



**Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd**

**Forest School**

**Handbook of Policies and  
Procedures**

**2025 - 2026**

To be read by all Leaders, Assisting Staff and Visitors of Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd attending Forest Schools sessions.

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## Introduction

Since its introduction in the United Kingdom, Forest School is proving a powerful tool for developing personal, social and emotional, physical and life-long learning skills in young people.

Forest School is an approach to outdoor education, which originated in Scandinavia, where outdoor living and learning are totally embedded in society. In Scandinavia, there is a strong belief that nature and movement are essential to a young person's overall development and well-being. Most young people, through their school years, spend one day per week engaged in learning activities outdoors, appreciating how to care for and respect the environment, while also looking after themselves and others.

Forest School is delivered by qualified staff at Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd. We hope that its inclusion into the school's activities will help our young people overcome some of the difficulties they face on a day-to-day basis.

## Our Forest School Ethos

At Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd, we are extremely lucky in that we rent large areas of the associated woodland under licence to Forestry England and Staffs County Council. We also deliver Forest School long-term programmes over several local educational establishments. We believe that they are a valuable and vital resource in helping our young people explore, learn and discover possibilities far beyond the limits of the school and classroom. **Our core values are - that of respect for others, our natural environment and ourselves.**

Forest School gives learners the chance to have first-hand opportunities within the woodland setting. The experiences in the woodland allow them to take safe and controlled risks, which help build their self-esteem and desire to find out more about the world around them. Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd provides learners of all ages, a very different environment in which they can find new ways of learning and have a chance to have a great sense of achievement. Everyone is afforded equal opportunities to succeed in an alternative environment. Forest School provides an opportunity for young people to develop their emotional intelligence and well-being, through their interaction with the woodland and with each other.

Forest School provides a unique 'unstructured' platform for learning, in which the opportunities that arise, stem from the discoveries by the young people and the 'unexpected'. The Forest School Leader provides a safe and encouraging environment and sessions are very much based on the children's prior knowledge and desires. That said, all of our programmes and sessions are both planned and evaluated by the Leader and a copy of this is available to back up the educational benefits observed by the Leader. The Leader is a facilitator of their learning and our observations of the learners lay at the base of future session planning. These follow a "spider web" design and it is possible to target specific learners on request from educational establishments.

Within this learning programme, the young people are developing a variety of life skills including independence, competence, co-operation and communication and are encouraged to assess safety issues for themselves and others. It also intends to engender a sense of respect and appreciation for the rich habitat around us and begin to instil an environmental ethic.

### **Aims**

To foster the young person's well-being and motivation, natural curiosity and interest through the provision of a happy and stimulating learning environment within a woodland setting.

To acknowledge how young people need to develop as individuals - to play, to learn, to move and to communicate with each other.

To encourage autonomy, independence and confidence.

To provide a range of activities stemming from weekly observations, which give young people opportunities for exploration, investigation, imagination and creativity.

To take full account of the young person's interests, family and culture - building on previous experience.

### **Objectives for Our Young People**

To enjoy outdoor activity in the woods throughout the seasons, exploring both by themselves and with others.

To investigate and experiment with a variety of natural resources.

To make discoveries using senses.

To use language to describe, explain, predict, ask questions and develop ideas.

To develop an appreciation of natural beauty and a sense of wonder.

To care for personal safety, as well as that of others.

To care for the woodland environment and create an awareness of wider environmental issues.

### **Play in the Forest School**

All freely chosen play is based on the following principles:

Play encompasses young people's behaviour, which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

Play is performed for no external goal or reward - so young people choose what they do, how they do it and why they do it.

Play is something that is created and developed by those who take part in it.

Good social play involves creativity, innovation and the ability to set aside your own wishes to perpetuate the game.

Play is about navigating real and imaginary worlds through pretence - relating external things to the internal world of the imagination.

Play is integrating - it allows young people to bring together ideas they have and things they know and to organise them through imagination and creativity.

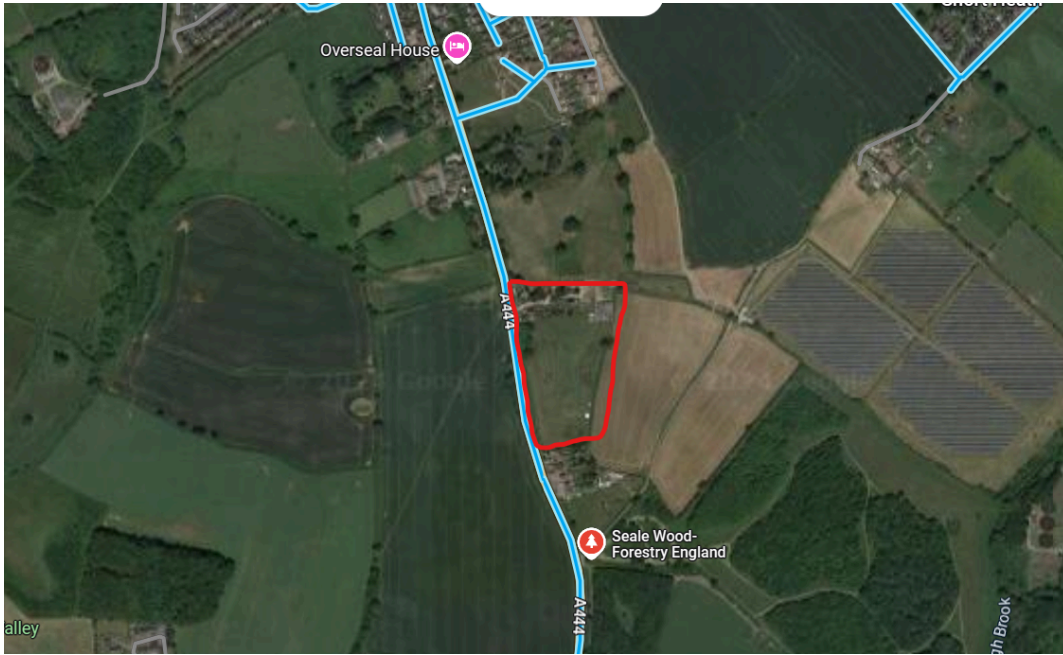
Play is the most important activity that young people take part in at Forest School, as it is the means through which they find motivation, well-being and happiness, in order to grow physically, emotionally and intellectually. Free choice outdoor play, in our woodland environment, gives children the opportunity to experience 'loose unstructured dreamtime' (Richard Louv), doing their own thing and freedom from the watching eyes of adults. At these times they can:

- be in control.
- be on their own.
- collaborate with others.
- re-create events.
- make their own props.
- make sense of their experiences.
- move freely using a range of motor skills.
- work to the limits of their skills.
- make their own choices, decisions and rules.
- manipulate materials.
- use and explore language freely.
- test out knowledge.
- explore how to risk assess and keep safe from dangers.
- express themselves and be creative.

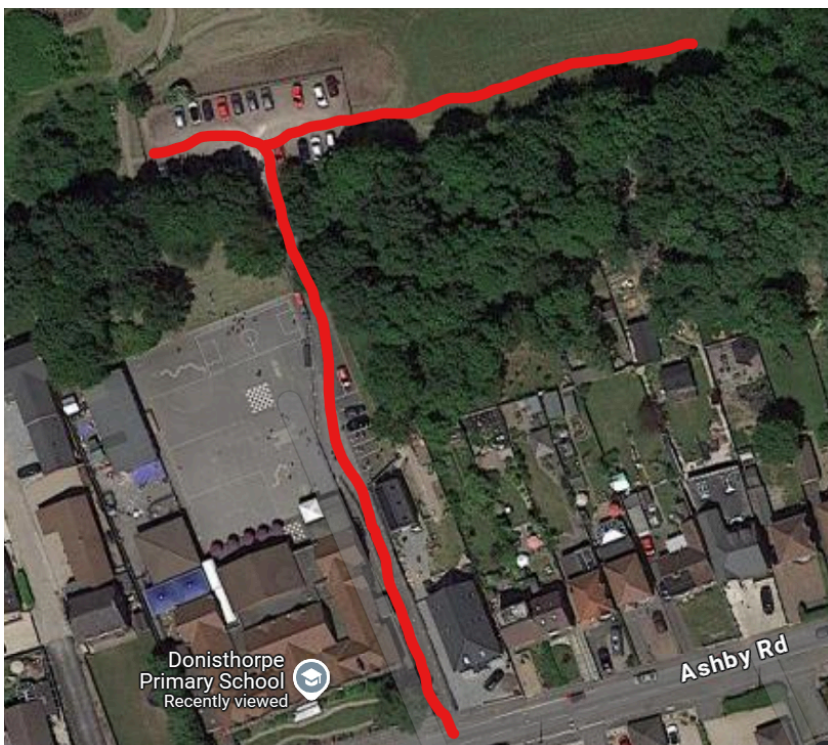
### Site Details and Travel to Forest School – Long Hedge Lane, Burton site (DE13 9QP).

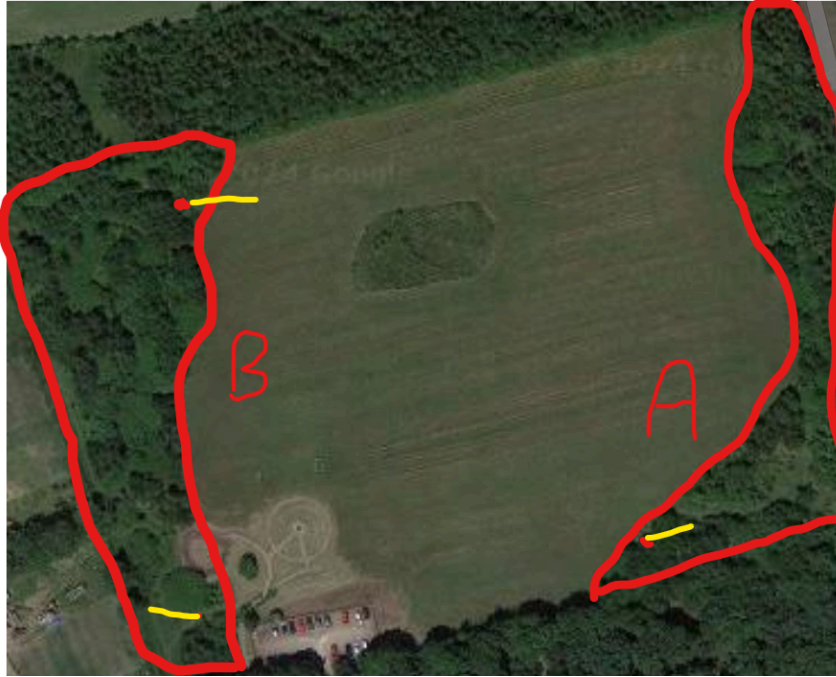


**Site Details and Travel to Forest School – Seales Hollow 115 Acresford Rd, Overseal, Swadlincote DE12 6HY**



**Site Details and Travel to Forest School – Donisthorpe Primary School 47, Ashby Road, Swadlincote DE12 7QF**





## Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd staff are responsible for:

- Planning, delivery and evaluations of Forest School programmes and sessions from pre-school, EYFS – KS4 and beyond.
- Preparing and delivering observations targeted at young learners who require specific help with their emotional intelligence (using the spider web format).

Trained staff will also be responsible for delivering the following qualifications:

- a) Forest Schools qualifications up to Level 3 through awarding bodies.
  - b) First Aid training covers a range of qualifications from child to adult through awarding bodies.
  - c) Safeguarding training for individuals and schools.
  - d) First Aid for Mental Health through awarding bodies.
  - e) Bush craft training in order to qualify through awarding bodies.
- Management of Forest School sites, in liaison with site managers and in accordance with conservation plans agreed, to ensure their sustainability as an educational and ecological site.

- Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, including producing relevant and up to date site, group and activity risk assessments.

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd staff have all obtained the following qualifications:

- Level 3 Forest Schools Practitioner
- Level 3 Outdoor and Paediatric First Aider.
- Level 3 Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Adults.
- Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate

All staff of Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd have DBS Enhanced Disclosures. The certificates are held with Meryl Gardner, the Administrator for Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd.

Please note that either school staff or parents/carers must provide supervision for those learners who require 1:1 support throughout their activities on site. Little Acorns Forest Schools staff are not responsible for this.

### Insurance

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd holds full Public Liability Insurance and Employer's Liability Insurance Policy.

Insurer: Birnbeck Insurance Ltd

Policy: SALSALIA/R136859/0332/18

Renewal date: November 2026

### Weekly Organisation of Our Groups

The manning is organised by Meryl Gardner, the administrator for Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd. It is held on the Find My Shift App (which all staff have downloaded) and all practitioners working on behalf of Little Acorns are to ensure that they keep up to date with work that is allocated to them and accept shifts through the Find My Shift App. If, for any reason, the practitioner cannot attend the session they are to physically call either Meryl Gardner or Dave Churchward in order to ensure that the session still goes ahead where possible.

### Placements

There have been increasing numbers of work placement or teachers under training behind placed on work experience with Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd. All placements are to ensure that they read and understand this document prior to attending sessions. All staff are to ensure that any placement is welcomed onto site, given experience related tasks to carry out during the session and given a quick verbal debrief on their performance on completion. On completion of the work placement, the Lead practitioner or senior Forest School leader on site, should complete an evaluation report (held in the Staff folder on Google Drive) and send it to Meryl Gardner for onward transmission to the parent workplace.

## School staff involvement on Forest School sessions

Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants should be welcomed onto sessions and given relevant tasks to carry out during the session. Those that are already Level 3 FSL trained can be used to complete tool and fire tasks however the practitioner running the session should also give non trained staff some direction so that they feel part of the session.

## Cancellation Procedure

All Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd sessions will take place at the usual sites in most weathers except for snow, exceptionally heavy rain, high winds or where there is a risk of an electrical storm. In high winds (Beaufort scale 6 to 7 or more), Forest School might not take place on any site. Where there is the risk of an electrical storm or after a fall of snow, sessions may be cancelled. The Forest School Leader will check the weather forecast the day before and on the Forest School session day. The responsibility of cancelling the session lies entirely with the Leader on the day and every effort will be made to ensure that the session is held, unless risk of injury or death is prevalent. The leader should inform Meryl Gardner as soon as possible in case of cancellation so relevant parties can be informed.

The school office and class teachers will be advised of the cancellation as soon as possible prior to the session.

If possible the Forest School Leader will run an indoor Forest School session, doing activities such as woodland ID, weaving/collage using natural materials, mapping and drawing skills, learning about woodland habitats and environmental issues.

Below is an explanation of the Beaufort Scale used as a guide for session cancellation.

## BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

Beaufort Number	Description	Wind speed	Wave height	Sea conditions	Land conditions	
0	Calm	< 1 knot < 1 mph < 2 km/h	0 ft 0 m	Sea like a mirror	Smoke rises vertically	
1	Light air	1-3 knots 1-3 mph 2-5 km/h	0-1 ft 0-0.3 m	Ripples	Direction shown by smoke drift	
2	Light breeze	4-6 knots 4-7 mph 6-11 km/h	1-2 ft 0.3-0.6 m	Small wavelets	Wind felt on face	
3	Gentle breeze	7-10 knots 8-12 mph 12-19 km/h	2-4 ft 0.6-1.2 m	Large wavelets	Leaves and small twigs in constant motion	
4	Moderate breeze	11-16 knots 13-18 mph 20-28 km/h	3.5-6 ft 1-2 m	Small waves	Raises dust and loose paper	
5	Fresh breeze	17-21 knots 19-24 mph 29-38 km/h	6-10 ft 2-3 m	Moderate waves	Small trees and leaves begin to sway	
6	Strong breeze	22-27 knots 25-31 mph 39-49 km/h	9-13 ft 3-4 m	Large waves	Large branches in motion	
7	High wind, moderate gale, near gale	28-33 knots 32-38 mph 50-61 km/h	13-19 ft 4-5.5 m	Sea heaps up	Whole trees in motion	
8	Gale, fresh gale	34-40 knots 39-46 mph 62-74 km/h	18-25 ft 5.5-7.5 m	Moderately high waves	Twigs break off trees	
9	Strong/severe gale	41-47 knots 47-54 mph 75-88 km/h	23-32 ft 7-10 m	High waves	Slight structural damage	
10	Storm, whole gale	48-55 knots 55-63 mph 89-102 km/h	29-41 ft 9-12.5 m	Very high waves	Trees uprooted, considerable structural damage	
11	Violent storm	56-63 knots 64-72 mph 103-117 km/h	37-52 ft 11.5-16 m	Exceptionally high waves	Widespread damage	
12	Hurricane force	≥ 64 knots ≥ 73 mph ≥ 118 km/h	≥ 46 ft ≥ 14 m	Exceptionally high waves, sea is completely white	Devastation	

## Forest School Code of Conduct

Pupils and staff should embrace our Code of Conduct, which will be revised with the young people at every session.

- Look after your Forest School. Respect the fact that it is living.
- Check with your Leader about cutting or picking living things
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth unless told otherwise.
- Stay within the boundaries agreed - we do not go beyond them.
- Stay outside of the fire circle, unless invited in.
- Look above, below and around for hazards.
- Use tools safely and with regard to others around us.
- Show respect, care and co-operation for people around you.

## Site Management

All sites are to be checked daily in accordance with Risk Assessment Procedures. Any risk outside of these, should be noted on the Daily Site Assessment Sheet (Kept inside the folder on the permanent sites)

To minimise danger to young people - shelters, fire pit and seating are always checked for security, before or during each session, dependent on session objectives.

Trees on site, are inspected termly by one of the Leaders, or after inclement weather/observations by staff.

The contact names regarding tree safety, inspection and general site management is:

- Kathryn Finch (Seales Hollow Site only)
- Dave Churchward – Director of Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd.

## Impact on Our Environment

We aim to care for the environment and to minimise our impact on the site\_and surrounding woodland. We ask everyone to consider the following:

- Instil concepts of responsible actions in the environment, by giving young people practise in decision making and helping them to formulate a Code of Behaviour about issues concerning environmental quality.
- Wherever possible, environmentally friendly products and recycled materials are used and woodland arts and crafts are made by using natural woodland resources.
- Adults model good practice by showing young people that the world we live in should be cared for. Involving young people in site checks, discussions and decisions about sustainability and managing the wood and playing environmental games support this.
- Ensure any equipment, such as tarps and rope, are cleared from the wood after a session. If there are subsequent sessions on following days tarps may be kept up however they MUST be tied so that they do not fill with water and rip. Any damage to tarps through neglect are expected to be replaced at the practitioner's own cost.

- Always light a fire within a designated fire square or no trace fire square and disperse burnt ash.
- If using live wood, then collect wood from a wide area of the main site and with careful consideration. Log stores are to be refilled on completion of sessions where possible.
- When collecting firewood, ensure large pieces of dead wood are left in situ for wildlife.
- Keep to main pathways and open spaces when working/playing, especially in April/May when the woodland floor is full of flora. Avoid muddy areas of the main woodland entrance.
- Encourage young people to report anything on the site which they are unsure of or feel unsafe with - e.g. poisonous plant, rubbish, dead branches.

## Forest School Routine

1. The Forest School Leader, developed from observations in the last session, will have prepared a Session Plan.
2. Risk assessments for the site are to be checked and any discrepancies or changes are to be noted in the Daily Site check sheet. See risk assessments for all specific sites in the site folder.
3. A thorough sweep of the site will be done before each session, to check for any litter, glass, animal faeces, etc.
  - a. A written record will be kept of each sweep on the Daily Site Assessment Sheet. This shall state if any hazards were found and how they were dealt with.
  - b. Trees will be checked for any broken or dead branches, which may fall.
4. Check the weather conditions. If it is unduly windy - e.g. trees leaning or a thunderstorm is imminent or has commenced, then it might not be advisable to carry out a session. If there is fallen snow, we will assess if the session goes ahead or not, due to hazards below foot and the cold.
5. The Forest School Leader will outline the session with any assisting staff and go through any Risk Assessments/medical issues.
6. Any equipment is prepared and collected, with the help of some young people and staff, from the practitioners' vehicles or the tent on site.

## A Forest School Session

### Session Outline:

1. Ensure all of the group has appropriate outdoor clothes and wellies (see Clothing Requirements). Leader to count/register the group. Ensure Next of Kin details are current.
2. Walk to site using designated trails, giving the opportunity to explore while on route.
3. Sit down and revise daily safety issues.
4. Revise the boundaries/identify potential hazards.
5. Revise the call signal – shout of 123 back to me.
6. Time to explore or a warm up game
7. Provide instructions for the session, identifying resources, opportunities and session focus.
8. Main session.

9. At the end of the session, gather back at the circle and discuss the session, allowing young people to feedback if they wish too.

#### Procedures to be carried out at the end of each session:

1. Collect resources/attend to fire if appropriate and ensure the site is tidy.
2. Do a headcount.
3. Young people depart from site, using trail designated by the Forest School Leader
4. Ensure that any dens that have been built during the session have been taken down and any wood stocked in a safe manner.
5. The Forest School Leader will complete a Session Evaluation Sheet and records kept in the appropriate Forest School Planning Folders on Google Drive.

### Appropriate Clothing

The following clothing should be worn, as dictated by weather conditions:

- Woolly hat/sun hat if weather dictates.
- Jacket/waterproof coat.
- Fleece/jumper.
- Waterproof trousers/long trousers.
- Long socks
- Sturdy footwear - trainers/wellies/boots
- Gloves if cold weather.

The Forest School Leader may carry spare clothing relevant to weather conditions which individuals can wear.

There will be extra clothing available in Leader safety bags and in the spare clothes box in the tent, should young people not have adequate clothing.

### Toileting

The young people are requested to use the toilet prior to arriving on site.

During sessions, a member of staff either from school or LAFS staff will escort young people to and from the toileting facilities if not directly on site.

When visiting Long Hedge Lane, Donisthorpe and Seales Hollow there is a composting toilet on site – all visitors will be briefed up on how it works on arrival. ( OCT 25).

### Equipment

#### ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

A safety bag will be taken out to Forest School every session.

The safety bag is always positioned within the fire pit and every member of staff is familiar with this location.

The safety bag will contain the following equipment, which will be checked and updated as necessary:

- Emergency Procedures – laminated card.
- Medical information for each individual and emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & young people).
- Risk Assessments – if required for a particular session, in a plastic pouch (a full set is kept in the site folder on each site).
- Mobile phone
- Clean drinking water
- Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves, it should be clearly labelled – staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)
- Wet wipes, hand gel
- Whistle
- Torch
- Spare clothing if required
- Sugary food i.e. jelly babies and NOT chocolate.
- Plastic bags
- Emergency shelter (can be carried separately)
- First Aid Kit
  - o Gloves
  - o Bandages – small, medium, large, triangular bandage
  - o Tourniquet and Haemostatic dressing (CELOX)
  - o Plasters
  - o Burns gel
  - o Dressings
  - o Eye wash and eye pad dressing
  - o Sam Splint and press to operate cold pack
  - o Tuff Cut shears and tweezers
  - o Cotton wool
  - o Antiseptic cleansing wipes
  - o Medication for individual children
  - o Tick removers
  - o Sterile water
  - o Adhesive tape

If a fire lighting activity is to take place: (see Fire Policy Appendices)

- Fire lighting kit – cotton wool, fire steel.
- Fire blanket
- Large containers of water
- Emergency fire kit/burns kit – burn gel, burn cream
- Fire retardant gauntlet gloves

## HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd - School Health and Safety Policy - sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the School's approach to the Health and Safety of its students, staff and visitors to the School.

