

Mount Street Nursery & Infants School



Forest School Policy

Date	November 2023
Review Date	November 2026

Contents

- Introduction
- Purpose & Aims
- Environmental Considerations and Conservation
- Legislation
- Links with existing School Policies
- Health and Safety
- Emergency Action Plan
- Risk Assessments and Risk management
- Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires
- Communication
- The Role of the Woodland Leader
- Our Forest School Rules
- Routines and Procedures for Forest School
- Essential Equipment for Forest School
- Clothing Requirements
- Toileting Consideration
- Insurance Requirements

Introduction

Teachers and our school PTA planted our Millennium Wood in 1999, with support from the Brecon Beacon National Park and the National Trust. A section of the school playing field was fenced off and a variety of trees typical of our area were planted. The use of our woodland was developed when the forest school initiative was introduced to our school community. Most children visit the school woodland with their class on a regular basis. The Toddler Group visits the woodlands as part of their Thursday morning meeting.

Woodland Learning includes Forest School and the Foundation Phase Curriculum.

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. The child is never put in a position where he/she will fail so success is attained. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

Learning in our woodland provides the opportunity to learn, extend and consolidate skills from the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Purpose/Aims of Woodland Learning and Forest School

- To provide children with experiences that encourage an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Woodland Learning and Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans and evaluations. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of being an Eco School. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave.

The teacher with responsibility for the Millennium Wood will monitor the site so that it does not become overused.

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts.

The risk assessments carried out for visits to our woodland are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures at our school are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

Mount Street Infant School staff should be familiar with the following school policies:

*Health and Safety Policy

*First Aid policy,

*Risk Assessment Policy and Risk Assessments particular to visits to the Millennium Wood and to the use of small tools

*Asthma Policy if asthmatics are attending sessions

*Food Policy

*Safeguarding Policy

*Equality & Inclusion Policy

*Behaviour Policy

Risk assessments for the Millennium Wood site and forest school activities and using small tools are included in the Forest School Folder.

Health and Safety

The woodland curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the Risk Assessment File in the school office.

A first aid kit is taken to all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, a mobile phone is carried and the teacher/leader would contact the school office immediately for assistance. The school will provide additional support or will contact the emergency services or parents.

Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures listed in this document.

Safeguarding

Our woodland sessions are run by class teachers or Level 3 Forest School Practitioners. Many of our teachers are fully trained Forest School Leaders. The leader of each session is supported by members of staff and parent volunteers.

Everyone involved in woodland visits is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.

All Mount Street Infant School staff and volunteers have current DBS checks.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers and our school Safeguarding Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality is maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the class teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Equality and Inclusion

Throughout the school day we aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

Behaviour

When visiting the Millennium Wood the Behaviour Policy of Mount Street Infant School is upheld.

We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office.

Medical – Emergency

The class teacher or first aider present with the casualty in the woodland would contact the school office for support, which may include contacting the emergency services.

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff would direct the emergency services to the casualty. The group's First Aider would attend to the casualty until the Emergency Services arrive. Members of school staff or parent would accompany the casualty to hospital.

The adult accompanying the casualty would return to school once the child was in the care of their parents/carers.

The class teacher would oversee the rest of the group are counted and prepared to return to school.

In the event of an adult needing emergency attention it must be judged whether they need to be accompanied or support may be required. Decisions taken must ensure the safety of the children within the group and accompanying adults.

In the event of the adult with responsibility for the woodland session needed emergency assistance it would be expected for additional staff to return the children to school and another adult would stay with the casualty.

Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school.
Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

Emergency Services 999
Mount Street Infant School Office 01874 623038

Location of Forest School Site:
Mount Street Infant School
Rhosferig Road
Brecon
LD3 7NG

Millennium Wood

Risk assessments for the Millennium Wood site and forest school activities and using small tools are included in the Forest School Folder.

