinators.  <b>Year 3</b> Clear any nettles brambles leave to see if area has reseeded.
Pathways	Pathway becomes overgrown.  Paths become littered with rubbish and animal faeces.  Paths are slippery and muddy in some areas.  Paths are not accessible for wheelchair users/low mobility users.	Paths are cleared.  Paths are cleaned.  Slip hazards are minimised.  Possible handrail, or rope and peg rail.  Paths are created to ensure access for all.	Children are encouraged to clear pathways.  Premises staff and grounds staff assist in clearing paths.  Bark/stone used in areas that become overly muddy.  Follow procedures in handbook if site is too icy/muddy.	Forest School staff  Premises Staff  Beck Ground staff  Children	<b>Year 1:</b> Establish clear pathways in the Dell that are accessible. Make accessible for wheelchair users.  <b>Year 2:</b> Develop pathways by adding stones/barks and manage upkeep.  <b>Year 3:</b> Maintain and repairing, as year 2

Wildlife	Noise pollution and activity from children in dell.  Mini beasts habitats.  Bird nesting.	Activities to teach children about environments for birds/mini beasts/pond life and wild animals.  Make mini beast hotels and use designated areas.  Use bird boxes and find information on RSPB website.	Teach children about the impact they have on nature and how they can respect their environment.  Children help make bug hotels, source logs from outside area.  Be involved in bird watching and bird box installation. Children to find out information on birds observed and RSPB website.	Forest School staff  Children  Adults	<b>Year 1</b> Teach children about the impact they have on wildlife.  <b>Year 2</b> Make bug hotels designate areas for wildlife be aware of natural material usage.  <b>Year 3</b> Replenish logs from other areas.
Deadwood	Risk trips falls.  Falling branches.	Use deadwood for habitats making bug hotels in designated area.  Use for fire wood stored in a designated area to dry out.	Children learn to respect areas that mini beasts/frogs/newts may inhabit.	Forest School staff  Children  Adults	<b>Year 1</b> Look at areas to put deadwood and make bug hotels with children.  <b>Year 2</b> Maintain refresh and repair if needed.  <b>Year 3</b> As year 2.
Trees	Climbing.  Den building.	Tree climbing can put strain on branches and peel bark.  Look for damage to trees before allowing children to climb.  Ropes can cause damage to branches and bark.	Daily check of designated climbing trees.  Teach children which trees are for climbing, the safe way to climb on thicker branches and not on branches that have lost their bark less impact on the tree. An adult will be present when a child is climbing.	Forest School staff  Children  Adult	<b>Year 1</b> Choose which trees will be used for climbing. Maintain continually. Look for another area in the school to use to reduce impact on Dell.  <b>Year 2</b> Change the tree that are used for climbing to give trees a chance for regrowth.  <b>Year 3</b> Use the other area in school give the trees in dell time to regrow and rest.
Nettles	Growing over pathways.	Clear pathways,  Teach children to tell FSL about areas of nettles to clear pathways but also teach about the importance of nettles to wildlife habitats.	Daily site sweep check trample nettles to make clear pathways.	Forest School staff  Children  Premises staff	<b>Year 1</b> Mark out clear pathways through nettles.  <b>Year 2</b> Continue to maintain pathed areas and teach new children to nettle management.  <b>Year 3</b> Continue to manage regrowth.

Pond	Children throwing objects in pond.  Reduced water levels /stagnant water.	Teach children the importance of looking after the pond life.  During times of reduced rainfall, refill pond to desired water levels for wildlife. Get some pond plants to oxygenate the water.	Part of health and safety briefing talk about how to respect pond life.  Part of daily risk assessment, children can help to replenish water to maintain levels.	Forest School leader  Children  Premises staff	<b>Year 1</b> Watch and record pond life.  Maintain water levels and teach children about environments.  <b>Year 2</b> Take into account information gathered and use this to maintain the health of the pond.  <b>Year 3</b> As year 2
Ground cover	Den building.  Collecting natural materials from ground.	Footfall will have an impact on wildlife areas.  Rotate areas that are used for collecting. Teach the importance of caring for environment.	Mark out designated areas for den use.	Forest School leader  Children  Adult	<b>Year 1</b> Use designated areas for den building, teach appropriate knots to use on trees.  <b>Year 2</b> Look at other areas in school that maybe used too.  <b>Year 3</b> May need to move areas in Dell.
Camp fire	Vegetation in and above designated area.	Ensure that safety is of paramount importance and ignite fire for a purpose.	Keep only in designated area.	Forest School leader  Premises Staff	<b>Year 1</b> Locate camp fire in the most appropriate area.  <b>Year 2</b> Turn over resurface area.  <b>Year 3</b> As year 2.
Look at other areas in school to mark out for future use	Daily use of Dell will have a footfall impact on growth in Dell.	Look to give the Dell a rest from use and allow for regrowth.		Forest School leader  Head Teacher  Premises Staff	<b>Year 1</b> Identify Flora and Fauna in Dell. Look at habitats.  <b>Year 2</b> Look at how this area can be adapted.  <b>Year 3</b> Use the area to allow Dell to rest and regrow.

## **The Countryside Code**

### **Respect other people**

Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors. Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available.

### **Protect the natural environment**

Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home. Keep dogs under effective control.

### **Enjoy the outdoors**

Plan ahead and be prepared.  
Follow advice and local signs.

**Full details of the Countryside Code can be found online.**

## First Aid Certificate

A copy of Joanne Richardson's first aid certificate is available on request.

## Provision

At Belmont Academy we aim to provide our EYFS and KS1 pupils with weekly access to Forest School. Each class will receive pm provision that will be rotated to give children the opportunity to experience the changing seasons.

## Forest School Rules

In the first Forest School session, children become involved with the setting and understanding of the Forest school rules to ensure their safety. At the beginning of every session a quick recap of the rules is reinforced by the children and with laminate cues.

## Rules

### The Dell

- Forest school is for all, we must look after the natural environment Flora and Fauna.
- We must look after each other. Treat others how you want to be treated.
- We must look after ourselves.
- We must look after ourselves some plants trees have thorns.
- Stinging nettles cause discomfort beware.
- We must listen to rules they are for everyone.
- If you need help you call out 'I need you'.
- If an adult calls '123, where are you' you must call back so we know where you are answer 'Here I am'.
- If the Forest School leader calls 'Back to base' you return to the fire circle seating as soon as possible.
- We will respect the environment around us.
- 'No lick' don't lick your fingers.
- 'No pick' don't pick anything on a living tree or plant.
- Collect natural materials only from the ground or loose from a tree.
- Habitats must be left how you found them.
- If we are quiet we observe more creatures.
- Kneel at the pond, don't throw anything in the pond.

### Camp Fire

- Base camp is the focus point of Forest School starting and ending sessions.
- Entering the fire circle is only allowed from outside the seating area.
- The fire circle will be named 'Tablecloth' to help identify the danger of entering the fire circle.
- Fires will not be lit until this rule is adhered to.
- Belongings must stay outside the fire circle.
- The Forest School leader will be the one to invite individuals into the fire circle.
- Use 'The respect position' at the fire pit.

### Clothing

- It's not inappropriate weather it is unsuitable clothes.
- We dress and undress in school.
- Clothing for outdoors in warm weather long sleeves, long trousers, strong closed toed shoes.
- Clothing for outdoors in the cold weather lots of thin layers, warm socks, long warm trousers, long sleeved warm jacket coat, hat, scarf tucked in coat, gloves.
- Clothing for wet weather clothes long under clothes, waterproof all in one, welly boots.
- Spare clothes will be available if you get wet.
- All clothes named.

### Climbing

- Make sure you check the branch before you stand on it.
- Climb on branches thicker than your arm.

- Only climb as high as the adult allows.
- If you feel unsure then stop.
- You got up there you must try to get yourself down.
- If you get tired come down or rest.

## **Tools**

- Only 1 tool will be used at a time.
- Tools must always be carried in their protective cases when walking round with them.
- Tool use will only be instructed by The Forest School leader.
- Initial assessments knife use will be age and stage of student and carried out by Forest School leader with the use of a potato peeler and carrots, initial assessment assessing listening skills and manipulation.
- Further tool use will be 1-1 with Early years and 1-2 with key stage 1.
- Forest School assistants will only give supervision to stop and put tools down safely waiting for Forest School leader direction.
- Tools must always be returned their designated area/box when not in use.
- Everyone must conform to the 'Safe Working distance' for older students or 'Safety bubble' for younger students whilst using tools. The Safe Working Distance is an arm's length plus the length of the tool that is being used.
- If two people are working with tools next to each other the Safe Working Distance will double.
- If you get tired stop!!

## **Tarps and ropes**

- Use tarpaulin and ropes in designated areas.
- An adult must be present.
- Check that branches are strong enough to take, hold up tarp.
- Use coloured rope make sure it is seen well.
- Don't leave hanging rope tie it appropriately with knots.
- When put away fold tarp and rope to be safe.

It is important that the adults involved try to help children understand the importance of these rules, and support children in understanding that Forest School will become too dangerous if these rules aren't followed, which may mean that Forest School sessions have to end.

## **Staff and helpers at Forest School**

*Forest School leader at Belmont Academy:*

Mrs Joanne Richardson (Nursery Nurse - NNEB)

Forest School OCN Level 3 in Forest School leadership

First Aid and Outdoor First Aid

*Forest School Assistants at Belmont Academy:*

Susan Smith (Teaching Support)

Nasima Ahmed (Teaching Support)

## **Responsibilities of the Forest School leader:**

- To plan and lead all Forest School activities.
- To ensure that planned activities are within the capabilities of the children taking part, amending plans to provide an inclusive curriculum.
- To take responsibility for behaviour management during Forest School sessions (in line with the school's Behaviour Management policy)
- To have an up to date Outdoor First Aid Qualification.
- To ensure that all participants follow the Clothing Policy.
- To carry out daily risk assessments as described in the Risk Assessment Policy.
- To assist with the toileting of children if they request help.
- To ensure personal medication for pupils including asthma inhalers and epi-pens are carried to each Forest School session.
- To ensure all Forest School policies are regularly reviewed and that review is informed by observations and developing knowledge of the Forest School setting.

## **Forest School Assistants at Belmont Academy:**

Forest School is an exploration of experiential learning for the participants in an environment where they can be in control of their learning and experiences as far as possible. We strongly advise adult helpers to try not to direct children too much or demonstrate how to do things, but to get involved and extend their learning if they are happy for you to do so.

**Adult helpers are there to encourage positive behaviours, respect for the environment, each other and the tools they use.**

## **Responsibilities of the Forest School Assistants:**

- To understand and adhere to the core principles of Forest School.
- To take an active role in Forest School activities and assist with behaviour management.
- To assist the Forest School leader in ensuring equipment meets safety standards and to report any concerns about the state of equipment immediately.
- To assist the Forest School leader in teaching children to maintain their own and others' health and safety.
- To report accidents or hazards to the Forest School leader immediately.
- To take responsibility for making themselves aware of safety issues, such as the whereabouts of resources, first aid kit.
- To ensure that they wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear.

## **Responsibilities of the children:**

- To take personal responsibility for their own safety as well as the safety of others.
- To listen to and follow information and instructions given to them.
- To bring appropriate clothing into school to enable them to take part in the Forest School sessions.

## **Forest School Session**

Forest School is carried out with an adult to child ratio of at least 1:8, but additional adult support will be provided where appropriate for children who have disability or SEN needs. When using tools, a definitive adult to child ratio is determined, please see section on tool policies. A separate activity risk assessment will be carried out for each activity, when any hazards associated with that activity are at risk of causing harm, ratios for each activity will be determined by the type of activity, the competence of the children and the level of risk involved. All Staff are first aid trained. All staff and adults involved in Forest Schools, are required to sign and date a form to show that they have read this handbook, appropriate risk assessments and understand to comply with the safety guidelines.

## Forest School Risk Assessment Health and Safety

### Statement

At Belmont Primary School, the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors is our primary concern. The following policies within this handbook are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them. They are the minimum requirements for the safe running of Forest Schools.

### Procedure

Forest Schools is held on the school premises, within the nature area named 'The Dell', and is attended by children from the school. It is covered by the London Borough of Bexley School's liability Insurance, which also covers the main school.

Public Liability Insurance: this information is available from the school office. Insurance is provided by the London South East Academy Trust which the school is a part of.

The Forest School leader is responsible for the safe running of Forest Schools therefore, has a duty of care for the children. However all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe. Before a session commences all staff involved in the sessions have access to activity plans and risk assessments associated with the activities. A full and comprehensive site risk assessment will be conducted prior to the visit pm. This will be done by the premises staff in the morning of session and Forest School leader will use this information to assess the safety of the session. Individual generic risk assessments will be used for the use of tools and some activities/actions.

Risks can be minimised, but they cannot be eliminated altogether, and health and safety concerns need to be balanced against the potential benefits of any activity. Children of 3 and above will be insured to use tools once fully assessed of capability before use. Children, young people and adults will suffer the occasional bumps, cuts and bruises which are a part of everyday life. The application of common sense will ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be, whilst enjoying all the physical and intellectual challenges of Forest School.

### Site Risk Assessment

Before a site is used a risk assessment will be carried out by a Forest School leader. The site risk assessment will be approved by Mrs S Duff (EYFS Leader) and updated as and when there are any permanent or seasonal changes to the site which are not recorded on daily site assessment below.

### Daily site risk assessment

A daily site risk assessment will be carried out by site team before the site is used to ensure that there are no changes to the site which could cause harm this will include a visual check immediately prior to every session. This should be taken with extra caution following high winds and other bad weather. It should be carried out by the Forest School leader who will make the decision whether PPE should be worn when carrying out checks. Following the daily site risk assessment the FS leader will carry out anything that is needed to make the site safe (e.g. remove any hazards, mark off any unsafe areas). At the same time will consider specific circumstances which make it appropriate to cancel a Forest School Session.

### Activity risk assessment

When planning activities for Forest Schools, any hazards associated with that activity, that are at risk of causing harm, should be considered. These should be recorded on an activity risk assessment with suitable control measures taken to control and minimise the risk. Due to the nature of Forest Schools the children may come up with a new activity during a session and therefore reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the activity is safe. An activity risk assessment form will be completed a.s.a.p. following that session. Ongoing risk assessments will take place at various times during a visit – this normally consists of judgements and decisions made as the need arises, which will then be recorded after the visit.

## First Aid

A small First aid kit is accessible to the adults. In addition to this a full emergency bag is on site. Access to the emergency bag is permitted only to the Forest School leader and other teaching assistants not to volunteers, visitors or children.

