



## Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

### Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive, and nurturing outdoor learning environment where every child can thrive.

We recognise the unique value that time in nature brings to all learners, and we are dedicated to ensuring that children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities are fully included in all aspects of our forest school programme.

We will make every reasonable adjustment to enable equal participation and ensure that no child is disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their needs or disabilities.

## 2. Legal Framework

This policy complies with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- **Equality Act 2010** – prohibits discrimination and requires reasonable adjustments for disabled children.
- **Children and Families Act 2014** – outlines duties for supporting children with SEN and disabilities.
- **SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years (2015)** – statutory guidance on identifying and supporting children with SEN and/or disabilities.
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** – ensures safe working and learning environments.
- **The Education Act 1996** and **Special Educational Needs Regulations 2014** – detail responsibilities of educational providers.
- **Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)** – governs confidentiality and information sharing about children with additional needs.

## 3. Definitions

- **Special Educational Needs (SEN):** A child has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that requires special educational provision to be made for them (Children and Families Act 2014).
- **Disability:** A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Equality Act 2010).

A child may have both SEN and a disability, or one without the other.

## 4. Aims and Objectives

We aim to:

- Identify and respond to the individual needs of every child attending our forest school.
- Remove barriers to participation and learning in the outdoor environment.
- Promote equality of opportunity for all learners.
- Ensure early identification of SEN and effective partnership working with parents, carers, schools, and professionals.
- Provide staff with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support children with additional needs.
- Celebrate diversity and encourage empathy, respect, and inclusion among all learners.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

**Forest School Leader (Designated Inclusion Lead – Dave Churchward):**

- Ensures the policy is implemented effectively.
- Coordinates support for children with SEN/disabilities.
- Liaises with parents/carers, schools, and external agencies.
- Oversees individual support plans and accessibility adjustments.
- Monitors and reviews provision regularly.

**Forest School Staff and Volunteers:**

- Support inclusion in all activities.
- Recognise and report concerns about a child's development or access needs.
- Implement agreed strategies and reasonable adjustments.
- Maintain confidentiality and promote dignity and respect.

**Parents and Carers:**

- Provide relevant information about their child's needs.
- Work in partnership with staff to support learning and participation.
- Participate in planning and review meetings where appropriate.

## 6. Identification of Needs

Children's needs may be identified through:

- Information provided by schools, parents, or carers before sessions.
- Observations made by forest school leaders during activities.
- Discussions with parents, carers, and professionals (e.g., SENCo, health visitors, therapists).

If additional needs are identified, we will:

1. Discuss observations with parents/carers.

2. Agree on strategies or adjustments to support the child.
3. Record actions in an **Individual Support Plan (ISP)** if needed.
4. Monitor progress and review provision regularly.

## **7. Supporting Children with SEN and Disabilities**

We will make **reasonable adjustments** to ensure inclusion, which may include:

- Adapting activities, equipment, or teaching approaches.
- Providing additional adult support.
- Adjusting group sizes or session timing.
- Offering quiet or sensory spaces.
- Modifying the site layout for accessibility where possible.
- Providing alternative communication methods (e.g., visual aids, Makaton, social stories).

Where required, we will seek support from external specialists or the child's school SENCo.

## **8. Accessibility**

- We aim to improve physical access (e.g., paths, shelters, toilet facilities) where possible.
- Information can be provided in alternative formats (large print, pictorial, or digital).
- Safety and access plans are developed collaboratively with families for each child.

## **9. Training and Professional Development**

All staff receive:

- Training in inclusive outdoor learning practices.
- Regular first aid and medical needs training (including anaphylaxis, epilepsy, diabetes where relevant).
- Additional CPD (Continuing Professional Development) in response to specific children's needs.

## **10. Health, Safety, and Risk Assessment**

- Individual risk assessments will be created for children with additional needs.
- Adjustments will be made to supervision levels, emergency procedures, and activity plans.
- Parents/carers are invited to contribute to risk assessments to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.
- Safety is balanced with the Forest School ethos of supported risk-taking and experiential learning.

## 11. Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise parents and carers as experts on their children and value their knowledge and input.

We will:

- Communicate openly and sensitively.
- Share observations and plans.
- Encourage feedback and collaboration.
- Review support strategies together at least annually or as needs change.

## 12. Monitoring and Review

- The Forest School Leader will review each child's participation and progress regularly.
- Feedback from parents, children, and staff will inform future planning.
- The policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with changes to legislation or best practice.

## 13. Complaints Procedure

If a parent or carer feels their child has been treated unfairly or that reasonable adjustments have not been made:

1. They should first raise the concern with the Forest School Leader.
2. If unresolved, it will be escalated to the Forest School Manager or Governing Body.
3. Parents may also seek advice from the **Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)** or **SENDIASS**.

## 14. Related Policies

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy

Policy written by: Kate Morison (Lead Practitioner)

*Reviewed January 2026*