

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School



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Introduction

At St Catherine's our intention is to nurture and guide every child into reaching their full potential by 'Letting their light shine'.

To support us in this mission, our Year 3 class joined some Year 6 girls from the Newcastle High School for girls in a forest school Stone Age topic 'Hearth and Home'. As this was such a positive experience, resulting in a lot of progress made by all the children involved, St Catherine's have decided to build a Forest School programme that will include children from Nursery to Year 6.

Through this programme, our aim is to educate the whole child and support their learning and development outside the classroom.

This policy has been specifically written to ensure that all staff, parents, governors and volunteers understand the strong ethos behind Forest School, and how it is being implemented at St Catherine's.

This policy works together with our:

- Health and safety policy
- Behaviour policy
- Special Educational Needs policy

Within this policy, the term 'Forest School leader' refers to a member of staff, adult volunteer or outside professional who hold a level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification.

Forest School staffing

Alys Hadow

Year 3 teacher

Forest School L3 practitioner

Forest School Aims and Mission

In this policy we aim to share the driving ethos behind our Forest School at St Catherine's.

Forest School takes a child's natural curiosity and develops skills around



it, giving them opportunities to make their own choices, take managed risks, learn from the environment and have fun!

What is Forest School all about?

- Develop their self-esteem
- Develop self-confidence
- Form positive relationships with others
- Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others
- Learn to cooperate and work well with their peers and adults
- Develop problem solving strategies independently and with others
- Take risks - managed by Forest School Leaders
- Learn specific skills which link into the curriculum
- Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a forest environment

St Catherine's Forest School will encourage children to explore their natural environment and aim to understand the structure through practical activities.

Learners will be expected to go out in all weathers, all year round as this will provide valuable opportunities to learn from the changing seasons.

Appropriate clothing will need to be worn by all learners and leaders during all sessions - it is better to be too warm and take layers off than too cold.

Forest School sessions will only be cancelled during times of extremely high winds or lightning.

Learners interests will work alongside the natural resources we have to provide fun and engaging activities for them to complete during sessions. These activities will develop their self-esteem, build problem solving skills and stimulate their imaginations, all under the banner of 'play'.



Behaviour Procedure

Behaviour expectations in Forest School will be of the same standard as that expected in our classrooms.

St Catherine's operates in a traffic light system - everyone starts the day on green (good) and can be moved up to outstanding for many different reasons.

Children are also awarded house points for displaying desired attitudes. Sanctioning:

Children are given two verbal warnings and reminded of our five school rules as an opportunity to turn their behaviour around.

For example, asking: Billy, what is rule number 1? (we are kind and gentle) Billy's response will demonstrate his understanding of that rule and allow him to adjust his behaviour.

If two verbal warnings have been given and the behaviour does not change, a stop card can be given.

Following this the child would move their name down on the traffic light to amber which is 'requires improvement'. Following that the child would be moved onto red (inadequate) and asked to reflect on their behaviour away from other children.

In Forest School it is very important to use **aspirational language** to encourage the correct attitude and behaviour.

For example; when delivering tool talks the L3 leader will say "I hold my knife like this, I use it like this and I carry it like this..." Not "You can't do this with it, don't do that with it..." Correct and safe modelling by all adults involved in the session will also promote desired behaviour from learners.

In Forest School we will still apply the traffic light system, but focus more on engaging the children and reminding them of our rules and procedures than just removing them.

In cases where rules are not followed and lead to dangerous situations, children will be removed from the area as soon as possible, and L3 will work to de-escalate the situation.



Any persistent or deliberate misuse of tools will result in the child being banned from using that tool until they can prove they understand the safety rules in place, and why we need them.

Daily Operating Procedure:

Perform dynamic risk assessment before each session – session leader

Weather check – when planning session but also on the day of to assess appropriate PPE and if safe for session to be outdoors

PPE clothing – check all learners have correct clothing

Check tools/ equipment – are they all there? Are they in the correct condition? (no rusty/ broken blades)]

First aid kit – including fire first aid equipment. Who is the designated available first aider for this session? (*Always to be SA for fire and tool sessions) Are there any children who require medication? Do you have it with you?

Snacks or food – depending on session requirements

Session planning* – detailing desired outcome of the session, and expectations of adults involved in the session

*Including camera and any additional resources, session dependant

Repeat rules of Forest School at the start of every session – make expectations, rules and boundaries clear from the start using aspirational language

Always leave the site as we find it – this includes after fire sessions





Forest School Site Map and Satellite Referencing

Satellite image of the school grounds.