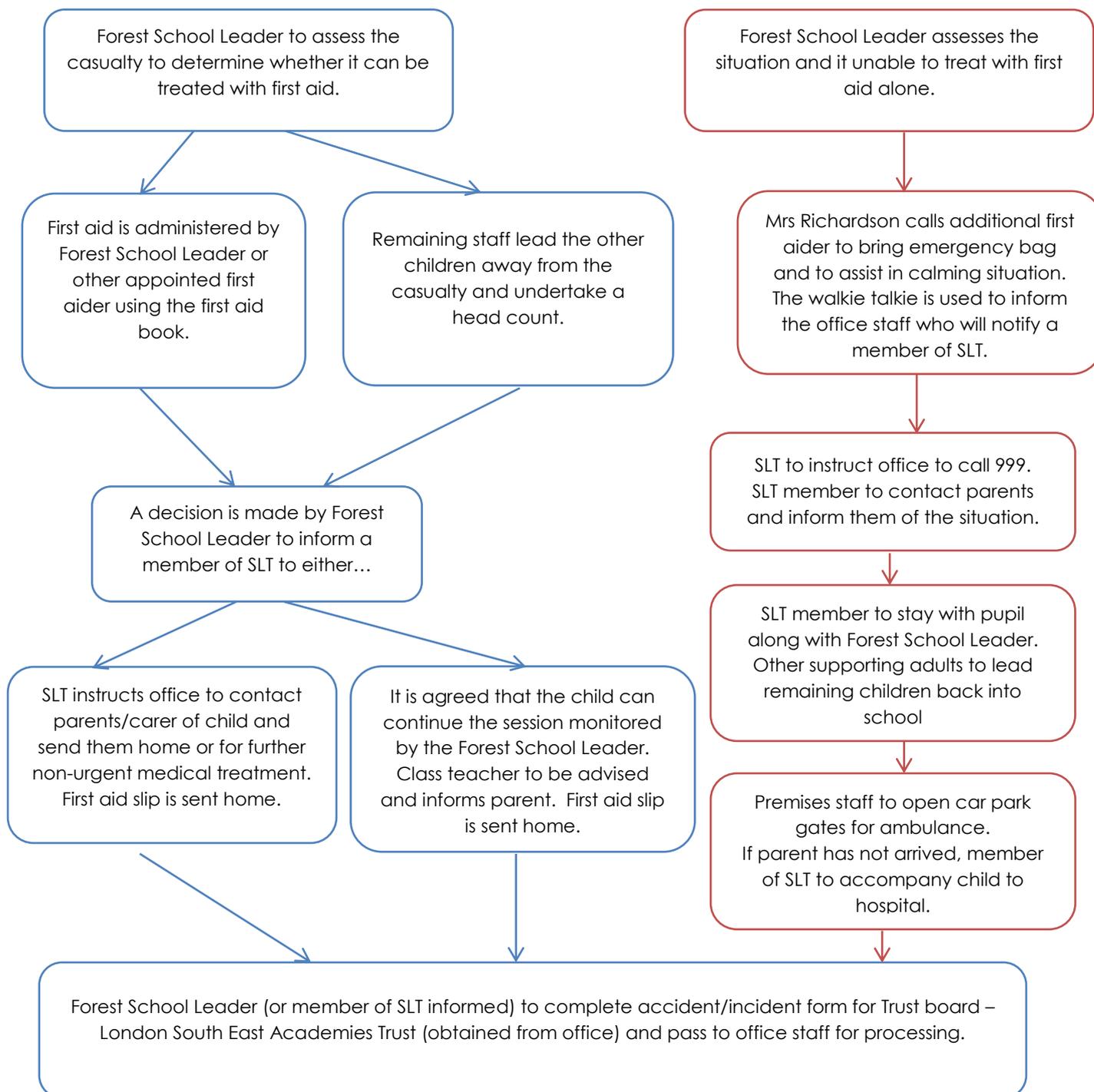
<p>The Emergency Bag contains the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Aid Kit (see contents in column right)</li> <li>• Burns Kit (cling film/scissors/latex gloves)</li> <li>• Survival bivvy bag.</li> <li>• Blanket and Roll mat.</li> <li>• Fire blanket</li> <li>• Torch.</li> <li>• Small tarp.</li> <li>• Tissues and paper towels in plastic bag.</li> <li>• Hand wash gel.</li> <li>• Baby wipes.</li> <li>• Fresh water in container.</li> <li>• Spare socks, waterproofs/trousers and hat. (size appropriate for group)</li> <li>• Sugary snack.</li> <li>• Emergency action plan and incident book.</li> <li>• Casualty monitoring card.</li> <li>• Emergency 999 script.</li> <li>• Sun cream (with opened date recorded on)</li> </ul>	<p>Full First Aid kit will contain;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instant ice packs.</li> <li>Antiseptic wipes.</li> <li>Eye irrigation solution sachets.</li> <li>Jumbo plasters.</li> <li>Medium plasters.</li> <li>Small plasters.</li> <li>Triangular bandages.</li> <li>Large self-adhesive wound dressings.</li> <li>Small self-adhesive wound dressings.</li> <li>Crepe bandages.</li> <li>Pairs of protective gloves.</li> <li>Eye pads.</li> <li>Roll micro pore tape.</li> <li>CPR face shield.</li> <li>Foil Blanket.</li> </ul>
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The Forest School leader will ensure this is adequately stocked and replenished. In addition to this a summary of medical information relating to each child and/or specific care plans are carried by the Forest School leader. Individual pupil inhalers and epi-pens and medical resources will accompany the children to the Dell and will be held by the Forest School leader or assistant. Staff will be advised of any specific medical information they should be aware of. The leader will also ensure a fully charged walkie talkie and mobile phone is available in the area during each session.

## Emergency First Aid Procedures

In the event of an emergency, the following will happen:

- Emergency whistle will be blown by the Forest School leader.
- Children will be asked to put down any tools or equipment by supervising adults.
- Forest School leader will assess the situation and remove any hazards.



## Daily Operating Procedures

### What to do before the session

Before a session takes place the Forest School leader with support from premises staff will carry out a daily risk assessment of the area and will take any necessary action to ensure the site is safe before use.

The Forest School leader will list resources required for the session on the planning. The resources will be checked out by the Forest School leader using the check list and all tools will be checked before use by the Forest School leader following the tool policy procedure. All tools and resources are left in locked storage until required for use at the beginning of a session. Sometimes children are encouraged to help carry and transport resources safely to the session. The Forest School leader will provide activity risk assessments (see risk assessments) to all staff and volunteers at the session, to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of any hazards associated with an activity and the measures in place to control the risk. Before the session staff and volunteers will be briefed on the intended structure of the session and their responsibilities.

### Transport at the beginning of the session

When on the school site, children will be brought to the Dell after registration in class. Pupil to staff ratios need to be considered by the Forest Leader particularly for classes where there are pupils with SEND including physical disability or a visual impairment (class teachers can support with this). The class adults will advise the Forest School leader of any changes in expected numbers. The children will change into waterproofs and appropriate footwear. The beginning of the session will follow a similar pattern each time (coming together time to recap rules and boundaries).

### What to do during the session

It is the responsibility of ALL adults to make on-going risk assessments. Regular head counts are carried out and if there is 'any' doubt the children will be brought back together.

### Emergency Fire and Lock down procedures

The school office will contact The Forest School leader by walkie talkie informing her of the need for Fire procedure or Lock down procedure. The Forest School leader will call with the command **"Procedure"** when all adults hear this they must make sure the children put down what they are using and quickly and calmly go straight to the Dell exit where we will vacate straight away and go to the designated safety areas. Fire drill we will go to the Key stage 2 playground lock down we must return to the class from the back entrance.

### What to do after the session

At the end of the session children are called by the Forest School leader. Children will be encouraged by supporting adults to work together to return resources safely, to a central location, ready for returning to storage. Children will then group in the Forest School seating area, where a head count will take place. A reflection session or game will take place, sometimes followed by a song. The adults will then escort the children back to their classroom. The children will change back into uniform.

The remaining staff will stay onsite to gather resources and take back to the locked storage, where they will be checked back in using the check list by the Forest School leader, who will be advised immediately if any tools/resources are missing and go and check the area.

### Evaluation for next session;

During and following a session, Forest School assistants will ensure they provide their observational notes to the Forest School leader to enable them to plan, according to the children's needs, for the next session.

## **Cancellation Policy**

### **Statement**

Forest School session will only take place when all safety aspects have been assessed. Taking this into consideration there may be times when sessions will need to be cancelled as safety is of paramount importance.

### **Weather**

Following the Forest Schools ethos of *'there is no such thing as bad weather, only Inappropriate clothing!'* children will need to be provided with appropriate clothing for the weather/time of year. Further information will be shared on this later in the handbook.

However, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather including:

- High winds of 25mph or more determined to pose risk by the MET office online.
- Extreme temperature determined by a MET office amber weather warning.
- Extreme cold of below zero degrees. A decision will be made on the day as to whether a session will be cancelled. If it is deemed viable, the session will go ahead provided that the children are appropriately dressed and risk assessments have been carried out. It is likely that in this instance, the activities will ensure children are active and the session will be shorter.

### **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 as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, 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.

## **Safeguarding**

### **Statement**

Reference should be made to Belmont Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (updated November 2018). The policy should be applied to the Forest School situation. The full Safeguarding policy should be read alongside this and referred to for further information. The purpose of Belmont Academy's safeguarding policy is to ensure every child who is a registered pupil at our school is safe and protected from harm. All staff, volunteers and visitors will be asked to read our Safeguarding Policy (please refer to full safeguarding policy available on our website or from the school office) which will give clear direct about the expected behaviour and our legal responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children at our school. It is the responsibility of every member of staff, volunteer and regular visitor to our school to ensure that they carry out the requirements of this procedure and, at all times, work in a way that will safeguard and promote the welfare of all of the pupils at this school. When new staff, volunteers or regular visitors join our school they will be informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place and will be given a leaflet which clearly outlines the school's expectations and Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy DSL's. The leaflet includes the school's procedures for reporting a safeguarding concern.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Lucy Childs (Head of School)

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads: Tom Lynch (Deputy Head), Kate Law (Inclusion Lead), Tanya Knight (Leader of Pastoral Care)

### **Procedure**

#### **What to look for**

Every new member of staff or volunteer will have an induction period that will include essential safeguarding information. This programme will include basic safeguarding information relating to signs and symptoms of abuse, how to manage a disclosure from a child, how to record and issues of confidentiality. The induction will also remind staff and volunteers of their responsibility to safeguard all children at our school and the remit of the role of the Senior Designated Professional.

#### **Safeguarding at Forest Schools**

Through the long term process of Forest Schools, we aim to build trust and meaningful relationships between the adults and the children. Therefore, the nature of Forest Schools means that disclosures are more likely. Any volunteer or member of staff who finds themselves with children telling them something which concerns them should follow the process set out in the school's safeguarding policy and should refer the matter directly to the DSL or in her absence, a deputy DSL.

#### **Boundaries**

Boundaries are established with the children at the beginning of a session. The Dell area is enclosed from the rest of the school and is only accessible via a gate that will be closed/locked after entry. Children are involved in the risk management process of establishing boundaries and safe areas to go within the Dell.

#### **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.

## High ratios of adults and role of the adult

The high ratios of adults to children at Forest Schools (minimum 1:8) ensure that children are well supervised and supported in their learning and development. Adults are expected to spread out in the Forest School area and be able to see children but not impose on children. Use 1,2, 3, where are you?

On the school site due to the size of the Dell area the overall size of the groups need to be limited to 16 children with 2-4 adults. This is not only to allow for physical safety but also to allow the forest school ethos to have maximum effect.

## Staff

The staff code of conduct will be given to all staff during induction. This clearly outlines the school's expectation in terms of their professional conduct with children. All staff will have access to and be expected to know our school's Code of Conduct and policy for positive handling (please refer to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for positive handling). There will be occasion when some form of physical contact is inevitable, for example if a child has an accident or is hurt or is in a situation of danger to themselves or others around them. However, at all times the agreed policy for safe restraint must be adhered to and this can be found in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

At Forest Schools if visitors, volunteers or parent helpers are working with children they will do so in sight of the Forest School leader or other members of staff. At no point will a volunteer, parent helper or visitor be left alone with a child unless they have had DBS clearance and this is recorded in the office. Adults will be deployed within the Dell area but will ensure that they are visible at all times.

Safeguarding – social media (please refer to the following policies:

E-safety Policy

ICT policy

Staff Code of Conduct

Safeguarding Visitor Protocol please refer to:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Safeguarding lost or missing child please refer to:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Safeguarding GDPR compliance including confidentiality please refer to:

GDPR policy.

Confidentiality policy.

PREVENT Duty please refer to the school's PREVENT statement.

## Covid 19

### Statement

As Forest School is an opportunity to be in the outside environment and promotes well-being. It is a positive experience and with the government acknowledging that '*the risk of transmission outdoors is significantly lower,*' they suggest that people '*move activity outdoors if you can*'. Forest School sessions can be risk assessed and procedures implemented to reduce risk.

### Procedure

Forest school sessions will only take place with a maximum of 15 pupils within their year group bubbles. Precautions will be taken and a clear Risk Benefit assessment made to be adhered to within the session.

- Changing into own forest school clothes in the classroom or changing shed
- Access to the Dell from outside the building through the field
- Use of toilet in the house (cleaned after each session)
- Pupils take their own drink bottles
- Use of hand sanitizer in Dell, hand washing when returning
- Any pupil experiencing symptoms, Forest School leader to inform office to advise where to isolate
- When using the fire pit area children to socially distance on benches
- First aid administered with PPE

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## Equality

### Statement

Belmont Academy is has a fully inclusive ethos and strives to promote equality in all dimensions of school life; irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

### Procedure

In Forest Schools we aim to build an inclusive ethos by;

- Using reflection – talking about feelings, emotions. Teaching children to become emotionally literate and aware of feelings, becoming aware of who we are.
- Setting up opportunities for children to work together; developing social skills, sharing resources, trying new activities.
- Ensuring that activities and resources are accessible for all.
- Ensuring that the area is accessible for all users. The Forest School area (The Dell) has clear pathways through allowing wheelchair users or children with less mobility access to the area.
- Allowing the children to choose to take their learning in a way that is appropriate and individual to them. Giving them time and space to do this.

**Please refer to the full Equal opportunities policy on the school website**

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## Behaviour

### Statement

Forest School is an opportunity for children to be at one with nature and this can allow for the calming effect of nature. There are also activities available that can cause great risk to their welfare if calm behaviour is not maintained. Forest school has clear rules and boundaries which are relayed in Safety briefings at the beginning of sessions to allow a calm atmosphere for all.

**The Schools Behaviour Policy to be read alongside this handbook.**

### Behaviour management in Forest School

- Clear expectations of abiding by rules and boundaries will be delivered in safety briefings.
- Clear expectations of abiding by rules and boundaries will be delivered during teaching of activities.
- Staff will maintain vigilance of children at all times and deal with areas of behaviour sooner rather than later.
- If expected rules of behaviour are not maintained staff must reinforce the rules and expectations.
- If there is a threat of danger to self or others staff must stop this straight away and remove them from activity to talk about dangers of actions. Forest School leader will support if needed. Steps from Behaviour Policy will be observed.
- Unless there is a threat of danger to self and others use following steps to allow children to adapt their behaviour. (Step 1 "I have asked you" reinforce expected behaviour. Step 2 "Now I am telling you" firmer tone ask them what they should be doing. If they can tell you let them try to have a chance to change behaviour. Step 3 Now "Time out" at fire circle Forest School leader will ask child about rules and expectations or reinforce rules expectations of behaviour. Child will be given an opportunity to restore behaviour and show they can keep to the expectations of behaviour. When adults see this change staff will reinforce with praise the child's efforts.
- Staff to remain calm and clear and always gain support from Forest School leader.
- If after all the steps child does not maintain levels of behaviour this will be reported under the steps in the behaviour policy.
- Staff must be good role models and all adhere to the above steps and no behaviour will stop any child from making the most of The Dell.

**Full Behaviour Management policy on the school website school information or on request**

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## Confidentiality

### Statement

In practice there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our school. We strive to keep a balance between ensuring the safety, wellbeing and protection of our pupils and staff. It is, however, essential that our school community gives due regard to confidentiality regarding school matters. The nature of Forest School children may be more relaxed and have more opportunities to speak to staff this can give way to confidentiality issues.