The following is a list of additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions:

1. However many members of staff accompany Forest School sessions, the person in charge is always the trained Forest School Leader.
2. The Forest School Leader has overall 'Duty of Care' for the children in his/her charge, but all members of staff are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
3. All attending members of staff must sign and date a form to show they have read this Handbook and appropriate Risk Assessments and understand and agree to comply with the General Operating Procedures for Forest School.
4. The Forest School Leader or Assistant will carry the Emergency Bag and it is always positioned in a central location.
5. The Forest School Leader will ensure that the Emergency Bag contains all essential equipment.
6. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services.
7. The Forest School Leader will prepare and review the Risk Assessments before every session.
8. The Forest School Leader will ensure that any assisting members of staff are fully briefed regarding any planned activities available and relevant risks/hazards. All members of staff MUST read and understand the Risk Assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping
9. When tools are used, the staff/student ratio will always be 1:1 to begin with, until confident.
10. The Forest School Leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest School, prior to their use.
11. The Forest Leader is responsible in training students and staff in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
12. The Forest Leader will be responsible for the pre-visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd aims to develop young people's self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. In order that these aims can be met, the Forest School Leader will:

1. Consistently apply the five-step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School activities:
  - Look for hazards.
  - Decide who may be harmed and how.
  - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done.
  - Record findings, including daily amendments to standing Risk Assessments, based on site visits or observations.
  - Review Risk Assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change, which may affect the rigour of the Assessment) and revise if necessary.
2. The Forest School Leader on sites to be used, prior to a day's activity, will carry out daily pre-visit checks – these must be done as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical. The findings will be recorded on the Daily Risk Assessment Form held in the toilet at Longhedge and Donisthorpe Primary and the container at Seales.
3. Ensure all members of staff have read the relevant Site and Activity Risk Assessments prior to a session.

4. Move activities indoors if, in the opinion of the Forest School Leader, weather conditions such as high winds or the threat/occurrence of electrical storms, make work outdoors unsafe.
5. Inform members of staff and young people of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further.
6. Involve members of staff and young people in the Risk Assessment, as appropriate, as part of learning.
7. Ensure legal guidelines regarding off-site activities, such as adequate insurance and parental permission, are met.
8. Ensure that all members of staff and young people are aware of the Emergency Procedures for the Forest School site.
9. Be responsible for teaching young people adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.
10. Ensure members of staff and young people will have access to drinking water during sessions.
11. Ensure a nil-by-mouth policy is adopted in all Forest School sessions, except for food cooked as part of a fully Risk-Assessed Forest School activity.

## TOOL POLICY

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd uses the following tools with pupils:

- Bow saw
- Loppers
- Billhook
- Auger
- Hand drills
- Sheath knife
- Small Forest Axe
- Secateurs
- Rubber/wooden mallets
- Folding saw
- Scissors

Tools are used with 1-1 supervision initially, until proved competent and confident in use. All use of tools is to be at designated cutting stations and leaders are to ensure competent use.

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd staff are responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools, providing Risk Assessments for tool usage and guiding any support staff in their usage.

All tools are kept in a lockable storage box that is kept in a central location within the woodland, in sight of leaders at all times. In addition sheath knives are kept in a separate lockable 'Pelicase', which is kept locked in accordance with UK Knife Law.

All tools are transported in a lockable box, to and from site, on a daily basis.

Tools are counted out and then counted in at the end of a session to ensure that all items are returned safely. The Forest School Leader supervises tool usage by all young people and supporting staff.

The Tool Box, which contains sharp tools such as knives is kept locked with a combination lock at all times.

Tool maintenance should be carried out at the end of each session or if the tool requires sharpening during use.

Activity Risk/Benefit Assessments are completed for all activities involving the use of tools. These are held on file in the Café at Hicks Lodge or on site specific to schools.

*Tool Safety Information Sheets and Risk Assessments are included in Appendix 1.*

## **FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd aim to ensure that all young people and staff participating in Forest School sessions with fires - will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

### *Location*

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for fires. The same fire sites are always to be used.
- The Leader will assess the forest floor (re. dry/damp material) and general weather conditions for suitability for having a fire safely.
- Campfire areas are enclosed and defined by logs to contain the fire area and discourage any young person from accessing the fire directly.

### *Positioning of young people and members of staff*

- Fire areas are surrounded by secure (i.e. wedged to prevent rolling) seating logs or stools, at least 2 metres from the fire pit – these are to be checked prior to fire lighting.
- When the campfire is in use, young people are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- When allowed to access the campfire, young people must walk around the outside of the seating logs/stools and wait for permission to step over. Once permission has been given, they must sit, ensuring legs are drawn into the log/stool and not outstretched.
- Once seated around the campfire, the young people must remain seated until directed by a member of staff to move.
- Young people will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- Any young person or member of staff with long hair should have it tied back (spare bands are in the Forest School kit bag).
- Young people are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire, but may add fuel under the direction of the Forest School Leader.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the young people - they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes or ask permission to move.
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.

### *Safety and Responsibility*

#### Lighting and keeping fires burning

- The fire will be lit under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader.

- Other members of staff (who have been fully briefed and read the Risk Assessment) may supervise the fire area and attend/feed the fire.
- Fires are lit using a fire steel, natural tinder or cotton wool.
- **No flammable liquids or firelighters are to be used to light or accelerate fires.**
- If sessions involve young people adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with 1:1 staff supervision and they are shown how to kneel safely (with one knee on the ground) and how to sideways feed the fire.
- Hands should never go over the fire.