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

Site Assessment
Use of small tools
Collection of material activities

Preparing for a visit to the Millennium Wood

The leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at the Millennium Woods

Tools and the safe use of tools are an important part of our woodland learning. The teacher with responsibility for woodland learning will carefully manage their use. Tools may be used with the children or with adults for the management of the woodland.

When using tools good practice will be demonstrated by the teacher.

- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the teacher feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be introduced with a 1:1 adult to child ratio. When using potato peelers and junior hacksaws the adult in charge may decide to increase the number of children using a tool but close supervision must be maintained at all times.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the teacher's responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.

- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires in the Millennium Wood.

The Head Teacher must give permission before the lighting of a fire.

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:

Stand behind the log

Step over and sit down on log

Stand up, turn around and step over log

Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle.

In addition to the other resources, a large bucket full of water must be taken.

When lighting a fire:

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility once the fire is lit. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.
- Have a bucket of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will be sat at the log circle.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at the Millennium Wood:

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication and copies of Care Plans will be in the class teacher's rucksack.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the teacher with the responsibility for woodland learning.

The teacher will carry out a detailed safety check each week and comply with health and safety risk assessments. The teacher will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.

The role of the class teacher for the woodland learning.

- The teacher is responsible for the organising the planning and running class woodland sessions.
- The class teacher has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The class teacher will carry out a safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The class teacher will carry an emergency pack at all times.
- The class teacher is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The class teacher record incidents in the school accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Our Forest School Rules

1. Walk, never run
2. Stay outside the log circle.
3. Listen carefully to the sounds of your groups and wildlife.
4. Look after plants and creatures. Never pick flowers or leaves.
5. Be quiet.
6. Use tools and equipment safely.
7. Ask an adult to pick up any litter. Don't touch it yourself.

Routines and Procedures for Woodland Learning

Preparation - The teacher will do a sweep of the site prior to the weekly sessions.

Each teacher will check their rucksack contains all essential items.

First Aid kit, inhalers, wipes and spare hats and gloves (children's and adults) are kept in the rucksack. The tool bag, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate. The class teacher or class-teaching assistant will carry the rucksack to the site.

Waterproofs will be taken to the classroom prior to session.

Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs and wellington boots. Woodland safety rules will be shared with the group.

During the session children participate in a variety of activities, which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. They also learn how to watch and cook over fires safely when appropriate.

The children learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools. This is a tightly supervised activity on a 1:1 ratio of adult to children. It is introduced gradually in small steps.

Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment. Back at school children will remove waterproofs and wellington boots following class routines and ensure they have all washed their hands.

After the session equipment will be washed and stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and returned to storage. Flasks and water containers will be emptied and cleaned out. Tools (if taken) will be cleaned and stored safely in the outdoor

shed or the cupboard in Dosbarth Bluebell.

Visits to the Millennium Woods will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds, or blizzards. Adapted classroom activities will take place instead.

Visits to the Millennium Woods may not be able to go ahead if there are not enough adults to accompany the class. If no replacement adult can be found then the session will be cancelled.

Essential Equipment needed at woodland sessions:

A rucksack - containing the following essential items will always accompany the group:

- Mobile phone
- Medical Information for pupils at identified risk. (nut allergies, asthma)
- Newspaper and Matches (Campfire sessions only)
- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- Sun cream
- First Aid Kit
- Inhalers
- Carry bag for dirty / wet items
- Spare hat & gloves for children and adults

Clothing Requirements For woodland sessions:

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a woodland session (even adult volunteers).

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Waterproof trousers
- Spare socks
- Stout shoes/wellies/boots

Toileting considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the Classroom. Any children needing the toilet during the session will use the nearest school toilets. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

This Woodland Learning Policy has been written in agreement with the Head Teacher, Staff and Governors of Mount Street Infant School School.

It will be reviewed every three years.

Signed:(Chair of Governors)

Date:

Date of Review: November 2026

Appendix A

Forest School and visits to Mount Street Infants Woodland.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment has been carried out on the Forest School Site. All adults need to familiarise themselves with the risk assessment and the Forest School Site before using the site with a group of children.