### Procedure

- When talking with pupils, it is important for you to be aware of maintaining your professional boundaries.
- You must be clear to pupils that you cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when a pupil first begins to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue.
- Pupils should be warned that, if there is a safeguarding issue where the pupil (or others) is likely to be at risk of significant harm, you are under a duty to inform the Head of School (in her role as Safeguarding Officer), who may have to involve other agencies. It is important that each member of staff deals with this sensitively and explains to the pupil that they must inform the appropriate people who can help the child, but that they will only tell those who need to know in order to help.
- In all cases where you feel that you have to break confidentiality with the pupil, you must inform the pupil (unless there is a good reason not to inform them, e.g. risk of harm) and reassure them that their best interests will be maintained.
- In talking with pupils, you need to encourage them to talk to their parents/carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate.

**Please refer to, Equal Opportunities Policy, SEN policy and Anti Bullying Policy alongside this information available on school website school information or on request**

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## Child Protection

### Statement

We at Belmont Academy are committed to practice which protects children from harm. Staff, accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm. The safeguarding of children is everyone's business and schools have a responsibility under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The nature of Forest school can give opportunities for disclosure all staff must follow procedures set out in the Safeguarding and child protection policy.

### Procedure

- Understand that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. This means that at all times we must consider what is in the best interests of the child.
- All staff who have 1-1 contact will have extensive DBS checks.
- In the event that an accusation has been made against a member of staff must be reported to the Head of School to be investigated.
- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are confident to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure children know they can approach adults employed in the school if they are worried.
- If a disclosure takes place take note only what has been said or observed.
- You must report the concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Lucy Childs) or in her absence to a Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Claire Pettman, Kate Law, Tom Lynch or Tanya Knight) by completing a "Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form" which is a bright green form located in the school office, staff room.

**Please refer to Safeguarding and Child protection policy on the school website school information or on request**

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## Anti Bullying

### Statement

At Belmont Academy we are aware that pupils may be bullied in any school or setting and recognise that preventing, raising awareness and consistently responding to any cases of bullying should be a priority to ensure the safety and well-being of our pupils.

### Bullying definition

*Bullying is an act of aggression, causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to someone. It can be a physical act or emotional in nature, such as verbal abuse, making gestures, and exclusion. It is an abuse of power. It can be planned and organised, or it may be unintentional. It may be perpetrated by individuals or by groups of pupils.*

### Procedure

- A bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a pupil is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns
- This policy is closely linked with our Behaviour Management Policy, our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, our Code of Conduct and the school's aims, visions and values.

**Full policies: Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Peer-on-peer abuse policy Behaviour Management policy E-safety policy are available on the school website school information or on request**

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## GDPR

### Statement

Belmont Academy is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information. We take care to protect the privacy of our staff, pupils, parents and suppliers that communicate (online or offline) with us, in school, events, over the phone, through our mobile applications, websites and social media platforms.

### Procedure

We only collect information that we know we will genuinely use and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The type of information that we will collect on you, and you voluntarily provide to us.

**Full policy available on the school website school information or on request**

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## Social Media

### Statement

Forest school has many possibilities to use photographic images, which includes children using cameras to capture nature, Staff using cameras to capture child observations which may be used to display. These photos will be used with sensitivity and safety.

### Procedure

- We follow Government guidance for the use of photographs by using group photos in preference to individual photos.
- Using a pupil's name or their photo but not both and by not keeping photos when a child is no longer in school.
- We will seek specific permission from parents for use under the following circumstances
  - For photographs to be used in school publications which may also be used on the school website.
  - For photographs to be used for external publications (pupils named) including newspaper articles.
- School staff must only use school equipment, not personal e.g. their mobile phones, for taking photographs.
- Photographs will only be stored at school under the protection of the school network.

**Full E Safety policy available on the school website school information or on request**

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## Prevent Strategy

### Statement

The purpose of the Belmont Academy Prevent Strategy is to protect students from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and British values.

### Procedure

- Staff to be aware through training and policy what to look for.
- Enable learners to make a positive contribution.
- Safeguard young people.
- You must report the concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Lucy Childs) or in her absence to a Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Kate Law, Tom Lynch or Tanya Knight) by completing a "Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form" which is a bright green form located in the school office, staff room.

**Full Prevent Strategy policy available on the school website school information or on request**

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## Receiving visitors

### Statement

Forest School is a child led environment all adults must observe that the impact they have in this environment can have a negative effect on children. An adult who visits is there only to observe the wonderful nature of Forest School. You are stepping into a child's world of wonder, not an adult's world of direction. Be mindful of allowing children to submerge themselves into 'flow'.

### Procedure

- An adult must stand back observe the wonder of child led play.
- Staff will show you to a good standing point to watch and observe.
- Support for children will only be given by school staff only if and when needed.
- Allow children to find their own play do not direct.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors will not be permitted to take part in Forest School session as this increases the risk of transmission. This measure will be reviewed in line with DfE and wider government updates.

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## Toileting Policy

### Statement

As Forest School takes place outdoors and children will be suitably dressed for this environment. We want to ensure that children's experiences take into account all their needs a toileting procedure will help to ensure that toileting is taken into account as a specific need.

### Procedure

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before beginning a session, firstly to avoid too many trips during the session and to avoid having to take off all the waterproofs again! Adults and children are advised that tool use will be stopped during toilet visits due to the ratio of staff remaining.

Should a child need to go to the toilet during a session they will use the toilet facility in the house opposite dell and be escorted by assistant. If children are able they will escort themselves to the toilet with an adult watching from the Dell gate. If an adult needs to escort a child the Forest School leader will be informed.

If in the rare occasion a child should have a toileting accident on site, then the adult and child will advise the Forest School leader who will advise adults and children that tool use will be stopped whilst an adult leaves the site due to the ratio of staff remaining. The adult and child can return to the session when they are ready and advise the FS leader so that a usual session resumes.

In our 3 year management plan we will action the building of a toilet within the dell area to allow children to access toilet facilities independently.

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## Clothing policy

### Statement

As a school, we will endeavour to collect a bank of spare clothes and wellies and within EYFS, we have a set of waterproofs that can be worn by the children. However, it is expected that parents will provide their child with the necessary clothes (taken from the kit list below) to enable them to take part. The Forest School leader has the right to exclude any child they think is inappropriately dressed for Forest school activities.

### Procedure

Children will dress prior to Forest School session in class. It will be the responsibility of the class teacher that the parents have supplied clothing from the list provided and that children are appropriately dressed ready to go to the Dell. Not appropriately dressed will mean the child cannot attend the session.

### Winter

Vest or T-shirt  
Long sleeved top  
Hooded top / fleece or thick jumper  
Waterproof jacket  
Thick socks (thermal or two pairs of thin ones)  
Trousers  
Wellington boots  
Hat, gloves and scarf

### Summer

Long sleeved T-shirt or top  
Light trousers (Arms and legs must be covered in the woodland)  
Socks  
Trainers, sturdy shoes or Wellington boots. (Sandals, crocs and flip-flops are not suitable.)  
Sunhat

Parents are responsible for providing and applying their child's sunscreen before the start of the school day in line with the usual school practice. If insect repellent is required the same procedures will need to be followed.

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## **Personal Protective Equipment**

### **Policy Statement**

Each person attending and using our Forest School facilities will be provided and taught how and when to use the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) for the task. If a participant is unwilling to wear PPE they will be encouraged to do activities which don't require PPE.

### **Procedure**

- Participants will be taught the use of, and provided with correct PPE. These are all outlined in the tools procedures and the individual activities Risk Benefit Assessment.
- Staff must always model the correct use of PPE when engaging in activities.
- PPE will be checked before and after every session to ensure it is in correct working order, not broken, in date and not worn out.
- No jewellery should be worn apart from small studs and a watch (as per school policy)

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## **COSHH**

### **Statement**

The nature of Forest school may come into contact with biological agents, micro-organisms (bacteria and fungi) and external larger parasites (ticks and mosquitos) which may carry parasites that live in these hosts that may cause hazard to health.

### **Procedure**

Thorough site specific assessments the areas will be cleared or students will be warned of particular micro-organisms. The importance of the rule 'No licking' ensure children know the importance of looking after themselves from dangers digested. If first aid is administered for bites take into consideration the host hazard and take measures to ensure this information is given to class teacher and passed onto parent/carer. All safety checks will be made to ensure that fuel for camp fire is safe to burn.

**Full COSHH policy can be viewed online [HSE website](#)**

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## **Manual Handling**

### **Statement**

With guidance to staff on the safest way to lift or decide not to lift will reduce the risk of injury in the workplace. A number of practical things can be done to reduce the risks of injury from manual handling.

### **Procedure**

Employees must ensure that:

- They do not lift anything that they feel exceeds their capability.
- Seek help from others to support manual handling.
- Use equipment such as trolleys to transport heavy or awkward items.
- Make sure there is adequate space around you with nothing in the way.
- Adopt safety measures to lift safely.

**Full Manual handling policy with guidance can be found online at HSE website**

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## **Tool Handling and Equipment policy**

### **Statement**

Belmont Academy promotes the use of tools den building equipment by our participants during our Forest School sessions. Every participant will be taught how to use the tools and equipment according to the specific procedure. Correct tool and equipment use will always be modelled and reinforced by Forest School leader. Staff will supervise the safe use of tools and equipment once Forest School leader feels the participants are competent to do so. Extensive risk assessments and safety procedures have been put in place to reduce risk. Thorough risk assessments will take place before during and after activities.

### **Procedures**

#### **Ropes and cords**

Students will be shown how to use ropes and cords for different purposes to build dens, use for hammocks and pulling logs. Teaching appropriate knots for specific uses. Safety is paramount and supervision by staff stepping in if necessary to support. Staff will ensure that knots will take the appropriate weight and at a height not to cause injury to others. Knots and cords will be bright colours to be seen by others. Once used they will be stored away in appropriate storage container.

#### **Rope and cord rules**

- Only used for a purpose.
- Never used on people.
- Only tied to trees that will take the weight of hammock.
- Tied at a safe level above head height.
- Not left on floor can cause slip/trip.
- Wind rope up and store away safely when not in use.

#### **Tool usage**

Participants will only be involved in using sharp tools once the Forest School leader deems that they are confident and competent to do so. Before knife usage an assessment will be made with the use of potato peelers and carrots to teach the basic safety rules. During this activity the Forest School leader can assess manipulation and listening skills leading onto use of sharp tools. No child whatever age will move onto knives until the Forest School leader can ensure this basic use of tool safety is adhered to. Tools use will be assessed on ability not age.

#### **Supervision**

When tools such as knives and small saws are used the 4-5 year olds participants will always be appropriately supervised on a 1-1 ratio. 5-7 year olds 1-2 ratio. Tools will only be used in tool/camp fire area.

With older groups, never more than 1-4 ratio tools will be used after individual risk assessments of each child have been carried out to determine the degree of supervision necessary. At this stage staff members will continually observe safe tool usage. Children will always be in sight of an adult. Proper instructions will have been given and safety issues discussed prior to the use of any tools. Where appropriate, participants will use safety and protective gear such as gloves etc.

Staff will be taught how to use the tools in the same way as children to enable them to understand the enjoyment that can be achieved as well as risk. Staff can then with the practical and knowledge of risks and risk benefits will be able to supervise and stop tool usage where necessary. Staff can only supervise not teach tool usage.

Specific tool policies are in place for each tool that may be used within Forest Schools this information has been used to make extensive risk assessments and risk benefit documents. This information must be read and reread if necessary ensure safe tool use.

## **Tool rules:**

Children are taught these and they are reinforced at the beginning of each session.

- Ask an adult before you take a tool from the tool area.
- You must have a purpose for your tool.
- You must make sure you choose a safe working area within the tool area with nobody near you. (2 arms and a tool length this is the safety bubble)

## **Transportation**

- Small tools will be transported to the site every day in a locked storage box. Larger tools are stored in a locked storage container. They will then be moved to The Dell daily either by hand or in a trolley/wheel barrow.
- The tool box will either be carried or wheeled to The Dell depending on its weight.
- All students and accompanying adults will be taught how to transport tools in the correct way.

## **Maintenance**

- Visual checks will be carried out by Forest School leader every time a tool is checked out prior to use.
- Visual checks should also be carried out again at the start and end of any sessions.
- Tools must be cleaned and sharpened after every session when necessary.
- A tool log will be used to log tools in and out for safety purposes.

## **Use**

- Only 1 tool will be used at a time.
- Safety briefings will be given to participants either as a group or individually on proper tool use.
- Tools must always be carried in their protective cases when walking round with them.
- Tools must always be returned their designated area/box when not in use.
- Bladed tools are always kept in a designated tool box which is locked when not in use.
- Everyone must conform to the 'Safe Working distance' for older students or 'Safety bubble' for younger students whilst using tools. The Safe Working Distance is an arm's length plus the length of the tool that is being used.
- If two people are working with tools next to each other the Safe Working Distance will double.
- People must not enter the safe working distance of another participant whilst they are using a tool.
- Forest School leaders are the only people that will instruct in tool use.
- Forest School Assistants can only assist in tool use.
- Other adults on site can help supervise tool use and must stop any unsafe behaviour, notifying the Forest School leader immediately so a refresher of correct use can be demonstrated.
- Covered shoes must be worn by all people on site.

## **Procedures specific to each tool**

### **Axe**

- Use the Axe for a specific purpose and only split green wood with it.
- Only used for carving and splitting down the grain.
- Don't wear gloves when using an Axe.
- Always chop downwards on to either a wooden chopping block or a flat wooden surface.
- Never put the axe blade into the ground.
- Always wear covered shoes for safety purposes.

- Only use axes with your body positioned sideways so the blade will swing past your body if you miss the wood or it slips. Forest School leader should model this position when using axes.
- Always keep your hand/fingers of the opposite hand you use to hold the axe completely out of the way of the axe.
- Always keep the cover on the axe when it is not being used or it is being transported from place to another. Always return the axe immediately after use.
- Stop when tired and have a rest

### Bill hook

- Only use for a purpose.
- Use to split wood down the grain.
- Only use on tool bench.
- Stand legs apart to balance body.
- Use in pairs with a mallet to hit the back of billhook.
- Hold billhook with both hands one on handle other on blunt side on the other end.
- Participant holding billhook will give verbal instruction to partner with mallet (light, medium, or heavy hit) strike billhook in the middle with mallet.

### Bow Saws/Pruning Saws

- These saws are used for cutting round wood or for felling small trees.
- Select the right saw for the right job.
- Only used for sawing across grain.
- Younger participants must ask FSL help to remove saw blade safety guards. Older more experienced participants should be able to do this independently.
- A glove can be used on the hand that is not sawing.
- When starting to saw with a Bow Saw always put the hand that isn't holding the saw through the gap between the blade and the handle then firmly support the wood being cut.
- Once the blade is 1cm into the wood the supporting hand can come out from the gap between the blade and handle and be used to hold the wood still from a safe distance from the blade.
- Pruning Saws are good for use in confined spaces. Only cut on the pull and keep gloved hand a safe distance from the blade when starting to cut.
- If cutting near to the ground then always adopt the 'Respect Position'.
- If necessary, work in groups to hold wood firm whilst cutting.
- Ensure the proximity around you is clear of people before you start cutting.
- Use the full length of the saw and keep it straight whilst cutting.
- Never move around with an unguarded saw.
- Only cut wood.
- Stop if tired and have a rest

### Knives

- Knives are always introduced for a specific purpose.
- Used only for carving and whittling down the grain.
- Belmont Academy use Mora Sheath Knives with bright orange handles so they are easily visible.
- Knives are only introduced when the Forest School leader thinks the group has demonstrated that they are ready. Using potato peelers with carrots to assess manipulation and listening skills
- When passing knives it should be either sheathed or by passing the handle first with the blade facing upwards.
- Always put your knife in its sheath when it is being moved round the site or not being used.
- Knives must be returned to the locked box when they are finished with.
- Place elbows on knees and lean forward when whittling or sit down and whittle to the side of the body to avoid any possible contact with the femoral artery.
- Never cut anything that someone else is holding.
- Only cut away from your body.

- Do not cut if there is someone within the safe working distance, safety bubble (arm's length plus the length of the tool).
- Do not point the knife at someone.
- Never stick the knife into the ground.
- Don't cut any other material other than wood unless Forest School leader says you can.
- Stop if tired and have a rest

### **Loppers/secateurs**

- Only use loppers to small branches.
- Never cut branches thicker than your own thumb.
- Carry loppers in closed position and keep them pointed towards the ground.
- Do not stab the loppers into anything.
- Never stick the loppers into the ground.

### **Spades**

- Carry spades by the side of your body with the blade pointing down with a slight tilt forwards.
- Always keep one foot on the ground and one foot on the spade when digging. Never put both feet on the spade and balance.
- Wear covered shoes when using a spade.
- When not in use, lay spade on the ground with the blade pointing downwards.

### **Mallet**

- Mallets are used to hit the back of a billhook or axe for splitting wood.
- Mallets can also be used for hitting wooden steaks into the ground or greenwood projects.
- Keep fingers on the handle and keep the other hand a safe distance away from the object you are hitting to avoid injury.

### **Palm drill**

- Used for a purpose.
- Drill holes into wood only.
- Carry with handle holding down into body.
- Use on wood bench to drill into wood.
- Hold in palm of hand.
- Place body to the side of bench.
- Return to tool bench when not in use.

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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## Fire Safety

### Policy Statement

The whole experience of building, lighting, maintaining and using a camp fire is a very important part of the Forest School experience. Having fires with our groups of participants is a beneficial experience but the inevitable risks must not be taken into consideration. By following our sensible procedures all of our participants can have a safe, enjoyable experience. Fires will only be lit by the Forest School leader following this safety policy when the children are ready and are clear on the expectations regarding behaviour and safety.

### Procedure

#### Construction:

- Wind direction and strength.
- No combustible materials nearby/ overhanging branches.
- Soil type – ensure not too peaty.
- Clear the area of any materials (leaf litter, tinder, deadwood etc.) that could cause the fire to spread.
- Construct a 1m<sup>2</sup> fire site edged with green logs.
- Place seating benches (made from logs and planks), a minimum of 2m away from the fire site in the middle.
- Dig out 6 inches of soil and fill the bottom of the pit with sharp sand up to 4 inches deep. In-bed the freestanding fire-pit in to the sand.
- Choose the appropriate fire lay for the activity.

### Safety

- No hair to be loose – must be tied back and up.
- No jewellery should be worn apart from small studs and a watch (as per school policy)
- Gloves should not be worn when placing materials/lighting the fire.
- Scarves or loose clothing should be tucked in.
- Kneeling in the respect position.
- Seating in the line of smoke will be avoided. Children will be taught to turn their heads if smoke is coming in their direction.

### Lighting Fires

- Fires will be lit by the Forest School leader only and will only be lit by students once the Leader is confident that the group is ready.
- Fires will be lit using fire strikers which will be safely stored away. Fire will be ignited with safe lighter paper. No flammable liquids will be used.
- The fire will never be left unattended.
- The fire will be lit in the designated fire area only which is set up for this purpose. The area must be fit for purpose, i.e. cleared of any dried leaves, wood or porous rock which might ignite the fire further and explode.
- A fire pit/bowl will be used to prevent the spread of fire.
- A Kelly kettle will be used within the fire-pit area and be used instead of a fire
- Fire safety equipment will be nearby whenever a fire/Kelly kettle are used

## **The correct safety resources and first aid kits will be accessible.**

- Ensure the whole group listens to the safety talk, including all adults and accompanying staff that have not heard the talk before.
- Establish safe movement protocols for entrance and exit of the fire site area. Participants must never walk across the fire or round the inner fire area. If they wish to move round the fire site they must do so via the outside of the seating and then re-enter the inner zone at one of the entrance/exit points.
- Only the Forest School leader should enter fire circle. Anyone entering uninvited by the Forest School leader will be reminded with the 'tablecloth' warning.
- Those invited by the Forest School leader to enter fire circle must adopt the respect position.
- Demonstrate the correct kneeling position (the Respect Position).
- Point of fire buckets and First Aid kit.
- Firmly reinforce established protocols throughout.
- Involve the group in the ongoing safety of each other.
- Ensure everybody in the group understands the rules by questioning them. Using laminate flash cards to ensure auditory and visual rules are clear.

## **Extinguishing Fires**

- Fires must always be extinguished correctly to prevent injuries from a super-hot cloud of steam or hot ash.
- Water must be poured over the fire slowly from a bucket, kettle or watering can keeping your face and body away from the fire and steam. You must stand up wind to the fire when you do this.
- Start pouring water from the outside and slowly spiral in to the centre of the fire until it is completely extinguished. This process can take up to 2 full buckets of water.
- Unburned fuel can be removed and completely extinguished then stored safely for reuse on another day.
- Stir the water and ashes to ensure the fire is 100% extinguished.

## **Fire Site Rules**

- The bench seating (logs and planks) are for seating purposes only. Under no circumstances should anybody walk, jump, balance etc. on them.
- When entering or leaving the inner fire area participants must not walk, hop or jump over the seat benches. Participants must enter and leave by the entrance/exit points.
- Only confident participants can refuel the fire with the permission of the Forest School leader.
- Whilst in the inner fire area the respect position must always be adopted.

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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## **Food and eating Policy**

### **Statement**

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows/waffles and cooking damper bread. As skills develop, this will include cooking further meat and vegetable dishes such as vegetable kebabs, baked apples and hot dogs. Wild food is not carried out as an activity to avoid confusion amongst children between what is safe and unsafe to eat. There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and prepared.

### **Procedure**

#### **Food Preparation, transport and storage;**

- Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner (gloves) before handling and preparing food.
- Any food needing preparation will be prepared in the school kitchen (opposite the staff room) e.g. bread dough.
- Food will be stored in clean containers and transported in a cool bag to and from the site, with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.
- Raw meats will be stored separately to any other foods.
- All 'use by' dates will be checked on foods before eating.
- Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage.

#### **Handling, cooking and eating Food;**

- A fresh, clean, bucket of warm soapy water will be available for children to wash their hands before handling food or utensils.
- Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire policy. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.
- Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

#### **Clearing away and cleaning up;**

- ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults. The area is checked to ensure there no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.
- ALL utensils and pans will be placed in the cool box and carried away after the session and cleaned in hot soapy water by one of the adults and stored away correctly.

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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## **Risk Management and Assessment**

### **Policy Statement**

Taking risk and experiencing risk is a necessity in order for children and young people to develop and grow. Dirt, minor cuts, bruises and scrapes are all a normal part of a healthy childhood.

### **Procedure**

Belmont Academy understands that risks are an inherent part of life and certainly present when attending Forest School sessions. Many risks are good and actually help children and young people develop, providing fun and adventure. Bad risks can be unforeseen by children and young people and it is those risks which we seek to manage or highlight to participants.

Our Forest School Level 3 Leader uses a risk benefit analysis tool for risk management. However, we recognise that in practice the standard risk benefit model does not go far enough when children in our care are playing in the Dell. Belmont Academy has adopted the use of a dynamic risk benefit assessment for time spent at our Forest School.

