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**Forest Schools Policy**

**Rationale**

At Maidenhill Nursery Class we are committed to the importance of daily outdoor play and physical development in all children regardless of their age and stage of development. Forest School is great opportunity for children to develop and experience the outdoors in the most natural way possible. All activities will be made accessible to all children to ensure all children are able to freely and independently use the Forest School area.

**Introduction**

The Forest School experiences will provide a wealth of natural resources which help children to develop in a variety of ways, including independence, exploration and investigative skills, risk taking and self-esteem all of which support children to develop skills for now and the future. Children are provided with both adult-led and child-initiated opportunities to enable children to learn and practice new skills, knowledge and behaviours from the environment.

When in Forest School the ratio will be one practitioner to every four children (1:4), this enables the Forest School Leader to spend more individual time with the children to enhance their learning to the best of their ability.

The Nursery will ensure all areas are safe and secure through close supervision and the use of robust risk assessments and safety checks. The Forest School Leader and Staff are informed of the importance of these procedures and are trained appropriately to ensure these procedures are followed effectively.

**Forest School Safety Talk Pointers Rules of our Forest School:**

1. Take care with sticks. Stick carrying-hold them pointing down(demo) or take your stick for a walk along the ground.
2. Nettles and brambles-don't go near them.
3. We only eat food we brought with us not what we find on the ground.
4. Try not to put your fingers in your mouth and eyes. Wash our hands before eating.
5. Fire Square: do not walk into the fire circle, only adults touch the fire.
6. Have Fun.

**Forest School’s Fire Safety Procedure and Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

* During all campfire activities the Forest School Leader will ensure that there is a bucket of water next to the fire in case of emergency. A burns kit and fire blanket must be immediately available at all times, and flammable material must be removed before the fire is lit.
* The Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners have full knowledge of, and will pay regard to the contents of the Nursery’s risk assessments relating to lighting a campfire.
* It is the Forest School Leader’s responsibility to maintain the safe use of the fire and that the fire is kept under control at all times.
* The Forest School Leader is the only adult who may light a campfire or lead an activity involving the fire. Any practitioner or assisted child who is involved with the lighting and maintaining of the camp fire, must at all times wear protective gloves of the appropriate size. All practitioners involved in any activities involving the camp fire must have their hair tied back at all times. Whilst a campfire is lit, the Forest School Leader must not at any time leave the fire unsupervised for any reason, even if there are other adults present.
* At the end of a fire building activity it is the Forest school Leader’s responsibility to extinguish the fire in a safe way by using the bucket of water already at the scene. The fire must be completely extinguished and there is no detectable heat rising from it.
* In the event of a fire becoming out of control the Forest School Leader will take responsibility for organising the safe evacuation of all children and adult’s present in the Forest School area to the Nursery’s designated fire assembly point (The Gate in the Nursery Garden).

**Forest School Allergies, Allergic Reactions and Medication Procedures**

* The Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners have full knowledge of, and will pay regard to the contents of the Nursery’s policy and procedures for children who have allergies and allergic reactions, which may relate to food/plant allergies etc. Staff will be made aware of the signs and symptoms of a possible allergic reaction in case of an unknown or first reaction in a child. These may include a rash or hives, nausea, stomach pain, diarrhoea, itchy skin, runny eyes, shortness of breath, chest pain, swelling of the mouth or tongue, swelling to the airways to the lungs, wheezing and anaphylaxis.
* The Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners have full knowledge of, and will pay regard to the contents of the Nursery’s risk assessments relating to the outdoor environment. (See Forest School Handbook risk assessments section).
* The Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners have full knowledge of and will pay regard to the contents of the Nursery’s Child Medication Policy and Procedures document and the Procedure for the use of inhalers/hand held medication For some children their inhaler/medication may need to be immediately accessible during a Forest School activity, in which case it will be safely stored in a container alongside the first aid kit to enable all first aid trained practitioners to administer if necessary.

**Forest School’s Safe Use and Maintenance of Tools**

* The Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners have full knowledge of, and will pay regard to the contents of the Nursery’s risk assessments relating to the outdoor environment and use of tools and equipment (See Forest School Handbook risk assessments section).
* Activity Risk Assessments are completed by the Forest School Leader for all activities involving the use of tools by.
* At the beginning of an activity the Forest School Leader will demonstrate and explain the safe use of the tools required to complete the activity planned for that session. This is called a ‘Tool Talk’.
* Children will be supervised on a one to four ratios with the Forest School Leaders providing the correct level of support for the duration of the activity.
* The Forest School Leaders will wear appropriate protective equipment as necessary when carrying out tool maintenance and will follow the methods they developed from their training.

Maidenhill Nursery Class Forest School uses the following tools with the children at present:

* + - Bow Saw
    - Potato Peelers
    - Flints
    - Skewers

**Manual Handling in Forest School**

* Correct handling techniques must be followed to minimise the risks of injury. A variety of injuries may result from poor manual handling and staff must all be aware and adhere to the council’s manual handling policy.
* The Forest School Leader is responsible for modelling safe manual handling to the children and assessing their age and ability whether it is safe and appropriate for them to move loads such as logs or rocks, due to the weight, size and shape, taking into consideration factors such as weather conditions.

**Forest School Food Activity Management**

* The Forest School Leader and accompanying practitioners have full knowledge of, and will pay regard to the contents of the Nursery’s policy and procedures for children who have allergies and allergic reactions.
* It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader when carrying out a food activity to maintain the fire and the cooking of the food. The Forest School Leader will supervise staff and children who assist with the cooking. When doing so they must be wearing protective gloves.
* The Forest School Leaders and any staff present who will be handling food must hold an up to date Level 2 Food Hygiene certificate. Both will be responsible for demonstrating how to handle foods safely and hygienically.
* When children are preparing or handling food using tools such as knifes it is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure they are using them safely and correctly on a one to one ratio.
* A risk assessment will be completed before each activity involving cooking on the campfire.

Within the forest school environment and the nursery as a whole, we support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children’s health and development. Safeguarding is a much wider subject than the elements covered within this single child protection policy, therefore this document should be used in conjunction with the other nursery policies and procedures.

**Forest School Equal Opportunities**

The Forest School Equal Opportunities policy upholds the content of the Nurseries Equal Opportunities statement and East Renfrewshire Council’s inclusion policy. The aims of the policy are to ensure fair treatment of all users within Forest School, it is the responsibility of all staff to promote equality of opportunity at all times.

* We strive to ensure Forest School is a child led experience; the children are encouraged by practitioners to follow their own interests. All practitioners should demonstrate to the children respect for each other and their Forest School environment, encouraging children to do the same.
* Whilst in Forest School we will ensure that opportunities for learning and development are available to all. Discrimination of any kind is not acceptable, no child or practitioner will be discriminated due to their age, gender, race, religion, background.
* We aim for all children to feel appreciated, and that their ideas and contributions to Forest School are welcomed. Within Forest School and Maidenhill Nursery Class we aim to raise children’s confidence and self-esteem through well thought out activities.

**Monitoring and Review**

The DHT, SCDO and Forest School’s leader will monitor this policy annually in August and updated as required.

Next review: August 2020

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