Risk assessments for activities that are repeated frequently, such as collecting natural materials, have been prepared and are included in this pack of Forest School Risk Assessments. However the risk assessments must be read carefully by the adult responsible for the group and adapted to be ability and age appropriate.

Risk assessments for new activities should be completed before the children take part in the new activities to be undertaken during the visit. Blank copies are attached.

Before visiting the Forest School Site a pre-session check should be made and a three level check should be carried out. This involves looking for potential danger or hazards on the ground, at eye level and above. A blank pre-session checklist is included in the handbook.

The pre-session check may involve clearing up broken bottles and litter. Most poisonous plants have been removed but the site is a natural area and this cannot be maintained at all times. Please look at the pictures of the Lords and Ladies plant, which is sometimes growing within the woodland despite being removed regularly.

It is vital that at the end of Forest School sessions that the woodland is left litter free and clear of any constructions or art work. Any dens should be taken down and sticks left lying on the ground away from the paths.

Risk Assessment

Hazard – Anything that can cause harm

Risk – Is the chance, high to low, that somebody will be harmed by the hazard.

5 Steps to Risk Assessment

1. Look for hazards.
2. Decide who may be harmed.
3. Evaluate the risks. Are the risks high, medium or low?

Definition of Risks

Low – Something that will result in minor damage or slight harm.

Medium – Something that may result in significant damage, loss or injury. (Will need to go to hospital)

High – Something that may result in extensive damage, severe injury or death.

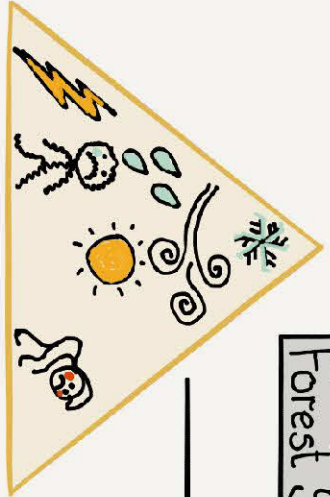
4. Record findings. Consider control measure to avoid risk or reduce likelihood of risk to a minimum.
5. Review regularly - Update risk assessments. Site checks. Activity checks.

Establish a list of age appropriate rules to follow with your group to promote safe behaviour and an awareness of how the woodland needs to be cared for. This is a list of rules made by a group of Year 2 children.

Our Forest School Rules

1. Walk, never run
2. Stay outside the log circle.
3. Listen carefully to the sounds of your groups and wildlife.
4. Look after plants and creatures. Never pick flowers or leaves.
5. Be quiet.
6. Use tools and equipment safely.
7. Ask an adult to pick up any litter. Don't touch it yourself.

Forest School Safety



Check the weather! Change activity!

hot cold wet

sun clouds snowflake lightning bolt person with hat



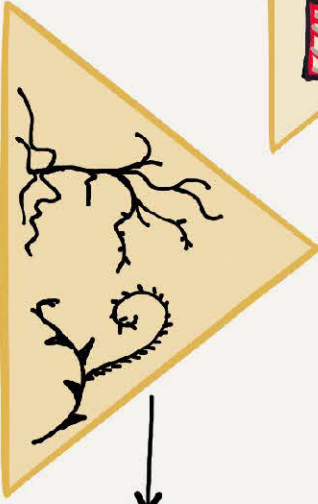
One named fire leader.

Walk around the outside of the log circle.

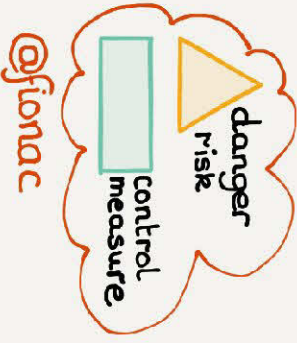


Ask an adult for help!

~~Use~~ ~~litter~~ ~~unknown objects~~



LOOK WALK



@fionac