- Staff are duty-bound under the Health and Safety at Work Act to work safely, take responsibility for their own safety and the implications of their actions, and report or remove hazards as they occur.
- Prepare staff tasks and activities that are age appropriate for the group experiencing the session.
- Ensure activities are suited to participant's abilities.
- Model the safety rules throughout the session and remind participants of them as necessary.
- Forest School activities have an individual Risk Benefit Assessment and a generic risk assessment.
- Risk Benefit Assessments (RBA) and policies and procedures will be reviewed every year. If there is any incidents the RBA's, policies and procedures will be reviewed immediately.
- While at work at our Forest School a Dynamic Risk-Benefit Assessment will be used.
- A reflective log book will be used to record any incidents or near misses which can then be discussed with SLT to help minimise risks.
- Children are taught to use our tools and fire in a specific way (e.g. respect position) and once they have become familiar with the rules they are able to use them independently.
- Our Forest School leaders site specific Handbook containing all RBA's, policies, procedures and emergency information is always onsite.
- Accident forms are filled out and signed in the event of an incident. These are stored and sent to local authority, School, parents etc if requested.

## Site Procedures

### Before each session:

A thorough safety sweep of the whole site must be carried out by the premises staff and this information logged and left in house for Forest School leader before the sessions start to ensure that there isn't any potential hazards that could cause injury or illness. Any hazards will be noted on the daily risk assessment which also acts as the daily register.

- Boundaries will be checked and fixed if any damage has occurred,
- Checks must be carried out on trees, bushes and any other foliage to ensure it is all safe.
- Checks for branches, dead wood, thorns, protruding sticks at eye level. If found these must be made safe.
- Check for hazardous berries and fruits.
- Check weather forecast to ensure it is or will not be a hazard.

### After each session:

- Clear everything away.
- Ensure that the fire is completely extinguished.
- Use a checklist to ensure that all tools are returned and then safely store them away.
- Check any other resources.

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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## Child Led Learning and Play

### Policy Statement

Children are biologically driven to play. Their brains grow as they play freely, especially in natural environments. At Belmont Academy we aim for our participants to play freely to help with their development.

### Procedure

Belmont Academy will use 'Risk Benefit Analysis' and the 'Playwork Model of Dynamic Risk Benefit Assessment' for all our Forest School sessions. In order for our participants to be able to have the opportunity to select free play, take risks to build resilience as freely as possible. All staff through reading, CPD and reflective practice have a basic understanding of:

- The Playwork Principles.
- The Play Cycle.
- Appropriate ways on intervening in children's play.
- 'Risk' in play to build resilience and children to assess own risk.
- These are communicated to other adults before and during sessions when appropriate.

Child led play has been shown as a tool that helps children develop. Play gives them good progress through the development stages up in to adulthood where this process is complete. The whole process of play in childhood is a necessity to help prepare children to be adults.

### Play in Child Development

**Self-Directed Play** encourages curiosity, allows for plenty of experimentation, and aids children in developing a keen sense of observation. Children learn to figure things out for themselves, take healthy risks, cope with failure and persevere in **play**, practicing necessary foundations of real-life skills.

### Playwork Principles

- All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- The prime essence of playwork is to support and facilitate and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
- For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and play workers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
- The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- The playworkers response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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## Communication

To enable the successful implementation and operation of Forest School, key stakeholders including the Head of School, Governors and parents will be informed of the aims, objectives and outcomes across the school year through a variety of sources including newsletter, parent consultations and the school website. A communication strategy will be used to deliver within time frames, use feedback and develop future sessions.

### Communication Strategy for Stakeholders

1. Letter out to parents in Reception giving a brief description of what Forest School is and inviting them to a parental meeting where they can find out more/ ask questions.
2. Parents of Early Years children will be given information in the starter handbook outlining a brief description of what Forest School is and inviting them to a parental meeting where they can find out more/ ask questions.



1. A meeting at school using a power-point outlining the Forest School Ethos and principles.
2. Explain how this can be achieved in the Dell.
3. Parental support is vital in ensuring children are happy their needs are met with suitable clothing for all weathers outdoors environment. Parents are happy that the level of risk has been given priority with risk assess/risk benefit.
4. Opportunities for questions.



1. Taking into account parental questions and concerns before setting out how and when the sessions will commence.
2. Parental consent forms to go out and be signed before child participation can commence. Class teacher to ensure consent forms are returned.
3. Children chosen for first sessions must have correct clothing before sessions begin.



1. Sessions begin rules and boundaries adhered too.
2. Observations of children by Forest School Leader and staff.
3. Observations, questionnaires will be used to assist in the progression for following sessions with next group.

## Appendix I

### Belmont Academy - Forest School Parental Consent Form

Name of Child.....

Class/Year group: .....

#### 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 (e.g. phobias, complaints) or any other allergies (e.g. material, food, medicine, pollen, dust, etc.) Please write below.

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#### Consent

As a parent/guardian of the child named above, I agree to my child participating in the Forest School activities taking place.

I understand that activities may include craftwork, pond dipping, tool use, flint fire lighting skills, den building, campfire cooking and other related activities.

I give my consent for the equipment and tools necessary for the activity to be used by the young person mentioned above. I understand that a strict code of practice for working with children will be followed and all activities will be risk assessed and I will be informed of any extra details of activities that are out of the ordinary pattern.

I understand that the Forest School ethos is that it goes ahead in any weather provided that it is safe to do so (this will be risk assessed) and I will ensure that my child is provided with the necessary clothing to take part.

I give my consent for photographs and videos to be taken of my child.

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

Name (in print): .....

## Appendix II

### Belmont Academy - Forest School Adult Consent Form

Name of Adult.....

#### Medical Information

Please provide any Medical information that might affect your involvement in the Forest School sessions. Please write below.

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#### Consent

Please read the Forest School Handbook any elements that you are not sure of ask J Richardson (Forest School leader) to clarify.

The experiences that are available during the session are dependent on all adults fulfilling procedures and risk assessments laid out in the Hand book

I understand that the Forest School ethos is that it goes ahead in any weather provided that it is safe to do so (this will be risk assessed) and I will ensure that I am wearing the necessary clothing to take part.

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

Name (in print):.....

## Appendix III Daily Site Risk Assessment Check List

<b>Date :</b>	<b>Time :</b>	<b>Check carried out by:</b>	
<b>Weather</b>			
<b>Hazard checklist</b>		<b>Checked ✓ or X</b>	<b>Action taken</b>
<b>Canopy/shrub layer</b> Deadwood in trees fallen/loose branches.			
<b>Field layer</b> Eye level branches, poisonous plants, thorns, fungi etc.			
<b>Ground layer</b> Hidden logs in grass, broken glass/rubbish, holes/ditches brambles and excessive stinging nettles dealt with			
<b>Boundary</b> Boundary fence not broken or damaged			
<b>Slippery areas</b> – excessive mud, icy patches			
<b>Vandalism/</b> evidence of intruders			
<b>Fire Zone/shelters</b> Fire pit area cleared of any debris/and area is safe for children to enter. Canopies and ropes to be checked. Canopies to be checked for tears rips and branches to be removed if necessary.			
<b>Pond area</b> Leaf debris cleared and water topped up if needed			
<b>Equipment ready to use</b> Half fill 2 buckets fire safety Fire pit empty of debris			
<b>Other identified hazards</b>			

**Appendix IV**  
**Weekly Site Risk Assessment Check List:**  
**6 week sessions**

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
WB					

## Appendix VI

### Site Sweep Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>Falling branches</i>					
<i>Uneven ground, slippery slopes, wet ground and slippery paths</i>					
<i>Extreme cold</i>					
<i>Extreme heat</i>					
<i>Contact with animal faeces</i>					
<i>Fences and gates</i>					
<i>Nettles and brambles</i>					
<i>Any unforeseen issues to be note</i>					

## Appendix VI

Equipment checklist: all equipment will be marked with permanent numbers

Item of equipment	Total in stock	Taken for session ✓ or X	Returned after session ✓ or X
Mallet (wooden/rubber)			
Hand trowels			
Hand forks			
Spades			
String			
Scissors			
Bow saw			
Laplander saw			
Knives			
Potato peelers			
Billhook			
Tarps			
Ropes			
Fire strikers			
Kelly kettle			

- A first aid kit must always be taken
- Any pupil medication must be taken (epi-pen, asthma pump)
- Tools that are not fit for purpose must be marked by the Forest School leader and removed from the toolkit.