Grid reference:

Latitude: 54.9714 / 54°58'17"N

Longitude: -1.5961 / 1°35'46"W

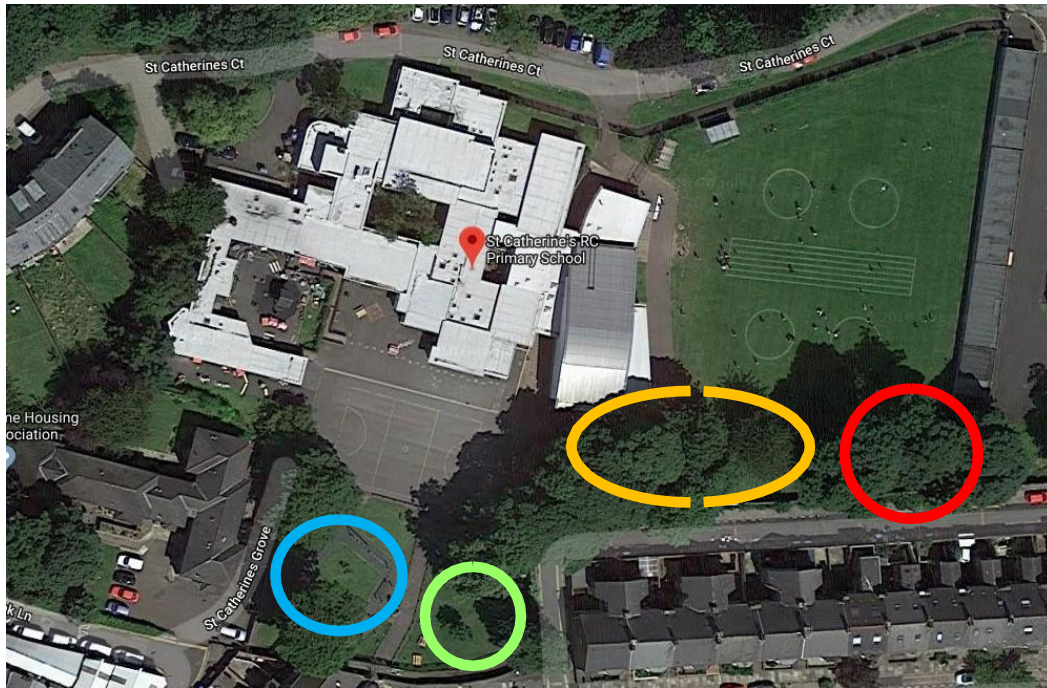
RED: fire area

AMBER: wooded area and

willow hut **GREEN:** grassy

area with mini-beast hotels

BLUE: adventure playground



Health and Safety considerations

*In conjunction with St Catherine's Health and Safety Policy.

The health and safety of all learners, leaders and other adults will be paramount during all Forest School sessions.

Safe conduct and practice of any equipment will be reinforced through regular reminders and demonstrations. Forest school promotes independence and ownership; whilst learners will develop their independence they will also learn how to be responsible for their learning, and that their actions have consequences.

Risk assessments will be conducted for programme leaders termly as this will take into account any seasonal changes on the grounds. Programme leaders will also work closely with the caretaker and ground-keepers so that any dangers or damage can be reported and acknowledged when delivering Forest School sessions.

St Catherine's Forest School 'site' will consist of:

- Down the side of the field where large trees are situated
- The willow hut
- A fire area in the bottom right-hand corner of the field



- The adventure playground and adjacent grassy area
- The garden club area

Duty of care information for staff

- Our duty of care is taken very seriously at St Catherine's and as such, all participants of a Forest School session will:
- Know the relevant Health and Safety procedures
- Be briefed on the risk assessments of the site
- All staff and volunteers will be made aware of the relevant policies (health and safety, safeguarding, behaviour, and SEN)
- All members of staff at St Catherine's undertake Child Protection training. Any concerns are reported to the Head Teacher or SENDCO, the named Child Protection Officers, to ensure the school's child protection policy can then be followed.
- All adults and volunteers participating in sessions will have relevant and current DBS check
- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. Pupils are expected to wear sturdy footwear or wellington boots during all session. Hats scarves, gloves and waterproof outerwear to be worn during winter months. Sun- screen and hats should be worn in the summer months.
- Forest School leader and forest school assistant will know where all learners are during sessions, and learners will know who their responsible adult is

Assessing and incorporating risk

A huge part of Forest School is to introduce children to a certain level of risk that they feel challenges them. The reason for this being that children are sometimes overly and unnecessarily protected which, ironically, leaves them more vulnerable and unable to cope with risk in the long run.



All leaders and adults involved in delivering sessions will be aware of preconceived and implemented risks to ensure the safety of all learners during the session.

At St Catherine's most sessions will include some level of risk and through careful supervision, training and good practice, adults will aim to ensure that accidents are avoided whilst the full benefits of risk-taking can be enjoyed by the learners.

We will have risk assessments for:

- Site Weather conditions and general welfare
- Groups
- Buildings and shelters
- Rope and String
- Fire - including strikers
- Food
- Water
- Blindfolds
- Tools - bill hooks, sheath knives, potato peelers, bow saw and mallets

All risk assessments will be kept on the school server and any hand written risk assessments will be kept in the Forest School folder with the programme leaders.

Risk assessments will be reviewed periodically to promote the highest safety management of St Catherine's Forest School.

Forest School policies and procedures:

Fire at Forest School

Fires at St Catherine's Forest School will **always** be supervised by a Forest School leader. Fires will never be left unattended and learners will take part in the responsibility of safely extinguishing any before leaving the site. Safe fire practice will be taught and adhered to during every fire session held. Relevant equipment will be accessible during each session -



water bucket, fire-proof gloves and a fire blanket.

Learners will be taught, and consistently reminded of, the fire pit rules from their very first visit to the area. These are:

- Ratio is 1:10 (adults to learners)
- Seating logs will be minimum of 1.5 - 2m away from the fire pit
- Enter the fire pit through the opening in the fence
- Walk around the outside of the logs until everyone is behind a log
- Step over the log and sit down - to not push or shove
- When the session has ended, stand up and step back over the log. Then move towards the entrance/ exit in the fence in an orderly fashion
- Keep the area around the fire circle free from rubbish
- NEVER walk across the fire circle
- NEVER throw anything into the fire
- When invited to work on the fire with an adult, make sure to approach the fire pit slowly, assume the respect position and listen to the adult supervising

Cooking and eating at Forest School

Programme leaders, adults and volunteers need to be aware of the following when cooking and eating during Forest School sessions:

- Open fire cooking only happens in the fire pit area
- Respect position must be used at all times when cooking over the fire
- Everyone must wash their hands before handling food
- All food must be stored in appropriate containers
- Equipment must be clean before using, and cleaned after use
- All dietary requirements must be researched, recorded and met during sessions
- All food must be cooked correctly
- All waste must be disposed of correctly after each session



Tools in Forest School

Safety whilst using tools is of the utmost importance. All participants must ensure that the

tools are used correctly and safely. They will know:

- Tools are safely stored in school (in locked toolbox) and will be checked by programme leaders before and after each session
- Clear rules will be set out at the beginning of the tool session
- Leaders will ensure that relevant tool talks are delivered correctly before any tools are used
- Learners will be supervised at all times whilst using any of the tools
- Inappropriate use of tools by learners will result in immediate withdrawal from the task

Animals and strangers

St Catherine's Forest School site is on school grounds. It has a perimeter fence on both sides and gates that are locked during school hours. Members of the public have to buzz the main office at the main entrance to get into the school. However, should such measures be breached, the following procedures will be in place:

- Learners will know to never approach any person or animal they do not know
- Staff delivering sessions will look for any animal excrement in the designated site before a session
- Should any dogs/ cats breach the perimeter, staff will look for owners or shoo the animal away from learners. Should it be necessary, learners will be taken to another area until the animal has vacated
- Learners will be reminded to inform any members of staff should they see a stranger on site



Health, hygiene and toileting procedure

Toileting on site

- Ensure learners use the toilets before leaving the school building
- Learners can return to school (as forest school is on site) through allocated doors agreed prior to the session with an adult.
- Ensure learners wash hands before and after using the loo

once they have been outside. Off Site toileting

- Use biodegradable paper
- Using a trowel dig a hole of approximately 6-8 inches.
- Learners are told they may use a stick if they miss the hole.
- Earth is replaced after completion.
- Learners wash their hands with water (take a bottle of water offsite specifically for this) and use antibacterial solution.
- Dry hands using paper towels which are collected and recycled once returned to school.

Health and hygiene

- Wash hands in warm water and antibacterial soap before cooking and use towel dry hands (provide two towels per class).
- 'No hands near face' including eating anything unless agreed upon by forest school leader.
- All medical records must be checked to ensure up to date information is implemented (allergies to food, stings, bites, medication) – copy taken if offsite.
- Food will be stored at a correct temperature prior to sessions in a cool box which can be used to transport food items on to site.
- Any foods not refrigerated to be consumed within 4 hours of preparation.
- Cooked foods not to be reheated.
- Utensils and crockery to be checked to ensure they are clean



before use and put in school dishwasher on returning from forest school site.

- No litter to be burnt on fire.
- Waste foods to be disposed of after each session away from forest school area.
- If a member of the group has ingested or has been exposed to hazardous plants and fungi inform the forest leader and use appropriate first aid.
- Follow the emergency action plan if a more serious incident occurs
- Follow fire procedures when cooking using fire

First Aid

- There will always be a trained first aider on school premises who is easy to reach, and, when tools or fire sessions are run Level 3 trained Forest School first aider (SA) will be on site
- A suitable first aid kit will always be available at the Forest School site
- It is the Forest School leaders responsibility to ensure the first aid kit is taken onto site at the start of every session, and returned to its designated spot at the end of each session
- In cases of minor injury - such as small cuts or grazes - the Forest School leader will administer first aid and write up the accident note for school and parental records

Emergency procedures

- Emergency procedures must be followed in cases of injury or accident; this is for the safeguarding of all adults and learners participating in sessions
- In the case of a serious accident or incident, the Forest school leader will recall all participants to one area by raising a hand and blowing a whistle—this procedure will be explained, demonstrated and practiced in the first forest school sessions with all learners
- Once all learners are recalled to an area, a designated adult (or



where this is not possible, a sensible learner) will inform the school office, who will then follow procedure according to St Catherine's

- The head teacher will be informed if emergency services are required
- Should the casualty need to be taken to hospital, either the Forest school leader, assistant or other member of school staff will accompany them.
- The accident report form that would be completed in this instance would be accompanied by a written statement from the adult who witnessed it; with detailed reference to the sequence of events, the actions taken and the timing of events
- A signed copy would be retained by the head teacher, and a copy would be sent to the LA

**Emergency and
serious incident
procedure**



Secure the safety of whole group—stop all work and activities as soon as possible. Locate and call in all group member as previously agreed and practiced with group. If possible, remove whole group from further danger or threat of danger.

First aider to attend to casualty, with adult help if possible. Ratio for rest of the group taken into account. At least one first aider must be present or available for all sessions. First aider must be present for tool and fire sessions.

First aider/ adult support to record state of casualty and monitor/ record any changed—information to be passed to emergency services on arrival.

Adult to contact emergency services. Be prepared to tell them:

Casualty state and any changes

Nature of incident/ accident

School address:

St Catherine's RC Primary

Greystoke Gardens

Newcastle

Office member/ available adult to meet emergency services at front door and escort them to the scene.

Next of kin to be informed by office staff/ available appropriate adult with relevant and up-to-date information.

First aider/ adult supporter to travel with



Roles and Responsibilities

- The Forest School leader will hold a fully recognised Level 3 Practitioner qualification and up-to-date DBS check
- There will always be a recognised first aider who is easily contactable during Forest School sessions if SA - L3 Forest School first aider is not available

Forest School leaders have the overall responsibility for:

- Safety and risk assessments
- Planning and resourcing sessions - with class teachers when needed; including evaluation and feedback
- Liaising with school staff, governors and parents
- Administration of minor first aid, ensuring first aid kit is carried on and off site, has relevant equipment inside, that there is an accident book inside it, etc.
- Supervision of tools, fire, cooking on the fire, and cooking area
- Understanding the needs of learners in sessions including those with SEND
- Knowing and implementing emergency procedures- and sharing with adult helpers, support staff and learners
- Trainees and volunteers during sessions

With support from the Forest school leader, trainees , volunteers and support staff are responsible for:

- Modelling good practice - especially when tool talks and fire are involved in the sessions
- Supporting learners in any way they need in order to extend their learning



- Supporting Forest school leaders in delivering tool talks, tool sessions, fire and cooking

Insurance for Forest School activities if covered by St Catherine's insurance policy.

Equal opportunities: *read alongside our policy for equality in school. All people involved in forest school sessions will be treated with respect and equality. St Catherine's staff want to provide an outdoor environment where both adults and learners can feel safe and secure whilst extending their curiosity and knowledge. Sessions will be planned to engage and excite learners and all contributions from participants and volunteers will be heard and acknowledged. Forest School leaders and assistants will approach planning sessions with a 'constant reflective' mentality - in that all sessions will be evaluated and reflected upon to assist in assessing effectiveness, impact, future sessions and future planning.

St Catherine's sustainability plan

A huge part of Forest School is educating the learners on their ecological impact. Forest school leaders will work with staff, governors and learners to consider the following:

- Fires will either be in the Kelly kettle or in the fire pit area. Fire sessions will be kept to a maximum of 1 per week to limit smoke damage to the surrounding trees and disturbance of any nesting birds - however, that will all depend on the stage of learners, time of year and session planning
- The maximum limit above will also assist in limiting the amount of dead wood burnt, as this can affect the soil layer
- Learners will be taught what to pick up/ collect for sessions in accordance with limiting resources depleting from our surrounding area (E.G. some weeks learners may be asked to collect materials for homework and bring them in)
- There will usually only be one Forest School session per week, this will allow the ground to recover wherever the session has taken place on site



- St Catherine’s Forest School site consists of: an area of the field, the willow hut, a grassy area and the adventure playground (see previous map) At the moment, there is no fencing separating the area of the field from the rest of it but part of the initial stages of the project is to involve learners, parents and governors to erect the fences we need. These will clearly mark the areas.

Leading to the fire pit area will be different paths in order to preserve the ground - there will only be one entrance/ exit to the fire pit area. Next to the fire pit area there will be a wood pile collection that is off the ground in aid of keeping dry wood dry.

Near to the willow hut we hope to collect materials that learners will be able to use to create dens and shelters.

Round the corner from the willow hut is a grassy area in which there is already a mini-beast hotel. We hope to create more of these and also incorporate natural ones - large dead logs - to support learners in learning about the natural wildlife.

Dynamic risk assessment including site specific risk assessments

Hazard	Safety prevention and procedures
General everyday practice	Children to be supervised at all times in the Forest School area Adults to have any children specific medication with forest school first aid kit Leaders to have First aid kit and equipment (water, fire blankets, etc.) Leaders to have charges mobile phone on them at all times
Weather	L3 leader to check weather prior to sessions, and again on the day of to assess if session can go ahead or needs adjusting Sessions to be cancelled during extreme weather conditions (high winds and lightning storms) Children to have correct PPE according to the weather
Litter/ debris	L3 to check site prior to session for litter picking L3 leader and adults to wear correct PPE
Animal faeces	L3 leader to check site prior to session Any faeces found to be collected safely and disposed of correctly L3 leader to wear correct PPE
Trip/ fall hazard	L3 to remove any obvious/ unnecessary trip hazard Ensure children are aware of any potential hazards at the start of the session (is as-sault course set up, discuss safety rules)



Plants	<p>Identification used to support children's understanding of poisonous plants</p> <p>Children only to eat any forages food that has been washed and approved by L3</p> <p>leader or supporting adult</p> <p>Discuss potential risks at the start of every session</p> <p>Children to be aware of nettles in the area</p>
Insect/ bugs bites or stings	<p>Identification to support children's understanding of bugs/ insects</p> <p>Children to inform L3 or adult support if they think they have been bitten or stung</p> <p>L3 first aider to apply first aid if necessary</p>
Rope and string	<p>No running near shelters that are secured with rope/ string Ensure children have sound understanding of knots</p> <p>Ropes and strings to be stored carefully and safely Remer rope and string at the end of each session</p>
Shelter building	<p>Ensure children know which materials they are allowed to use</p> <p>Demonstrate safe carrying of materials, safe construction and safe demolition</p>
Collecting natural materials	<p>Ensure children know the objective and which materials to collect</p> <p>Demonstrate how to safely lift and transport materials</p> <p>'No hands near faces' rule at all times All to wear correct PPE</p> <p>Discuss potential risks and hazards at the start of every session</p>
Blindfold (games)	<p>Demonstrate how to safely use blindfold – sighted partner use Safe leading</p> <p>Adult supervision</p>