## Safety Equipment

The following kit will be taken out to Forest School when lighting fires:

- Fire blanket
- Bucket
- Fire gloves
- Jerrican containing drinkable water
- First aid kit (with burn gel, dressings)

## Extinguishing fires

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Water should always be on hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- The Forest School Leader should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build-ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

*Fire Safety Information Sheet is included in Appendix 2*

## **Emergency Procedures**

### *Accident and Emergency*

All members of staff and participants will be briefed on what to do in case of an emergency:

1. A verbal shout of 1,2,3 back to me is the signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff at our designated base and be silent and wait for instructions.
2. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident.
3. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised.
4. They will attend to any casualties, giving First Aid as necessary.
5. An Accident Form will be completed later by staff and **reported to the landowner if needed.**
6. If the Forest School Leader is injured or becomes ill, a supporting member of staff will take charge of the situation, as all members of Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd are Level 3 Outdoor and Paediatric First Aid trained. They will then follow the procedure below.

### In the event of Serious Injury:

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by First Aid on-site and requires medical assistance:

1. In serious cases, the Emergency Services should be contacted giving the injury and site details (see below) using the Emergency Phone carried by the Forest School Leader, then the injured party's emergency contact will be contacted, using the Bookwhen system in place which conforms to GDPR.
2. The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
3. If the injured party is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and a member of staff will update the injured party's emergency contact about the situation.

All emergency procedures are found on the laminated card attached to the Emergency Red Bag.

### **Accident and Emergency Scenarios**

#### First aid

1. Ensure the rest of the group is safe – where appropriate delegate responsibility.
2. If appropriate, remove the danger or people from the danger.
3. Qualified First Aider called to administer First Aid and if necessary call for further assistance (999).
4. Have Medical Form details available in Emergency Bag and call parent/guardian as appropriate,
5. Record full details through School Incident Procedure back at school.

#### Lost or missing student

1. As soon as the young person is found to be missing, make the 1,2,3 call once again, make an immediate search of the vicinity and use 1, 2, 3 procedure again.
2. Assemble the rest of the group and ensure they are safe.
3. After 5 minutes call Emergency Contact to alert.
4. Continue to search for lost or missing student/s with all available personnel.

#### Death or serious accident

1. Follow First Aid procedure
2. Stay with casualty, but ensure the rest of the group is removed from the situation and is safe.
3. Staff to call parent/guardian/next of kin ASAP.
4. Gain advice on follow up from police.
5. Prepare a report, using guidance from RIDDOR.

#### Irregular occurrence, uninvited person/stranger

1. The intruder will be challenged and asked to leave politely.
2. If a young person is involved, then the police should be called and the young person should be removed from the situation and made to feel safe.
3. Inform Designated Safeguarding Officer.

#### Poor weather conditions

1. If trees are blowing more than 20 degrees, or if the group leader feels uncomfortable, take the emergency 'safe' route out ASAP.
2. Use indoor areas or shelter outdoors (away from trees) areas as alternatives.

## Behaviour problems

1. Trained members of staff to use de-escalation strategies.
2. Remove other young people from areas of risk (if deemed necessary).
3. Individual's emergency contact should be called in order to remove them from the site.
4. Subsequent meeting to discuss the individual's access to future sessions or how to integrate them back into sessions.

Please be aware than in cases of minor individual disruption or non-engagement, the session will not be stopped.

The Forest School Leader can decide to exclude a student, at any time, on the grounds of safety and behaviour.

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

All staff are responsible for keeping children safe. A copy of the additional Safeguarding Policy is available to all Little Acorns Forest Schools staff at all times.

All young people have a safe environment at Forest School in which to learn and develop:

- We practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff who work with young people.
- We continually raise awareness of child protection issues and equip young people with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- We develop and implement procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.
- We support young people who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed Child Protection Plan.
- We establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

**In addition, staff working within Forest School need to appreciate that when young people feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may be moved to disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves. Any member of staff who finds that a young person is telling them something which concerns them, should follow these simple steps:**

- **Listen**, but ask NO leading questions. Remember that you must not promise to 'keep a secret'. The general rule is that adults should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation.
- **Comfort** the young person if appropriate.
- **Inform** the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Dan Halford) or if DSL is not available, contact the Deputy DSL (Kate Morison), as soon as possible.
- **Record** any disclosures or concerns using LAFS recording sheets (or Schools recording procedure if the incident is within school) for subsequent investigation by Social Services.

**If disclosures or potential safeguarding issues arise within a school setting, they need to be reported directly to the schools DSL in order for them to invoke their procedures.**

## INCLUSION POLICY

### Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all our learners and students, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We undertake to ensure that all our learners/students:

- feel secure and know that their contributions are valued.
- appreciate and value the differences they see in others.
- take responsibility for their own actions.
- are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate for the task or connected to religious belief.
- are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success.
- have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles.
- are set challenging targets that enable them to succeed.
- participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### Policy Brief & Purpose

Our **social media policy** provides a framework for using social media. Social media is a place where people exchange information, opinions and experiences to learn, develop and have fun. Whether you're handling a corporate account or using one of your own, you should remain productive and avoid damaging our organisation in any way. This policy provides practical advice to avoid issues that might arise by careless use of social media in the workplace.

### Scope

We expect all our employees to follow this policy.

Also, by "social media", we refer to a variety of online communities like blogs, social networks, chat rooms and forums – not just platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

This policy is built around two different elements: one, using personal social media at work and two, representing our company through social media.

### Policy Elements

#### Using Personal Social Media

Little Acorns Forest School allow our employees to access their personal accounts at work. We expect you to act responsibly and ensure your productivity isn't affected.

Whether you're using your accounts for business or personal purposes, you may easily get sidetracked by the vast amount of available content. So, please restrict your use to a few minutes per workday.

We ask you to be careful when posting on social media, too. We can't restrict what you post there, but we expect you to always adhere to our confidentiality policies. We also caution you to avoid violating our anti-harassment policies or posting something that might make your collaboration with your colleagues more difficult (e.g., hate speech against groups where colleagues belong to). In general, please:

#### We advise our employees to:

- **Ensure others know that your personal account or statements don't represent our company.** You shouldn't state or imply that your personal opinions and content are authorised or endorsed by our company. We advise using a disclaimer such as "opinions are my own" to avoid misunderstandings.

- **Avoid sharing intellectual property** like trademarks on a personal account without approval. Confidentiality policies and laws always apply.
- **Avoid any defamatory, offensive or derogatory content.** It may be considered as a violation of our company's anti-harassment policy, if directed towards colleagues, clients or partners.

## Representing our Company

Some employees represent our company by handling corporate social media accounts or speak on our company's behalf. When you're sitting behind a corporate social media account, we expect you to act carefully and responsibly to protect our company's image and reputation. You should:

- **Be respectful, polite and patient**, when engaging in conversations on our company's behalf. You should be extra careful when making declarations or promises towards customers and stakeholders.
- **Avoid speaking on matters outside your field of expertise** when possible. Everyone should be careful not to answer questions or make statements that fall under somebody else's responsibility.
- **Follow our [confidentiality policy](#) and [data protection policy](#)** and observe laws on copyright, trademarks, plagiarism and fair use.
- **Only post** pictures that we have been given authorisation to use on social media (through Bookwhen when booking).
- **Avoid deleting or ignoring comments** for no reason. They should listen and reply to criticism.
- **Never post discriminatory, offensive or libellous** content and commentary.
- **Correct or remove** any misleading or false content as quickly as possible.

## Disciplinary Consequences

We'll monitor all social media postings on our business account.

We may have to take disciplinary action leading up to and including termination if employees do not follow this policy's guidelines. Examples of non-conformity with the employee social media policy include but are not limited to:

- Disregarding job responsibilities and deadlines to use social media at work.
- Disclosing confidential information through personal or corporate accounts.
- Directing offensive comments towards other members of the online community.

If you violate this policy inadvertently, you may receive a reprimand. We expect you to comply after that, or stricter [disciplinary actions](#) will apply.

## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

### Learning and Development in Forest School

At the heart of our Forest School, is the ethos that we aim to develop the 'whole' student and that its very inclusive nature means that young people of all abilities can gain a measure of success. Working with peers, we aim to develop self-confidence and reliance, development of language, decision-making, judgements and problem solving.

### Planning and Observing

The sessions are very much guided by the desires and interests of the students themselves and skills are developed over a period of time, as Forest School is an on-going and regular part of our

week. The Forest School Leader is very much a 'facilitator' as much as a teacher in a traditional sense.

A Session Plan is completed each session by the Forest School Leader and takes into account the feedback, desires and needs of the group as observed by themselves and staff during the session. The planning will also be guided by the time of year, staffing and the weather conditions etc. Observations are recorded after a session with annotated photos and written recordings. **All of these plans and evaluations are uploaded onto Google Drive to which all staff have access.**

Any learning needs or social issues are noted and certain students may be closely monitored, such as those with severe Special Educational Needs or low self-esteem. The Forest School leader briefs staff beforehand about the activities, their role and any Risk Assessments are noted.

A typical planned session will be structured as follows:

- Head count and walk to the Forest School base carrying kit.
- Safety revisions of our Forest School rules/boundaries and tool/fire use.
- A choice of planned activities available with the necessary resources/or free choice.
- A circle time with hot drinks and chat/feedback/comments.
- Head count/tool collection/walk back to school.

During the main session, staff are encouraged to work with the students and to initiate talk with questioning and encouragement. The Forest School Leader notes any feedback from the staff on the Weekly Observation Forms.

### **On-going training**

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd staff strive to give the best possible standard of delivery throughout the year and staff are encouraged to attend CPD Courses when and where possible, to enhance their own skills. Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd staff also attend regular staff meetings, to ensure that best practice is spread throughout all staff, regardless of experience and position.

### **Food Policy**

#### **Cooking Hygiene**

Ensure your hands and your participants' hands are clean. This can be done by either providing warm soapy water or if hands aren't too dirty they can be cleaned with hand sanitizer. Catering gloves can be worn when preparing food but should not be worn near the fire.

Before setting off, check your cooking equipment is clean, don't assume it is. Clean all cooking equipment after you have cooked and before storing.

Prepare food carefully following standard hygiene rules:

- Keep utensils used for preparing meat and vegetables separate.
- Wash hands between handling meat and vegetables.
- Have clean Tupperware for storing prepared food before cooking.
- Ensure meat is stored correctly before cooking.
- Waste needs to be disposed of appropriately.

When cooking:

- Avoiding tasting and returning the utensil to the food.
- Leave utensils in a clean/hygienic location. Ensure that no lids or cookware is rested on the ground – always place on a stump or purpose built shelf.
- Food falling on the floor must be disposed of.
- If hands become dirty, clean them again.
- Never leave the fire/food unattended.

When serving:

- Ensure everyone has cleaned their hands.
- Serve onto clean plates/bowls etc. Provide clean cutlery.
- Use clean utensils for serving food.
- Have facilities available for the disposal of waste.

## **Waste Disposal Policy**

### Aim:

The overall aim is to support the belief that we should leave the woodland as we found it. The policy provides clear guidelines for the disposal of waste whilst you're in the woodland environment. In this situation we will be referring to three types of waste; general rubbish, food waste and grey water.

### General Rubbish:

When in the woodland environment:

- Ensure there is a clearly designated area for the disposal of general waste, you may consider a hardy container to prevent fauna accessing the waste.
- Recyclable materials should be collected separately.
- Before leaving the site you may consider completing a litter pick. The children can form a line and walk slowly across the site picking up any stray litter.
- All rubbish should be taken with you when leaving the site, ensuring recyclable materials are dropped at the appropriate recycling centre.

### Food Waste:

When in the woodland environment:

- People often believe it is acceptable to leave organic waste in the woodland environment, however where possible this should be avoided. Leaving food waste may attract rats and other rodents. Waste food may also form an unnatural food source that fauna may become dependent upon, when you leave/change area this can lead to fauna not being able to survive.

- The same rules apply as for general rubbish. You may wish to keep food waste separate in a hard container so that fauna have no access. The food waste can also be composted once you leave the school site.

#### Grey Water:

When in the woodland environment:

-Wash dishes with hot water and a scrubbing sponge. When using soap ensure it is biodegradable soap.

-Strain the dish water through a fine mesh screen or fine fabric and into a container. The strainer catches all but the tiniest of food bits and you can then pack them in the designated rubbish area.

-The resulting water is called 'grey water' and should be disposed of by broadcasting it over a wide area. That means throwing the water out in an arc to disperse it as much as possible. This helps it evaporate faster and reduces the attraction for animals.

## Appendix 1: Tool Safety Sheet

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

### TOOL SAFETY SHEET

ALL USE OF TOOLS IS STRICTLY UNDER CLOSE 1:1 SUPERVISION

<b>Tools used</b>	Folding saw Bow saw Mallet Loppers Billhook Sheath Knife Forest Axe
<b>General Rules</b>	<p>All tools to be kept in a lockable box when not in use.</p> <p>All tools to be used from the kneeling position where appropriate.</p> <p>Cutting stations to be used.</p> <p>2 arms and a tool length must be enforced when using tools.</p> <p>Gloves to be worn when using tools / No glove on the hand holding the tool unless weather dictates otherwise.</p> <p>All tools must be maintained and sharp.</p>
<b>Bow Saw</b>	<p><b><i>Used for cutting large diameter timber and hard wood</i></b></p> <p>Saw blade cover kept attached when not in use.</p> <p>Only to be used as a pruning/coppicing tool as appropriate.</p> <p>Supporting hand is to be gloved.</p> <p>Use cross hand support if necessary.</p>
<b>Folding Saw</b>	<p><b><i>Used for cutting smaller diameter timber and harvesting working timber</i></b></p> <p>Saw blade kept folded when not in use.</p> <p>Supporting hand is to be gloved.</p> <p>Use cross hand support if necessary.</p> <p>Assistance must be provided if pruning/coppicing.</p>
<b>Mallet</b>	<p><b><i>Used for batoning firewood and driving pegs</i></b></p> <p>May be stored and transported out of the lock box.</p>

	<p>Ensure care is taken when starting the drive.</p> <p>No assisting hands at the start of the drive.</p> <p>Hands to be free of the drive area when completing the drive.</p> <p><b>If Instructor holds a knife for batoning, gloves must be worn.</b></p>
<b>Sheath Knife</b>	<p><b><i>Used for firewood prep and whittling</i></b></p> <p>Users are aware of positioning of the body in relation to knives.</p> <p>To be re-sheathed when not in use.</p> <p>Blade edge never to be touched.</p> <p>Knives may never be passed to another user.</p> <p>Knives never to be forced into the ground.</p> <p>Cuts with the knife are always made away from the body.</p>
<b>Forest Axe</b>	<p><b><i>Used for firewood prep and timber shaping</i></b></p> <p>Only to be used at a cutting station.</p> <p>Head cover to be fitted at all times when not in use.</p> <p>Only to be used as a splitting tool as appropriate to age and experience..</p> <p>Supporting hand above axe cut at all times when used for shaping.</p>
<b>Loppers</b>	<p><b>Used for woodland management on sticks smaller than 2p piece.</b></p> <p>Tool inspected prior to use and well maintained.</p> <p>Tool talk given every time used.</p> <p>Correct supervision levels at all times.</p> <p>Introduced at a suitable time in session.</p>

## Appendix 2: Fire Safety Sheet

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

### FIRE SAFETY SHEET

ALL FIRES SET BY STUDENTS ARE STRICTLY UNDER CLOSE 1:1 SUPERVISION

<p><b>Mandatory equipment</b></p>	<p><b>Safety</b></p> <p>Fire Bucket</p> <p>Fire Blanket</p> <p>Fire proof Gloves</p> <p>Burns Kit complete</p> <p>Water Container and Water</p>
<p><b>General Rules</b></p>	<p>All fires are set on designated areas.</p> <p>All fires set under the direct supervision of the forest school leader</p> <p>No accelerants are to be used.</p> <p>The fire must never be larger than necessary.</p> <p>All students and staff must wear long sleeves and trousers.</p> <p>Students are not permitted inside the fire circle unless invited to add fuel to the fire.</p> <p>All movement must be around the outside of the fire circle.</p>
<p><b>Fuel and Tinder</b></p>	<p>Fuel used for the fire must be collected from approved areas or provided.</p> <p>Acceptable tinder are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cotton Wool</li> <li>● Char Cloth</li> <li>● Birch Bark</li> <li>● Pine resin "FatWood"</li> <li>● Grass nest</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fire Lighting</b></p>	<p>All fire lighting by students must be under strict 1:1 supervision</p> <p>Jute twine or grass nests must be held by the Leader only.</p> <p>Fire steels and flint/steel use must be from the kneeling position.</p> <p>Gloves to be worn if practising friction fire methods.</p>
<p><b>Adding fuel to fire</b></p>	<p>Fuel may only be added to the fire by students only when invited to do so and under strict 1:1 supervision</p>

	<p>Only approved fuel is to be added to the fire.</p> <p>Fuel must be added from the kneeling position.</p> <p>Gloves must be worn.</p> <p>Hands must not go over the fire.</p>
<b>Smoke</b>	<p>Place students in the fire circle away from smoke drift.</p> <p>Brief correct smoke procedure.</p> <p><b>Close Eyes – Turn Head – Cover Mouth and Nose</b></p>
<b>Extinguishing the fire</b>	<p>All fire trays/fire bowls must be doused to extinguish fires.</p> <p>If possible burn fuel to ash.</p> <p>No movement from the fire circle until the fire is extinguished.</p> <p>The Forest School leader must dispose of all ash only.</p> <p><b>Students may be invited to douse the fire, but only under strict 1:1 supervision</b></p>