

# Three Legged Cross First and Nursery School

## Forest School Handbook

This handbook is a for use for staff and volunteers working in our Forest School. The policies are in this handbook are to closely linked with those of our school and are adhered to in the forest area. Further details of all school policies can be found on our website <https://3lxschool.com>

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# 1. Forest School Safety talk Pointers

## Rules of our Forest School

1. Take care with sticks. When carrying them, hold them pointing down and 'walk them like a dog' (demonstrate as necessary)
2. Avoid/ take care around the brambles and nettles. Watch out for tree roots and other trip hazards, and point them out to others.
3. We only eat food we brought into the forest area, not what we find in the forest area unless approved by an adult.
4. Try not to put your fingers in your mouth or eyes. Wash hands before eating food.
5. Leave flowers for others to enjoy.
6. Do not walk in the fire circle, unless invited in by an adult. Only adults touch the fire.
7. Have fun and be safe

## 2. Forest School Risk Assessment

Significant Hazard/Risk	Level	Control/Action	Risk benefits
Exploring the site. Uneven ground, branches and tree roots on the ground. Branches and shrubs at eye level	Medium	Children well supervised, give awareness talks and regular reminders. There will always be at least 2 members of staff with at least one first aid trained with a first aid kit on site	Promoting physical development and awareness of the difference in surroundings. Encourage children to be self-aware and support their peers.
Missing child A child may wander off during a session.	Low	<p>Children told and asked to repeat the boundaries and Forest school rules. Regular headcount and strategic positioning of staff. There is no access out of school grounds. A frequent register is made of Nursery children throughout the day. For the school children, the register is taken at 9.00am and 1pm.</p> <p>In the unlikely event of a child go missing then in accordance with the school risk assessment (<a href="https://31xschoolpolicies.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/health-and-safety-whole-school-risk-assessment2.pdf">https://31xschoolpolicies.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/health-and-safety-whole-school-risk-assessment2.pdf</a>) a CME (child missing in education) form will be completed and submitted to the local authority.</p>	Children to realise the importance of following rules and working as a group. building relationships and trusting each other.

<b>Significant Hazard/Risk</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Control/Action</b>	<b>Risk benefits</b>
Bites and Stings from bees/wasps or stinging nettles	Low	Warn children not to catch bees/wasps. Show them the stinging nettles and explain what happens if they touch them. Wear long trousers and closed in footwear. Gloves also available. Clear nettles when possible.	Opportunity to study how different insects move around. Displaying a positive approach to insects rather than being frightened of them. Nettles provide food for butterflies/ caterpillars and are good for bug hunting.
Allergies or children's existing conditions	Low	All staff to be aware of any known allergies or existing conditions, and be aware of treatment required. Ensure Inhalers & medicines are with child or adult.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding allergens.
Mushrooms and fungi	Low	Warn children about dangers of fungi. Ensure children do not eat anything they find, and keep hands out of their mouths, washing them thoroughly after the session. Obvious fungi to be cleared away.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying mushrooms and fungi. Identify similarities to foods bought and eaten.
Poisonous plants	Low	Site to be inspected prior to sessions, staff to be aware of poisonous plants and children not to pick anything that's living and growing. Keep fingers out of their mouths.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying poisonous plants. Understanding the natural world and what they mustn't touch.
Building dens or other activities using sticks and branches - risk of sharp objects.	Low	Children to be aware of dangers and carry/hold sticks carefully, being aware of others around them. Injuries/accidents to be dealt with accordingly.	Opportunity to work as a team safely, to problem solve and scaffold each other. opportunities to develop motor skills and practice knots as well as social skills.
Animal droppings	Low	Children to be made aware not to touch or pick up any animal droppings. hands to be cleaned and anti-bac gel to be used as necessary.	To help children identify animals from their droppings and other traits. To understand the importance of hygiene.

<b>Significant Hazard/Risk</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Control/Action</b>	<b>Risk benefits</b>
Falling branches	Low	Site checked regularly to ensure no fallen or dangerous branches.	Children to learn to risk assess for themselves.
Using string	Low	Children to be instructed how to use string to make dens and tie sticks together. Close supervision.	Practicing knots and learn new skills involving instructions. Encourages creativity
Sharp branches and thorns	Medium	Children to be aware, any cuts or injuries to be dealt with on site. Larger cuts/serious injuries to be dealt with in school. Severe injuries 999 to be called via school office. All injuries logged in accident book.	Children to be self aware, identify dangers and scaffold peers. Encourages self confidence in a new sensory environment.
Pond	Medium	Risk of falling in / drowning. Ensure gate is locked and surrounding fence is intact. Close adult supervision when doing ponds activities. Remind children dangers of water.	Children learn water safety. Experience and learn about aquatic habitats.
Small tools - potato peelers, knives and saws/	High	Safety talk given and repeated. Close supervision at all times.	Building confidence and gaining new experiences.
Larger tools - Sheath knife, loppers, bow saw and billhook	High	Safety talk given and repeated prior to use. Strict use of tools on a 1:1 basis under very close supervision. Gloves to be used on hand not holding the tool. Only trained forest school leader to use tools with children and fire lighting.	Supporting communication skills: listening, understanding and learning new vocabulary. Improves hand eye coordination. Risk taking and managing behaviour and frustration.

Significant Hazard/Risk	Level	Control/Action	Risk benefits
Fire lighting and camp fire	High	Safety talk given prior to lighting each fire with reminder of fire circle rules. Children asked to repeat rules to ensure they have understood them. Fire circle laid out with clear boundaries, children to only enter fire circle when invited by an adult. Water is always available next to fire and sticks collected before fire is lit. Gauntlets used when dealing with fire. Children to sit on logs/seats whilst fire is lit. Only FS leader to light fires with children.	Development of awareness and respect of fire. Working as a team and building relationships and self confidence. Children learn to be aware of danger and risk take as well as learning how to safely light and maintain a fire. Gaining new experiences that empower them to use initiative and enjoy natural environment. Can support mathematical development sorting different size sticks.
Cooking food	High	As fire lighting and camp fire. Any food cooked will be under close supervision, with adult cooking the food and ensure it is cooled before the children eat it.	See lighting and camp fire. Children learn about cooking and being independent as well as learning life skills. Encourages creativity.

Please refer to the school risk assessment (<https://3lxschoolpolicies.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/health-and-safety-whole-school-risk-assessment2.pdf>) which covers Nursery ratios, the fact all adults working with children have been DBS checked and all visitors to the school will sign in and wear a visitor badge or professional agency id badge.

### 3. Daily Procedures

On days when visiting the forest, the Forest School leader or other suitable adult will check the site, which includes:

- Checking the site for animal waste and dangerous objects such as fallen or unsafe branches
- Checking for increased risks due to changes in the weather
- Carry out all safety checks in line with risk assessment
- Put up shelter if needed.
- Cut any dangerous eye level branches
- When all staff and children are present and prepared, the group will set off.
- At end of session there will be a tidying up session where everyone will be expected to participate.
- Before leaving there will be a headcount
- All equipment to be returned to shed or appropriate storage facility.

#### **Toileting**

There are no toilet facilities in the woods. In Nursery, children are encouraged to use the toilet before visiting the woods, and any nappies are changed beforehand. Should a child require the toilet, there is sufficient members of staff to take that child back into school to use the toilet. If a nappy change is required, then the adult can return to school with child and get support of the Reception TA whilst changing the nappy.

For the older children, they will be encouraged to use the toilet before visiting the woods. If they need to go, then the TA can escort them back to school as necessary.

#### **Appropriate Clothing**

Children are encouraged to bring appropriate clothing for forest school activities. However the school also has a selection of welly boots and waterproof trousers. They also have some waterproof jackets for Nursery and smaller children. Warm clothes are essential on cold days. Sun hats/woolly hats may also be required. Long sleeved tops and trousers are beneficial to prevent some scratches, stings and bites. Reminders can be sent to parents via the blog and newsletters.

## 4. First Aid and Kit List

First Aid kit containing:

- Sterile Wipes
- Plasters (various sizes)
- Disposable Gloves
- Gauze
- Surgical Tape
- Burns Kit

The full first aid kit is held in the school. All teaching assistants are paediatric first aid trained in addition to the Forest School Leader. Minor injuries can be dealt with in the forest, otherwise child to be taken to school office for further treatment.

In accordance with the school Health and safety policy 3.1(<https://3lxschoolpolicies.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/health-and-safety-policy1.pdf>), all accidents to be recorded in the accident book held in school as well as a note to the parent/carer. Major injuries to be reported using the online RIDDOR system. Please refer to the school policy for further information.

Children with medical needs have a care plan with the designated medical personnel contact details. Medication is only administered in line with the Administering of Medicines Policy. (<https://3lxnursery.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/administration-of-medicines-policy.pdf>)

Basic Kit list:

- Register
- Accident reporting slips (to give to parent and use to enter into school accident book) & pen
- Risk Assessments
- Session plans
- Water for hand washing and mud making
- Soap
- Children's water bottles



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- Trowels and hand fork, mallets/hammers (if required)
- Gardening gloves
- (If required) Fire gloves, fire bowl, watering can with water to extinguish fire, fire lighting kit
- String
- Scissors
- Loppers
- Bungees
- Kelly Kettle (if required)
- Tarpaulins
- Snack (If required)
- Hammocks
- Wheelbarrow
- iPad for photographs

Other equipment may be required depending upon specific activities.

## 5) Guidance for safe use of tools & maintenance

Bow Saw - Forest school leader to instruct on safe cutting procedure. (See guide below)

Appropriate staff-child ratio 1:1 child at one end, adult at the other. Wood to be sawn is placed on saw horse. Non tooled hand to be wearing a glove. Blade to be sheathed when not in use and maintained by a little oil to keep in good condition by not allowing it to go rusty. Replace blade when required to avoid a blunt blade. Equipment to be counted out and back in.

Bill hook- FSL to instruct on safe cutting procedures.

Gloves to be worn. Staff-child ratio 1:1 Adult to hold the billhook with straight arms, child to hold mallet and ask adult "are you ready" Adult replies yes and child strikes billhook. Ensure billhook is sheathed/covered when not in use. Count out and back in again at end of session. Keep tool in good condition and sharpen as necessary using a sharpening stone and oiling to prevent rust.

Peelers- FSL to demonstrate safe use by sitting in good space, peeling away from body, with glove on non tooled hand. Appropriate staff ratio 1:3. Count out and back in again at end of session.

Loppers- FSL to demonstrate safe use and carriage. (See guide)

Gloves to be used. Ensure there is a safe space to work. Adult to child ratio 1:1. Ensure loppers remain closed when not in use and are cleaned and oil in necessary before next use. Count out and back in again.

## 6) Guidance for safe use of fires

Campfires will only be carried out within the designated fire circle which is enclosed by logs and cleared of any leaves and debris. The fire will be in the fire bowl. The use of the Kelly kettle will also be in this area. A vessel of water will be next to the fire for extinguishing as necessary.

The logs placed around the fire are at least 1.5 metres away from the fire and represent the fire boundary.

Once lit, an adult will remain by the fire at all times. Children will not be allowed to enter the fire circle unless invited by an adult.

Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire. With 1:1 adult help, children may carefully place fuel for fire on the edge of the fire.

If food is to be cooked on the fire FSL is responsible for ensuring food has been transported, cooked and stored in a safe to eat manner. A cool bag or similar storage facility kept specifically for food should be used. Food that contains:- meat, fish, dairy products, cereals, rice, pulses, vegetables etc. should be kept cold (at or below 8° C). Food to be cooked must be kept cold until required and cooked to a temperature at or above 63° C. Raw meat and fish should be stored cold separately from cooked meats, cereals, dairy products etc.

Hand washing facilities are by way of Tippy tap and soap. Antibac gel is also available.

All fires to be extinguished at end of session by dousing with water and stirring until no heat or steam. Where possible all fuels burnt off to ash.

The Kelly kettle may be fed sticks by the children, but with 1:1 supervision and children having been shown how to carefully drop the sticks in, the hand never over the top of the kettle. It should burn itself out, but can be extinguished with water as for the camp fire.

## **Insurance**

The Children Act 1989 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, place a number of legal responsibilities on the school. The school therefore has appropriate insurance through RPA.