

# Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd



## Health and Safety Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and enriching Forest School environment where children and young people can explore, learn, and take appropriate risks in a natural outdoor setting. We recognise that risk is a valuable part of learning and aim to manage risk sensibly, not eliminate it, in line with Forest School principles.

We will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of participants, staff, volunteers, and visitors during Forest School sessions.

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### 2. Aims of the Policy

- To comply with relevant health and safety legislation
  - To identify, assess, and manage risks associated with Forest School activities
  - To promote safe practice while supporting appropriate risk-taking
  - To ensure all staff understand their health and safety responsibilities
  - To provide clear procedures for emergencies and incidents
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### 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Forest School sessions delivered by Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd
  - All staff, volunteers, students, and visitors
  - All participants, including children and young people
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### 4. Relevant Legislation and Guidance (UK)

This policy is informed by, and complies with, the following legislation and guidance:

- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974**
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
- **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013**
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**

- **Children Act 1989 and 2004**
  - **Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984**
  - **Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998**
  - **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002**
  - **Equality Act 2010**
  - **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework** (where applicable)
  - **Forest School Association (FSA) Good Practice Guidance**
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## **5. Responsibilities**

### **Forest School Leader**

The Forest School Leader is responsible for:

- Ensuring suitable and sufficient risk–benefit assessments are completed and reviewed
- Maintaining appropriate Forest School qualifications and first aid certification
- Ensuring tools and equipment are used safely and appropriately
- Monitoring weather, site conditions, and participant wellbeing
- Ensuring emergency procedures are understood and followed

### **Staff and Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers must:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others
- Follow risk assessments, safety procedures, and leader instructions
- Report hazards, near misses, and incidents promptly
- Model safe behaviour and appropriate tool use

### **Participants**

Participants are encouraged to:

- Follow safety instructions and boundaries
  - Respect others, the environment, and equipment
  - Develop awareness of risk and personal responsibility appropriate to their age
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## **6. Risk Management**

### **Risk–Benefit Assessments**

- Written risk–benefit assessments will be carried out for the site and for specific activities (e.g. tool use, fire lighting, tree climbing).

- Assessments will be reviewed regularly and adapted to changing conditions such as weather, seasons, and group needs.
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### **Site Safety**

- The Forest School site will be checked before each session for hazards such as broken branches, unstable trees, sharp objects, or animal waste.
  - Clear physical and behavioural boundaries will be established with participants.
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## **7. Tools and Fire Safety**

- Tools (e.g. knives, saws, loppers) will only be used under direct supervision by trained staff.
  - Participants will receive clear instruction and demonstrations before using tools.
  - Fires will only be lit where permitted, following a specific fire risk assessment.
  - Fire areas will be clearly marked, and safe distances enforced.
  - Water, fire blankets, and first aid supplies will be available at all times.
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## **8. Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment**

- Participants are required to wear weather-appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear.
  - Additional PPE (e.g. gloves) will be provided where necessary.
  - Parents/carers will be informed of clothing requirements in advance.
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## **9. First Aid and Medical Needs**

- A qualified Outdoor or Paediatric First Aider will be present at every session.
  - A first aid kit will be available and checked regularly.
  - Medical information, allergies, and emergency contacts will be collected and kept accessible.
  - Medication will be administered in line with Little Acorns's first aid and medication policy.
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## **10. Emergency Procedures**

- Emergency procedures will be explained to all staff and participants at the start of sessions.
- A mobile phone and emergency contact details will be available at all times.
- Clear access points for emergency services will be identified.

- Incidents and accidents will be recorded and reported in line with RIDDOR where required.
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## 11. Safeguarding and Wellbeing

- Safeguarding procedures will be followed in line with Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd's Safeguarding Policy.
  - Staff will be DBS-checked where required.
  - Ratios will be maintained appropriate to age, need, and activity.
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## 12. Environmental Considerations

- The Forest School follows a "leave no trace" ethos.
  - Activities will promote respect for wildlife and natural habitats.
  - Risk assessments will consider environmental impact as well as safety.
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## 13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or:

- Following an incident or near miss
  - When legislation or guidance changes
  - When activities or sites change
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**Policy reviewed on:** January 2026

**Next review due:** January 2027

**Signed:** Kate Morison

**Role:** Lead Practitioner at Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd