



Growing Habitats, Biodiversity and Local Organic Food

Website: www.growinggardens.ie

Blog: <http://thegrownetwork.blogspot.ie>

Email: growinggardens@gmail.com

0876508226

FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK

POLICIES & PROCEDURES



LUCY BELL

GROWING GARDENS

©2014

Table of Contents:

1. Forest School Policy (Learning & Development Policy)

- 1.1. Ethos of Forest School
- 1.2. Environmental Awareness Policy
- 1.3. Rules of Forest School
- 1.4. Forest School Guidelines
- 1.5. Role Specifications
- 1.6. Insurance Requirements

2. Legislation Relating to Policies & Procedures

3. Health & Safety Procedures

- 3.1. First-Aid Provision
- 3.2. Health & Safety Policy
- 3.3. Accident and Emergency Procedures
- 3.4. Accident and Emergency Scenarios

4. Child Protection Policy

- 4.1. Child Protection Policy
- 4.2. Equality & Diversity Policy

5. Risk Management Policy

- 5.1. Site Risk Assessment Procedures
- 5.2. Daily Operating Procedures
- 5.3. Managing Risk with Group
- 5.4. Fire policy
- 5.5. Tool Safety Policy
- 5.6. Travel Policy

6. Appendices

- 6.1. Appendix 1: Daily Site Check List
- 6.2. Appendix 2: Site Risk Assessment
- 6.3. Appendix 3: Forest School Medical Form
- 6.4. Appendix 4: Forest School Consent Form

Our Policies and Procedures are realistic and attainable; our handbook should reflect our practice. As our practice develops and changes, so too should our handbook.

All policies and procedures should be signed and dated by the author, with a review date specified, at least annually or after a change, incident or near miss.

Most recent review: November 2015

Forest School Policy (Learning & Development Policy)

1.1 Purpose of Forest School

The philosophy of **Forest Schools** is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age through an innovative, long term, educational approach to outdoor play and learning in a woodland environment.

Forest School is an ethos. Groups of children (or young adults) make regular visits to a natural, usually woodland, environment over a long period of time. They play; learning how to manage the risks they take and benefit from being in the outdoors. Focus is on learning that puts emotional, social and behavioural development of the children/young adults at the forefront.

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.

Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.

The 6 principles of Forest School:

- FS is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
- FS aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

1.2 Environmental Awareness Policy

Ecological Impact on Forest School Site:

There are of course consequences to running forest schools' projects at a woodland site. The increased footfall of young people will of course impact on the ground. The philosophy of this Forest School shall be to try and minimise the harm caused to local plant species and wildlife on the site. During the Forest School sessions, the participants shall be encouraged to be more responsible for the protection of plants and wildlife and be aware of their surroundings. We shall abide by The Forest School Rules and The Leave No Trace 7 Principles.

See Section 7, Ecological Impact on Site and Long-term Woodland Management Plan

Extract:

3-year woodland management plan.

- Ground – continuous footfall on pathways and more specifically on wild areas with ground cover such as ivy, bramble, and other wild plants – these will get walked on, bashed, broken and worn down with continued footfall from a forest school. If there is bad weather, or water underfoot – this would increase the breakdown of the ground into a potential mud bath, which would also then pose hazards to groups present.
- Trees – branches might get broken or snapped from presence of a group – unintentional or intentional – this is liable to happen
- Shrub layer – bushes and shrubs at children's height – branches broken, some of the plants trampled on, general wear and tear from presence of group

1. Maintenance/Impact on woods

- Vary the areas of wood that are used – repeated use of one area would cause breakdown/ damage to ground layer plants especially
- Teach children about the various plants – raise awareness of plants around them
- Don't use woods during wet periods – it would destroy the ground layer
- Observation – tree diseases, damage – pruning necessary to maintain trees in good condition
- Coppice saplings – small trees growing too near mature trees, general thinning that is needed – useful resources for forest school – and a resource that will come back but also manage the woodland

2. Long-term:

- Tree Seed collection – there are tons of trees seeds in the area, on the walk to the woods, on the trees at the edge of and in the woods – tree nursery project with forest schoolers – gather tree seeds, and plant in a tree nursery in school – grow the trees – pot on – eventually re-pot into the woods.

- Planting new trees, shrub & ground layer
- Coppicing trees – new saplings will grow – can use wood for forest school projects
- Introduce new ground cover plants – to knit ground layer together to decrease ground being damaged by presence of groups
- Introduce habitats such as log piles and bug hotels, these can be done by FS participants

Leave No Trace Policy

At the heart of **Leave No Trace** are 7 principles for reducing the damage caused by outdoor activities.

<p>1. Plan Ahead and Prepare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you go check, where possible, if access is allowed and your activity is permitted in the area you wish to visit. • Respect any signs, regulations, policies and special concerns for the area that you wish to visit. Permits may sometimes be needed for activities on public lands. • Where possible travel by public transport or share cars; consider the availability of parking. • Ensure you have the skills and equipment needed for your activity and to cope with emergencies that could arise. • Check the weather forecast and always be prepared for changing weather conditions. • For environmental and safety reasons, and to minimise your impact on other users, keep group numbers small; split larger parties into smaller groups. 	<p>2. Be Considerate of Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the people who live and work in the countryside. • Park appropriately - avoid blocking gateways, forest entrances or narrow roads. Remember that farm machinery, local residents and the emergency services may need access at all times. • Take care not to damage property, especially walls, fences and crops. • Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. • Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep noise to a minimum.
<p>3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs should be kept under close control and should only be brought onto hills or farmland with the landowner's permission. Some public areas stipulate that dogs must be kept on a lead at all times, please adhere to local guidelines. • Observe wild animals and birds from a distance. Avoid disturbing them, particularly at sensitive times: mating, nesting and raising young (mostly between spring and early summer). • Keep wildlife wild, don't feed wild animals or birds - our foods damage their health and leave them vulnerable to predators. • Farm animals are not pets; remain at a safe distance. 	<p>4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground</p> <p>Durable ground includes established tracks and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.</p> <p>In popular areas: Concentrate use on existing tracks and campsites. To avoid further erosion, travel in single file in the middle of the track even when wet or muddy.</p> <p>In more remote areas: Disperse use to prevent the creation of new tracks and campsites. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning to show.</p> <p>If camping: Protect water quality by camping at least 30m from lakes and streams. Keep campsites small and discreet. Aim to leave your campsite as you found it, or better.</p>

<p>5. Leave What You Find</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect property. For example, farming or forestry machinery, fences, stone walls etc. Leave gates as you find them (open or closed). • Preserve the past: examine - without damaging - archaeological structures, old walls and heritage artefacts e.g. holy wells, mine workings, monuments. • Conserve the present: leave rocks, flowers, plants, animals and all natural habitats as you find them. Fallen trees are a valuable wildlife habitat; do not remove or use for firewood. • Avoid introducing non-native plants and animals e.g. zebra mussels in rivers and lakes. • Do not build rock cairns, structures or shelters 	<p>6. Dispose of Waste Properly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If You Bring It In, Take It Out" - take home all litter and leftover food (including tea bags, fruit peels and other biodegradable foods). • To dispose of solid human waste, dig a hole 15-20cms deep and at least 30m from water, campsites and tracks. Cover and disguise the hole when finished. • Bring home toilet paper and hygiene products. • Wash yourself or your dishes 30m away from streams or lakes and if necessary use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Bring home any solids and scatter strained dishwater. • For more information on sanitation in the outdoors read the "Where to go in the outdoors" leaflet
<p>7. Minimise the Effects of Fire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires can cause lasting impacts and be devastating to forests, natural habitats and farmland. Therefore, when camping use, a lightweight stove for cooking. • Where fires are permitted: Use established fire rings, barbecues or create a mound fire. • Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Do not use growing vegetation for use as firewood. • Avoid burning plastics or other substances: which emit toxic fumes. • Burn all fires to ash, put out fires completely, and then scatter cool ashes 	

1.3 Rules of Forest School

- Look after the Forest School
- Eating Plants: Do not pick anything growing without checking with the FS leader, if it is ok to do so
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth (younger participants)
- Stay within the boundaries marked at the start of the session, (this is mentioned at the start of every session)
- Stay outside of the fire circle (when allowed to light fires), do not cross through the fire circle
- Look above, below and around for hazards
- Answer and return to the leader when the group call is made
- You must listen and follow instructions from the Forest School leader at all times

1.4 Forest School Guidelines

Procedures to be carried out before each session:

Before Visit:

1. Risk assessment of site to be undertaken.
2. A detailed check of the site will be carried out before each session to check for any litter, glass, animal faeces etc. Any such items shall be collected using plastic bags and disposable gloves.
3. A written record will be kept of each check (Appendix 1). This shall state if any hazards were found and how they were dealt with.
4. Contact with school and teacher involved, discussion of group members, special needs identified, pupil to teacher ratio agreed (according to LEA guidelines?), timing of session agreed, travel arrangements
5. Information sent to school and woodland site owners – site risk assessment, letter including agreement of responsibilities.
6. Check of weather conditions. If it is excessively windy or a thunder storm is imminent or has commenced, then it will not be advisable to carry out a Forest School session.

On Arrival:

1. The group size and number of accompanying adults will be counted.
2. Re-confirm timing of session, clarifying finishing time.
3. Sit down and discuss rules
4. The group will be made aware of/sit down and discuss: hazards – risks associated with the river, how to be in the space safely, trip hazards, dodgy branches, brambles etc, rules on eating plants, fungi etc., boundaries of the site
5. Group call - crow call/whistle - used as a call to bring group back together – must be obeyed when heard
6. Put on outdoor clothes and boots. (See clothing requirements).

(Optional) Hazards Intro session:

- Participants to walk the boundaries in groups and identify hazards.
- Sit together and discuss safety issues again.

N.B. If a participant identifies a potential hazard have them place a flag near it and tell a leader.

During Session:

1. Forest School leader will carry first-aid kit, whistle, mobile phone and if possible radio (depending on location) for emergency purposes.
2. Regular headcounts will be performed throughout the session.

3. Activities with specific risks will be outlined before those activities take place.
4. Provide instructions for the session, identifying resources and session focus.
5. If possible, participants to have time exploring & to have time to enjoy a 'sit spot'.
6. Snack time if needed, ensure participant have cleaned their hands with wipes first.
7. Discuss session, allowing participant to feedback if they wish to.

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

- ✓ Collect resources in containers (check all are returned) and ensure forest school area is tidy.
- ✓ Participants to walk to the gate in pairs.
- ✓ Once through the gate participant can walk ahead of the leaders.
- ✓ Return resources to the storage area.
- ✓ Remove outdoor clothing.
- ✓ Wash hands.

Toileting Procedure

If a participant needs to use a toilet they shall have to inform a member of staff who will then give them permission to go to the public toilet in the grounds. An adult will accompany anyone under the age of 18 years.

Clothing Requirement (for everyone)

- Woolly hat/ Sun hat
- Gloves
- Jacket/ waterproof coat
- Fleece/Jumper
- waterproof trousers/ Long trousers
- Spare socks
- Sturdy Footwear- Trainers/Wellies/Boots
- An emergency change of clothes and a carrier bag for dirty/wet clothing

Equipment

Emergency Bag (kept in a backpack):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| • Register with emergency numbers/contact numbers | • Water bottle |
| • Medical forms | • Blanket |
| • Mobile phone/ Means of communication | • Nature reference books |
| • Newspaper | • Species List for site |
| • Matches | • Container for medical items |
| | • Carrier Bags |

- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- First aid kit including plasters, bandages and scissors.
- Hot chocolate and snack
- Risk assessment

Possible Activity Equipment

- Trowels and rakes
- Magnifying glasses
- Identification books
- Local Wildlife Puppet i.e. Rabbit for base camp/ small mouse for sharing time.
- Bird song Birds
- Buckets/Pots
- Paintbrushes
- Fire pit when allowed to light fires
- String
- Bow saw
- Penknife

*Any further equipment taken to the site must be deemed appropriate by Forest School Leader.

1.5 Role Specifications

Role Responsibilities:

Please read the following agreement of responsibilities to ensure we meet health and safety requirements and to ensure the children have an enjoyable and safe time.

Staff Qualifications:

Forest School Leaders must have at least Forest School Leadership Training, Level 3 Certificate, basic Wilderness First-Aid Training.

The forest school leader must:

1. Undertake a site risk assessment of the proposed site in advance of the sessions.
2. Put in place safety measures based on that site risk assessment.
3. Carry out a safety check before each session.
4. Take regular head counts during the session.
5. Ensure the safety of participant and leaders travelling to and from the forest school site.
6. Ensure the safety of participants and leaders whilst at the site.
7. Provide clear guidance and expectations to leaders and participants.
8. Long-term projects: To assess the site on a quarterly basis.

The school/teacher must:

1. Take overall responsibility for the group.

2. Share knowledge of the group in terms of special needs and medical needs of specific members of the group.
3. Brief support staff on their role before commencing the project.
4. School Group leaders must have contact details of the school and carry a mobile phone.

Support Staff/Volunteers:

- Ensure the safety of participant and leaders as they travel to and from the forest school site.
- Partake in participant's activities.
- Ask open ended questions rather than directing them to activities or telling them what to do.
- Record observations.

Parent Helper:

- Assist with carrying resources to and from site.
- Partake in participant's activities.
- Ask open ended questions rather than directing them to activities or telling them what to do.
- Record observations.

1.6 Insurance requirements

Forest School leader running Forest School Programme, must have Public Liability Insurance, to specifically cover Forest School activities.

2. Legislation relating to Policies & Procedures

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Acts 2005 and 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011
- Health and Safety Authority Guidelines on First Aid at Places of Work, 2008

Legislation

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the main provisions for securing and improving the safety, health and welfare of people at work. The law applies to all places of work regardless of how many workers are employed and includes the self-employed.

Employer Duties

The core of the legislation is the risk assessment approach and the legal duty on employers to prepare a written health and safety document referred to as a Safety Statement. Employers (including self-employed persons) are also responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace.

Risk Management and Assessment Policy

We understand that we are required to keep children safe and to produce a Child Safeguarding Statement, as per the Children's First Bill 2014.

By law, organisations providing services to children and young people will now be required to undertake an assessment of any risks to a child while the child is availing of its services, and use this as the basis for developing a Child Safeguarding Statement. The purpose of the Statement is to identify how the organisation will manage any risks identified in the risk assessment. The Safeguarding Statement will also outline how staff/volunteers will be provided with information to identify abuse which children may experience outside the organisation, and what they should do with any concerns about child safety.

3. Health & Safety Procedures

3.1 Health & Safety Policy

Statement of Aims.

Forest School sessions offer learning opportunities for children and young people. Part of their purpose is to encourage participants to face new challenges and learn to take reasonable risks. In order to do that safely, the adults involved must know their role and ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out regularly and thoroughly. The following guidance for adults and children must be clearly understood by all concerned.

1. However, many leaders 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 participants in his/her charge, but all leaders are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure participant are safe.
3. The Forest School Leader or another member of teaching staff is competent to lead the activity and is familiar with the site.
4. All leader helpers 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.
5. Whenever sessions are being carried out the Forest School Leader will inform staff of the group's whereabouts and for how long we intend to stay in the area.
6. The Forest School Leader or Assistant will carry the Emergency Bag, with:
 - a. First-aid Kit
 - b. Essential survival equipment;
 - c. A contact list for each participant undertaking the activities
 - d. The schools' telephone number.
7. The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone.
8. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services.
9. The risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place.
10. The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every session.
11. The adult: child ratio is appropriate. When tools are used the leader: participant ratio will always be 1:1.
12. Adequate child protection procedures are in place.
13. Parents have signed consent forms.
14. Arrangements have been made for the medical and special educational needs of children attending.
15. There is adequate and relevant insurance cover.
16. The Forest School leader, teacher and school contact have a copy of the emergency procedures, the names of everyone in the group and contact details for the next of kin.

Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader should have the overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit. The leader should:

- Obtain the head teachers permission for visits to the Forest School site.
- Follow the health and safety guidelines and policies.
- Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment.
- Clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned.
- Be familiar with the site.
- Be aware of child protection issues.
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision is available.
- Undertake the planning and preparation for the visit, including briefing group members.
- Review activities and advise teacher where adjustments may be necessary.
- Ensure that teachers/adults are aware of what the visit involves.
- Observe the guidance for teachers and other adults

First Aid Provision (incl. Emergency equipment carried)

We aim to collate all medical and special needs of each participant by asking for emergency contact numbers and any medical or other kinds of needs that we need to know, from the parent/primary carer, in order to ensure the safety of the participant, other participants, staff and site. The form shall be carried at all times in case of an emergency. (Appendix 3)

Emergency Equipment carried:

- First Aid kit, 1 per Leader
- Emergency Shelter for 8 people
- Emergency contact list with each participants' medical needs, medical waiver and emergency contact number
- Emergency Contact Numbers:

Emergency Contacts:

Emergency Services:	999
Security at Castletown House	*radio them*
Pauline Kennedy, Education Officer, Castletown House	01 628 8252/ 01 6271928
Lucy Bell, Forest School Leader	087 6508226
Gillian Flynn, teacher, Salesian College	087 2329998
Salesian College	01 627 2166 or 01 627 2200

(from Pilot Forest School)

3.3 Accident and Emergency Procedures

In case of Emergency:

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the group leader should maintain or resume control of the group overall. She/he will, however, delegate responsibility when necessary, so all leaders accompanying the visit must read and sign the visit handbook before the trip begins.

The group leader will:	details
Carry out preliminary assessment of the situation, establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible.	See scenarios
Ensure that the entire group are safe and looked after and kept together.	All other leaders will be told as soon as possible and allocated roles; roles may be changed as needed.
Establish the names of any casualties and carry out basic first-aid to manage accident/injury to student.	Participant's names and medical details will be in the emergency bag. First Aid box will be on site.
Call emergency services if needs be.	Another leader may be asked to do this. In this location (Forest School Pilot) – call security at the House – *use security radio given by Castletown House. * they have direct link to emergency services and can direction clearly to location to maximise accuracy of emergency services arrival point.
Ensure that a teacher or teaching assistant accompanies casualties to hospital with any relevant medical information	In extremis a CRB checked leader may have to take this role
Inform the college of the name of the casualty and details of their injuries plus action taken so far.	Head of Department will notify the police if necessary
Pass on to college details of nature, date and time, location of the incident.	Head will notify parents, providing as full a factual account of the incident as possible.
Write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence. Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident.	
Complete an accident report form as soon as possible. Inform the Health and Safety Officer.	

3.4 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 check A-B-C, administer First Aid and if necessary call for further assistance (999 or 112)
4. Have medical form details available in emergency bag and call parent/guardian as appropriate.
5. Record full details through college incident procedure back at college.
6. Follow up to parents as usual.

Lost or Missing Participant

1. As soon as participant is found to be missing, make an immediate search of vicinity and use 1, 2, 3 procedures.
2. Assemble rest of participants and ensure they are safe.
3. Call college to alert and then college calls police (and parent/guardian).
4. Follow college critical incident procedure.

Death or Serious Accident

1. Follow First Aid procedure.
2. Stay with casualty, but ensure rest of group is removed from the situation and is safe.
3. College to call parent/guardian/next of kin ASAP.
4. Follow college critical incident procedure.
5. Gain advice on follow up from police.

4 Child Protection Policy

4.1 Child Protection Policy



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

©2014

1. Statement

It is the policy of GROWing Gardens Forest School to safeguard all children and young people from physical, sexual and emotional harm while participating in Forest School activities.

GROWing Gardens Forest School will take all reasonable steps to create an environment where children are safe from abuse, in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to using the following procedures and guidelines.

The GROWing Gardens Child Protection Policy focuses on:

- Minimising the risk of abuse taking place through good planning and best practice
- Empowering those it works with to stay safe and speak out
- Taking appropriate action when any allegations arise

2. Definition of Child Abuse

An abused child is any boy or girl under the age of 18 whom has suffered from or is believed to be at significant risk of:

▪ Neglect	▪ Physical injury
▪ Emotional abuse	▪ Sexual abuse
▪ Or bullying.	

Child abuse can be carried out by *anyone* who has contact with the child. This *could* be friends, family, other children, a stranger or someone who is known and trusted.

3. Staff & Volunteers

- All Forest School Leaders will have current Garda vetting and previous work references.
- FS Leaders and volunteers will have job descriptions and clearly defined roles.
- Volunteers working directly with children will be vetted by gathering some of the following: references / employment history / record of qualification /or because we will have had prior personal knowledge of the person

- Participants will not be left unsupervised with a visitor or volunteer with no previous record of working with GROWing Gardens.

4. Preventing abuse by means of good practice

Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence, through our support in making choices and finding words to describe their feelings and manageable ways of expressing them. This will enable our children to work toward resisting inappropriate approaches.

5. Ratios

The following minimum adult ratios will ensure appropriate support and supervision of vulnerable groups at all times:

For children

Foundation Stage: 1 adult: 4 children

Key Stage 1: 1 adult: 6 children

Key Stage 2: 1 adult: 10 children

These ratios are for guidance only for groups of children and suitable levels of support should be determined in advance depending on the types of activity and needs of the group.

6. Toileting

Where possible only the group's supporting staff or the child's/adult's parents may assist children with toileting.

7. Photos & Video

Permission will be requested, via consent form prior to Forest School taking place, to take photographs of participants for monitoring and evaluation purposes and suitable use in publications for leaflets/materials/website. Where permission is refused, we will aim to avoid photographing and videoing that child and blur out faces wherever they do appear in recorded material.

8. Dealing with Abuse

It is important to deal with concerns in a positive and non-judgemental way. Forest School aims to do this by establishing a good relationship with children and young people and encouraging them to express their views and opinions.

- 1) Record concerns in an agreed place separate from other children's notes
- 2) Share concerns with appropriate Forest School Leader and others who *need* to know
- 3) Do not let concerns become common knowledge or gossip
- 4) Seek advice from Social Services
- 5) Do not investigate further or decide whether concerns are true or not

6) If worried contact the appropriate agency (Social Services or Gardaí)

9. Disclosures

Children and young people will talk to adults who they trust. This could include disclosing abuse to an adult or another child at Forest School. When this situation arises, follow these steps:

The FS Leader will be responsible for dealing with disclosure or suspicion of abuse. This person will be responsible for recording information and contacting the relevant authority.

- 1) Receive** Listen to what is being said
Accept it
Do not display shock or disbelief
Take notes
- 2) Reassure** Reassure the child/young person but be honest
Don't make promises you may not be able to keep
Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer
Reassure the child/young person that they were right to tell you. If the child/young person expresses guilt, point out that they are not to blame.
- 3) React** Do not interrogate for further details
Do not ask leading questions (this can invalidate court evidence)
Do ask open questions e.g. "Anything else you need to tell me?"
Do not criticise the person the child is talking about
Do not ask the child to repeat what they are saying for someone else
Explain to them what you have to do next
- 4) Record** Make brief notes as soon as possible
Do not destroy original notes
Record the time, date, place, noticeable non- verbal behaviour and the 'actual' words used by the child/young person
Draw a diagram to show any marks/bruises
Record what is said rather than your assumptions
- 5) Remember** Follow the guidelines in this policy
Consult with the appropriate person as soon as possible.
Ask for support from your manager if needed, you have been dealing with a traumatic situation

10. Dealing with allegations against Staff & Volunteers

It is important to deal with any allegations by children, young people or their parents/carers straight away.

- Any allegation must be taken seriously and reported to Social Services, who will investigate
- Any member of staff, the management committee or a volunteer should be offered support from another member of the organisation.
- Any member of staff or volunteer who has an allegation made against them should be suspended immediately and remain suspended until the allegations have been investigated
- Ensure as much confidentiality as possible
- If Social Services investigate the allegations, decide how this affects Forest School's disciplinary procedure.

11. Guidelines on the behaviour and roles of the staff and volunteers

The aim of these guidelines is to identify appropriate behaviour to protect children and young people and to safeguard adults.

- Physical punishment in any form is not acceptable
- Activities involving close contact should take place in a group situation
- Keep everything public – a hug in the group is different to a hug behind closed doors
- Touch should be related to the child's needs and not the worker's.
- Avoid sexually stimulating physical activity
- Children and young people have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others
- Adults should monitor each other in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything that can be misunderstood.
- Minimise time spent alone with children and young people and tell other adults if this does happen.
- Don't give lifts to children or young people if they are alone, unless not doing so puts them at risk.

NB. It is important to publicise this policy and to ensure that children and young people are aware of its existence. All volunteer and FS leaders should receive a copy of this policy.

4.2 Equality & Diversity Policy

GROWing Gardens is committed to equal opportunity for all and we wish to provide an environment in which people feel equally valued.

When planning a visit, information is requested from schools/groups about any participants with access or medical requirements so they can be fully included in the programme. We will adapt activities to ensure that everyone can participate as much as possible.

5 Risk Management Policy

Risk Assessment

A full and comprehensive site risk assessment will be conducted prior to the first visit to any new site. This will be done by the Forest School Leader and, if possible, in conjunction with a member of staff from the site setting. This risk assessment will be reviewed regularly. A visual check will be undertaken immediately prior to every session. Individual generic risk assessments will be used for the use of tools and some activities/actions. Individual activities will be risk assessed previously by the Forest School Leader. Ongoing risk assessments will take place at various times during a visit – this normally consists of judgements and decisions made as the need arises, which will then be recorded after the visit.

Risks can be minimised, but they cannot be eliminated altogether, and health and safety concerns need to be balanced against the potential benefits of any activity. Children, young people and adults will suffer the occasional bumps, cuts and bruises which are a part of everyday life. The application of common sense will ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be, whilst enjoying all the physical and intellectual challenges of Forest School!

5.1 Site Risk Assessment Procedures

1. Carry out Site Risk Assessment (see Appendix 2) in advance of running Forest School Programmes
2. Carry out site preparation, clearing dangerous fallen branches, old trees that might fall down,
3. Identify risk areas, put in place measure to reduce these risks
4. Identify where boundaries must go up

5.2 Daily Operating Procedures

1. Daily Site Checklist (see Appendix 1) – carry this out in advance of FS session, every time.
2. Act on any issues arising, new hazards, weather issues, adapt to changes in weather, set up tarp etc. Keep a record of this.
3. A detailed check of the site will be carried out before each session to check for any litter, glass, animal faeces etc. Any such items shall be collected using plastic bags and disposable gloves.
4. Check in on weather conditions. If it is excessively windy or a thunder storm is imminent or has commenced, then it will not be advisable to carry out a Forest School session. Cancel session if weather is unsuitable, and there isn't enough tarp or other cover.
5. Forest School leader will carry first-aid kit, whistle, mobile phone and if possible radio (depending on location) for emergency purposes.

5.3 Managing Risk with group

1. Sit down and discuss rules
2. The group will be made aware of/sit down and discuss: hazards – risks associated with the river, how to be in the space safely, trip hazards, dodgy branches, brambles etc., rules on eating plants, fungi etc., boundaries of the site
3. Group call - crow call/whistle - used as a call to bring group back together – must be obeyed when heard.
4. The group size and number of accompanying adults will be counted.
5. Activities with specific risks will be outlined before those activities take place.
6. Regular headcounts will be performed throughout the session.

(Optional) Hazards Intro session:

- Participants to walk the boundaries in groups and identify hazards.
- Sit together and discuss safety issues again.
N.B. If a participant identifies a potential hazard have them place a flag near it and tell a leader.

NB. Poor weather conditions

- If trees blowing more than 20 degrees, or if group leader feels uncomfortable take emergency 'safe' route out ASAP.
- Use indoor areas or shelter outdoors (away from trees) areas as alternative if you can, cancel session if needs be.

5.4 Fire policy (when fire lighting is allowed)

Aim- To use fire safely as part of the Forest School experience.

Method

Fires must only be lit after a risk assessment has been carried out and they must only be within the fire circle area. There must always be a trained leader present within the fire circle when a fire is lit or hot embers remain, never leave a fire unattended.

There must be an adequate supply of fire water close to the fire basket to ensure there is enough water available to extinguish the fire. A fire blanket must be brought into the woodland to wrap round someone if their clothes become alight. Fire proof gauntlets should be kept at the fire area to allow leaders to pick up hot items. There should be two exits from the fire circle.

Before visiting the area, the participant should have had the opportunity to ask questions and be given information about fire safety. When at the fire circle the rules should be demonstrated for the participant to see. There should be no more than 2 people, leaders and participant, within the fire circle next to the fire at any one time. The best position for cooking is on one knee so you can move backwards easily and remain stable. Long hair should be tied back and scarves removed.

5.5 Tool Safety Policy

General rules for tool use:

- All tools must have an individual risk assessment in the Health and Safety folder
- Ensure safe storage at school with nominated Forest School Leader access and responsibility
- Ensure safe storage and responsibility by Forest School Leader at the Forest School Site
- Never walk around with tools.
- Always make sure they are well maintained, clean and sharp before using them.
- When using tools with participants it should only be with the Forest School Leader.
- When using tools there is a designated tool area where the Forest School Leader and participant will sit when using the tool.
- First aiders and first aid kit close by.

Penknife:

- Must be with Forest School Leader
- Always sit down when using the penknife
- Ensure penknife is closed and locked when not in use
- Open the penknife away from you sitting down with plenty of room around you (blood bubble)
- Always ensure participant are supported when using the penknife on a one to one basis.

Bow Saw:

- Ensure guard is in place when not in use
- Must only be used with a Forest School Leader
- Always use in the designated tool area
- Use the bow saw with a saw horse
- Talk with the participant about the way you hold the bow saw – hand over blade
- Ensure safe storage and safe handling in Forest School

Mallet :

- Must be with Forest School Leader
- No glove needed.
- One to one supervision for early years' participant.
- Keep in cover when not in use and store in tool bag.
- Remind others in vicinity to stay clear of tools.

Potato Peeler:

- Must be with Forest School Leader
- No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on other hand
- 3-1 ratio supervision for early years' participant.
- Use in designated area for tools
- Keep in cover when not in use and store in tool bag.
- Remind others in vicinity to stay clear of tools.

5.6 Travel Policy

Transport to be organised in advance of forest schools' sessions. The school shall decide on their own travel arrangements in collaboration with Forest School leader. Any travel where participants would end up waking on a main road etc. are not allowed. Participants only to walk if circumstance and distance allow and with full permission from the school.

Travel to and from site:

- Participant shall walk from car park to forest school site if safe
- Adult participants may make their way there independently.
- Child participants (under 18 years) will walk in pairs with an adult leader in front and behind the group.
- All participant must stay near to the Forest School Leader within the grounds.
- Participants must return to the FS leader when the group call is given.
- When leaving the site, the participant will walk in pairs back to the exit/car park and then when told walk back to the school as outlined above.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: Daily Site Check List

Daily Checklist of Site

Location:

Forest School Leader:

Procedures to be carried out before each session:

A detailed check of the site will be carried out before each session to check for any litter, glass, animal faeces etc. Any such items shall be collected using plastic bags and disposable gloves.

- A written record will be kept of each check (Appendix 2). This shall state if any hazards were found and how they were dealt with.
- Trees will be checked for any broken or dead branches which may fall.
- Check of weather conditions. If it is excessively windy or a thunder storm is imminent or has commenced, then it will not be advisable to carry out a Forest School session.

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

Collect resources in containers (check all are returned) and ensure forest school area is tidy.

- Participants to walk to the gate in pairs.
- Once through the gate participant can walk ahead of the leaders.
- Return resources to the storage area.
- Remove outdoor clothing.
- Wash hands.

Daily Risk Assessment:

Activity	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6
Fire						
Cutting tools						
Games						
Rope work						
Tree felling						
Other						
Weather conditions						
Wind speed						
Risk of environmental injuries, hypothermia/heat stroke						
Location identified on SSRA. Grid ref and/or postal address post code						
Mobile phone available and best location identified						
1st aid kit available						
Water available						

Daily Checklist of Site

Date:	Time:	Weather:
Name of Forest School Leader (who carried out check):		

To Check	How	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6
General Site Condition: Rubbish, glass shards, cans etc.	Do a sweep of site on the morning of forest school session						
Check boundaries: Hazards tape in place at specific locations – along river bank, dodgy branch, back boundary	Put tape out in specified locations prior to each forest school session						
Trip hazards – check no branches have come down in weeks gap	Sweep of site – check for new large trip hazards						
Check seats are in position	Seats being stored in shelter						
Check kit list- first-aid, basin & water, tools etc.	have kit list needed for forest school						
Check Toilet/set up toilet space – dig hole in ground, weekly	dig hole and fill in on weekly basis						
Canopy, Shrub, & Ground Layer, fallen branches, stinging plants – nettles, brambles etc.	Remove obvious ones in way of where activities will take place						
Equipment in place, rucksack with gear present							

Other hazards identified:

Action taken:

Appendix 2: Site Risk Assessment

**GROWing Gardens
Site Risk Assessment Form**

Site Assessed (Location):	Date:
Assessed By:	Mobile Signal:
Site Location grid reference:	Next Assessment Due:

Benefits of using the site

*
*
*
*
*

Type of Hazard	Likelihood of Occurrence	Hazard Severity	Risk Factor	Action to be taken to reduce risk (control measures).	New Likelihood of Occurrence	New Hazard Severity	New Risk Factor
Boundaries Getting lost in woods Barbed wire on edge							
Tree Layer (Tree Types) Semi-felled trees Trees likely to be climbed							
Shrub Layer Types of lower branches, small							

trees							
Field Layer Clearings Ground cover Ferns Animal habitats Mosses Fungi Leaf mould							
Water areas Ponds Streams Ditches							
Other Overhead cables Public access							

Risk Assessment scoring- Scores of 8 and above cease activity or reassess the control measures

Likelihood		Hazard severity		Risk Factor (likelihood x hazard severity)	
1	Very unlikely	1	Minor injury, scratches, bruises, burns etc.	1-3	Low
2	Unlikely	2	Moderate injury, cuts, grazing, burns etc.	4-7	Moderate
3	Likely	3	Serious- Person requires hospital treatment or time of school/work	8-12	High
4	Very likely	4	Significant, risk of death or loss of limbs/ eyesight etc.	13-16	Very High

GROWingGardens

Growing Habitats, Biodiversity and Local Organic Food

Forest School Medical Form

Childs Name:	
Child's Date of Birth:	
Primary Contact's Name (& relationship to child):	
Primary Contact's Contact Phone Number:	Home: Mobile: Work:
Primary Contact's Home Address:	
Doctor's Contact Details:	

Has your child any of the following conditions/illnesses:

Illness:	Comment:	Mediation needed: (Please specify)
ADHD, Autism, Asperger		
Allergies, food, nuts, pollen, hay fever, materials		
Asthma, bronchitis		
Fits, fainting or blackouts		
Sight/Hearing difficulties, sensory issues		
Allergies to any known drugs		
Diabetes		
Epilepsy		
Heart condition, related issue		
Issues relating to bee & wasp stings		
Date of last tetanus injection		
Other illness		

Signed (primary carer):

Date:

Appendix 4: Forest School Consent Form

GROWing Gardens

Growing Habitats, Biodiversity and Local Organic Food

Forest School Parental Consent Form

Name of Child:

I agree to my child taking part inForest School activities at regular intervals during the coming academic year/the next 8 weeks. Sessions will be led by a fully qualified Forest School leader. I understand my child will need to bring their own wellington boots and appropriate outdoor clothing.

I understand that my child may, at an appropriate level, have opportunities to work with hand tools and small fires through the course of their Forest School work.

I understand that my child will work in groups containing 1 adult to 4 children for 3 year olds, 1 adult to 6 children for 4-5 year olds and 1 adult to 10 children for over 5 year olds at all times.

Photographs/ Video Recordings			
I give permission for my child / children to be photographed whilst at Forest School and for these to be used in press releases or publications and on the FS website.			
Transport			
I give my permission for my child / children to be transported by Forest School in an emergency medical situation.			
Sun Cream			
I give my permission for my child to have sun cream applied, when necessary			
Medical Information			
I confirm that the medical information I have supplied in the form attached is fully up to date.			

I, being the parent/carer of.....

agree/do not agree for my child to participate in the Forest School activities at with GROWing Gardens.

I give permission for my child to take part in Forest School activities managed by Growing Gardens Forest School Team Leaders

To be given emergency treatment / first aid if necessary when attending a Forest School programme.

Signed Date:

GROWing Gardens

Growing Habitats, Biodiversity and Local Organic Food

Indemnity Statement

Taking part in Forest School activity is conditional on individuals recognizing that these activities are activities where the potential for misadventure exists, including personal injury. Participants shall be aware of and accept these risks and agree to be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

I declare that in the event of any claim of compensation for an incident, the claim will only be against another party directly involved in that incident.

No compensation will be sought from the Company or directors unless they are found, by law, to have acted in a negligent or illegal manner.

It must be remembered that safety is the responsibility of ALL participants who are each responsible for the safety of themselves and other participants.

All safety rules and procedures must be followed.

Any hazards found in / on the site must be reported to a Forest School Leader who will take all reasonable steps to ensure every participant is made aware of the hazard.

I declare that I have read and agree to the content of this document. I have discussed the content with my child/ren and made them aware of their responsibilities.

I can be contacted on
(home no.)

or (mobile no.)

Signed:

Date: