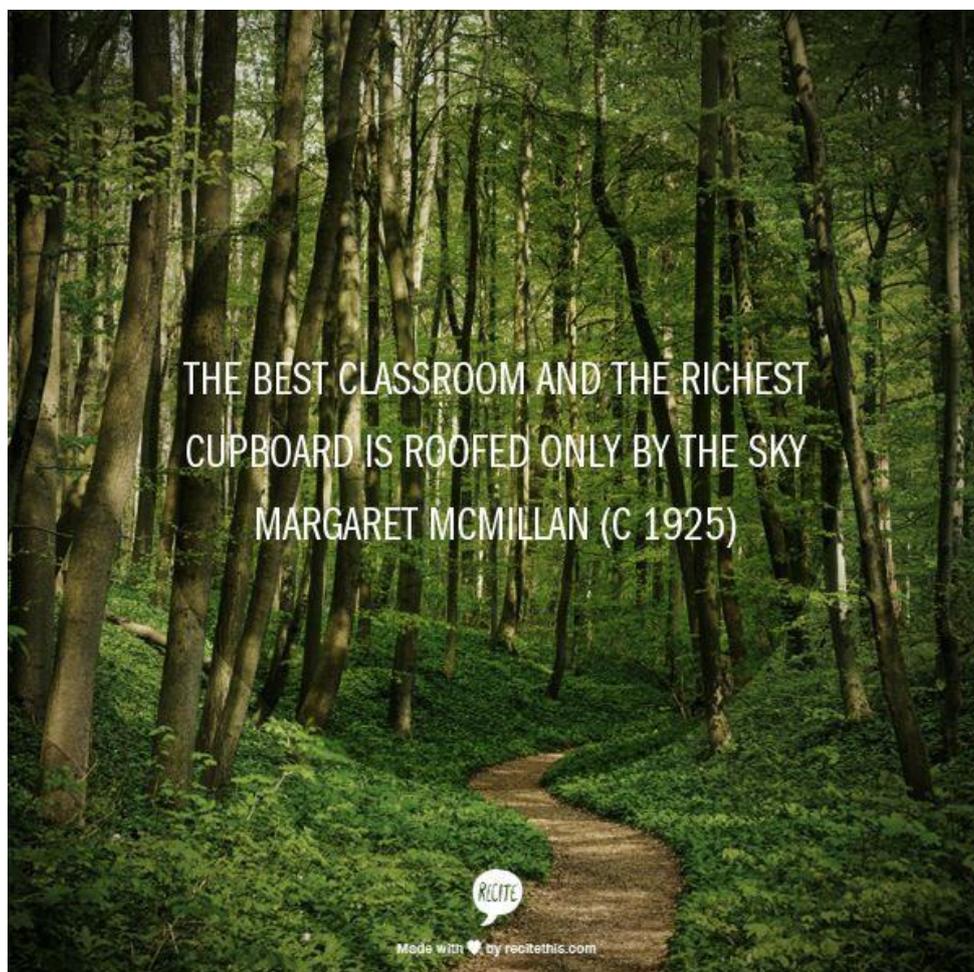




The Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools

Forest School Handbook



Written by J. Wones, FS Level 3 Trained

March 2016, (reviewed and updated March 2017)

Signed: 

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Introduction and Ethos

Forest School is based more on the process of learning than it is on the content – more on the ‘how’ than the ‘what.’

Forest School Training Company

Key Features of Forest Schools



Image taken from mumsnet website

The idea originates from Scandinavia where it was found that children who had been to a Forest School during their pre-school years, were confident, had strong communication skills and well developed social skills. These then set the platform for academic success.

By introducing Forest School at Swallowtail we hope to enhance learning, increase self-esteem, independence and risk taking in our children.

Role of the Adult

The staff at Forest School, by observing and working with the children when appropriate, will allow them to explore their own preferred learning styles while developing a lifelong love and understanding of the natural environment. Through carefully planned activities, children from all year groups can take part, enabling them to excel in all areas of their personal, academic and spiritual development.

All adults at Forest School sessions will:

- listen and show empathy
- observe learning
- join in with pupils activities/play when invited to
- model appropriate skills and behaviour
- ensure the health and safety of pupils and follow safeguarding procedures

Code of Conduct

Entering and exploring the site	Children are taught to explore and play with thought and care for the environment. Children are asked to give thanks to the site when leaving.
Boundaries	Children are told and/or shown the boundaries of the site. Children are familiar with games and calls such as '1, 2, 3 where are you' and '1, 2, 3 come to me.'
Picking up and playing with sticks	Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but make sure they think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a child at both ends. Sticks must not be thrown, nor should children be allowed to pull them from living trees.
Picking up and playing with stones	Children may pick up stones to transport them, but they must never be thrown.
Digging	Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using lolly pop sticks, fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made.
Using ropes and string	Children may use rope and string to tie or make things, such as mobiles or to put up a shelter. Adult will model appropriate knots and support the children as necessary.
Fire	Wood may be collected from the site for fire lighting, but only what is needed. Fires will be created in a fire square and never left unattended. See fire risk assessment for more details.
Using tools	Tools are used for a purpose and all adults should model their correct use, storage and transportation at all times. Tools are used well away from other active children and only walking is permitted when carrying them. Gloves are never worn when using tools. See tool use policy and risk assessment for more details.
Eating and drinking	Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Forest. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.

Health and Safety

The following points are additional to our Health and Safety policy and procedures (available on our website) that directly relate to Forest School sessions:

1. However many adults 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 children in his/her charge, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
3. All adult 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.
4. The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry a First Aid kit and emergency bag.
5. When tools are used the adult: child ratio will always be 1:1

Forest Schools aims to encourage risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. Through appropriate risk and challenge, children can build their confidence and solve problems and it is the Forest School leader who is responsible for ensuring that there are no unacceptable levels of risk. To do this we:

- Look for potential hazards and decide who might be at harm.
- Think about how harm may occur and the worst outcome that we could face.
- Evaluate the current level of risk and decide on a course of action that will be put in place to minimise the potential risk.
- Re-evaluate the level of risk once our course of action has been put in place.
- Create a risk assessment and collate them in the Forest School file.
- Inform all adults that accompany the group and require them to sign each relevant risk assessment to show that they have read and understood them
- Regularly monitor and review each risk assessment.

Through effective risk assessment and management the Forest School leader is responsible for ensuring that pupils are not exposed to unacceptable levels of risk. Risk assessments in place are:

- site risk assessment
- activity risk assessments (e.g. for tool use, fire)
- any pupil specific risk assessment (e.g. behaviour, medical)
- a daily site check before each session

As well as risk assessments, there will be appropriate staff to pupil ratios for each session, taking into account activities planned for and the needs of individuals.

Cancellation

Forest School sessions will not take place in high winds or electrical storms or if after having done the daily site check there is something that prohibits the pupils from accessing the site. The session will be cancelled and children will remain in lessons in school. The session will also be cancelled if the Forest School Leader is unable to take the session and Senior Management will be notified.

Food and Drink

Pupils will have access to drinking water. If snacks are offered, pupils will wash and wipe hands before eating and all food waste/rubbish will be taken back to school after the session.

Toileting

As the sessions are taking place on a school site, the children will walk back to use the school toilets if needed.

Equipment (including for emergencies)

Equipment for Forest School sessions will depend on the activities being undertaken, but may include:

- shelter building materials – tarps, ropes, guy lines
- bug hunting pots, spoons, ID guides
- mirrors, magnifying glasses, binoculars
- art and sculpture materials - clay, mortar and pestle
- puppets to develop and tell stories
- fire lighting kit
- tools

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag with them. The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment.

Essential equipment	Possible additional equipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Aid Kit (appropriate for no. people out during sessions and remoteness of site, kit needs to be regularly checked and restocked as necessary)• Emergency procedures• Medical information and emergency contact details of all in group• Appropriate risk assessments• Means of communication• Clean water• Whistle• Medication for individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fire kit and burns kit• Eye wash• Bivi bag or survival blanket• Thermos of hot water• Chocolate/sugary food• Torch• Welfare Kit (containing items such as: wet wipes, hand gel, nappy sacks and toileting things, trowel, sun cream (parental permissions required))

The Forest School leader, Miss Wones has undertaken a 16 hour First Aid training Course for Forest School (March 2016, to be refreshed every 3 years.)

Policy and Procedures

Tools

Tools may be used at Forest Schools if learners wish to develop new skills, but will always be done safely. There is an assessment undertaken by the Forest School leader detailing the benefits and risks of using tools at the end of this handbook. The Forest School leader will ensure that:

- tools are safe to use (cleaned, maintained, replaced when necessary)
- gloves are never worn when using them
- participants will never help themselves to any tool and when a tool is in use it will always be on a 1:1 basis with the Forest School leader in a designated area, away from other learners/activities
- all tools are stored and transported safely

Fire

A fire can act as a focal point for a group at Forest School, but also can provide heat and warmth. There is an assessment undertaken by the Forest School leader detailing the benefits and risks of fire lighting at the end of this handbook. The Forest School leader will ensure that:

- a fire circle is established away from overhanging trees and is attended at all times
- participants understand not to walk through it or run near it
- hair is tied back and no-body around the fire has any loose clothing (e.g. scarf)
- a fire blanket, plunge bucket, fire glove and full watering can is placed nearby
- only dead wood is used and only enough wood is used as needed
- any fire is fully extinguished at the end of a session

Foraging

Forest school sessions may include foraging, for example of blackberries or nettles. The Forest School leader will again take a 'risk benefit' approach and ensure that:

- participants are offered gloves to avoid stings
- participants understand that nothing is to be eaten and hands should not be put in or near or mouth
- allergy information for the group has been checked prior to the session

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Forest School leader will assess each activity and decide on whether any PPE is required. If it is, appropriate PPE will be offered in the correct sizes and in good working order.

PPE includes the appropriate clothing for the weather conditions, for example woolly hat/sun hat, thick socks, extra jumper. All participants including adults are encouraged to keep their skin covered with long trousers and sleeves. All participants must have sensible footwear, either wellington

boots, walking boots or sturdy trainers. Waterproof trousers are provided by the school, but the children must bring their own waterproof coat.

Emergency Procedures

At present, all Forest School sessions will be held on the school site and some of these procedures will only be needed if a group was taken off-site.

First aid	<ol style="list-style-type: none">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 use 'green cross first aid' carried with first aid bag to get further assistance from school. Call for further assistance (999) if required.4. Have medical form details available in emergency bag and call parent/guardian as appropriate.5. Record full details through school incident procedure.6. Follow up to parents as usual. <p>If the first aid is for 'walking wounded' then the parents would be called in the first instance to take the child to hospital, if unavailable or not within a short distance, then two members of first aid trained staff will take the child. The rest of the group will be head counted and taken back into school by a Forest School assistant.</p> <p>If an adult is injured, the FS leader would administer the first aid needed and assess whether further medical help was needed. In the event the leader was injured, another first aid trained forest school assistant would administer first aid.</p>
Lost or missing child	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. As soon as child is found to be missing, make an immediate search of vicinity and use 1, 2, 3 procedure.2. Assemble rest of children and ensure they are safe.3. Call School to alert and then School calls police (and parent/guardian).4. Follow School critical incident procedure.
Serious accident	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Follow First Aid procedure.2. Stay with casualty, but ensure rest of group is removed from the situation and is safe.3. School to call parent/guardian/next of kin ASAP.4. Follow School critical incident procedure – see RED BOOK kept in school office.5. Gain advice on follow up from police.
Irregular occurrence, uninvited person/stranger	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The intruder will be challenged and asked to leave politely.2. If a child is involved then the police should be called and the child/children involved should be removed from the situation and made to feel safe.3. Follow School's critical incident procedure4. Parents/guardian should be briefed by FS leader asap.5. Inform Safeguarding Officer and gain advice.
Poor weather conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If trees blowing more than 20 degrees, or if group leader feels uncomfortable take emergency 'safe' route out ASAP.2. Use indoor areas or shelter outdoors (away from trees) as alternative.
Behaviour problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trained members of staff to use de-escalation strategies.2. Remove other children from area of risk (if deemed necessary).3. If thought necessary, trained members of school staff to use appropriate restraint technique. As school policy on restraint.4. Debrief child after calm down period.5. Log incident and inform parents/guardian.

Following an incident or accident, an incident report form should be filled in, even if no-one was harmed and it was a 'near miss.' Reports should be written clearly and in chronological order and a parent/guardian must sign them on the same day as the incident.

If an accident leads to hospitalisation it must be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours. Reports can be made online at www.hse.gov.uk

Equal opportunities

Swallowtail is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all our children, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background. At Forest School, we all learn alongside each other and from one another.

Children with medical needs or disabilities will be helped so they can take as full a part as everyone else in Forest School sessions. Those with challenging behaviour are risk-assessed and may need one-to-one supervision, but their entitlement remains the same.

Although we encourage children to take responsibility for their own clothing and appropriate footwear for sessions, we do have a stock of spare wellies and waterproof trousers for children to borrow.

Safeguarding

Our full safeguarding policy can be found on our website.

'The child's welfare is of paramount importance. Our school will establish and maintain an ethos where pupils feel secure, are encouraged to talk, are listened to and are safe.'

All staff are required to have a DBS check and any volunteers helping regularly at Forest School sessions will also be required to undertake a full check. Any volunteer or member of staff who finds that a child is telling them something which concerns them should follow these simple steps:

- Listen, but ask NO leading questions. Remember that you must not promise to 'keep a secret'. The general rule is that adults should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation.
- Comfort the child if appropriate.
- If a disclosure is made, the adult must fill in a recording form (carried in the emergency bag.) If additional adult help is required to cover whilst the form is filled in, the 'red spot card' can be sent into school. The form must be passed to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (Head teacher/Head of School) as soon as possible. This procedure is still the case if the disclosure is about a member of staff.

Confidentiality

Adults working within Forest School sessions must appreciate that conversations had within the setting are confidential. If an adult finds a child is telling them something that concerns them, the safeguarding procedure outlined above must be followed.

In addition to this:

- All parental consent forms and medical information are kept with the Forest School Leader during sessions and are otherwise kept securely in school.
- All adults supporting Forest School sessions will be made aware that discussions with participants at Forest School are confidential

Behaviour

At Swallowtail we aim to promote an environment where everyone feels happy, safe and secure. The expectations during Forest School sessions of behaviour remain the same:

- Show care and consideration for others and the environment
- Keep yourself and others safe
- Listen when adults are talking/giving instructions
- Be kind and co-operate with others

Staff are trained in de-escalation strategies to deal with challenging behaviour and the school's behaviour policy will be followed if the unwanted behaviour continues.

In our federation, children know that bullying is wrong and that it is unacceptable behaviour. Staff and adults will deal with incidents of bullying according to our policy (on our website.)

Use of photographs

Parents/carers complete consent forms for use of photographs and digital media prior to sessions. Adults accompanying the group are made aware of any pupil who may not be photographed.

Daily Operating Procedure

Before the session

- Forest School leader to check all relevant risk assessments are in place, including daily site check and have been read by all adults supporting the sessions.
- Forest School leader will prepare and share session plan with all adults supporting the session.
- The Forest School Leader will check that enough adults are present for the session to go ahead and that the weather conditions allow it to take place.
- The equipment required for the session will be assembled, checked and prepared.
- All children will be registered by their class teacher. They will then get changed for Forest School, go to the toilet and apply sun cream when necessary.

During the session

- Head counts
- Ongoing risk assessments to take account of weather, safety and behaviour.

After the session

- A headcount will be undertaken at the end of the session.
- All equipment returned to bird hide/storage shed. Tool check – count and store (Forest School leader to clean/carry out maintenance later if necessary.)
- A session evaluation will be completed by the Forest School Leader.

Signature Page

Name of staff/volunteer	Handbook read (please sign)	Date

Forest Schools Consent Form

Name of Child.....

Medical Information

Medical information will be obtained from the medical information you provided at the start of the school year. However, if there is further information that you would like to make us aware of that might affect your child's involvement in Forest Schools (e.g. phobias, complaints) or any other allergies (e.g. material, food, medicine, pollen, dust, etc.) Please write below.

Please give the date of your child's last Tetanus Jab if known ___/___/___

Consent

As a parent/guardian of the child named above, I agree to my child participating in the Forest School activities taking place. I understand that activities may include, walking, craftwork, pond dipping, tool use, fire lighting skills, den building, campfire cooking and other related activities. I give my consent for the equipment and tools necessary for the activity to be used by the young person mentioned above. I understand that a strict code of practice for working with children will be followed and all activities will be risk assessed and I will be informed of any extra details of activities that are out of the ordinary pattern.

Photos

I give permission for my child to be photographed/videoed whilst at Forest School and for these images to be used on the school website and in school publications.

Yes No

Signed: Date:.....

Name (in print):

Relationship to child:

Appendix 2

Woodland Site Risk Assessment Template

Site Name: Sutton Wildlife Area/Hickling Wildlife Area/Catfield playing field	Assessment carried out by: Julie Wones
Postcode: NR12 9QP, NR12 0XX, NR29 5DA	Signature:  Date: 30/03/16
Location Grid Reference: TG38255 23980 (Sutton)	
Review Date: Sept 2016 (after summer holidays) and at the start of each term thereafter	

<u>Areas to Consider</u>	<u>What are the Hazards?</u>	<u>Who might be harmed & how?</u>	<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Control Actions (What needs to be done, Who does it & by When?)</u>	<u>In Place?</u>	<u>New Level</u>
Access route to the sites e.g roads, tracks etc	Sutton: partially gravelled path across the field that can become slippery when wet/muddy.	Children and adult helpers could fall or slip	M	FS leader walks the path as part of pre-session checks. If path is deemed slippery, then children will be taken across the grass to the site.	✓	L
Boundaries around the site: e.g, fencelines, ditches	Possible damage to the boundary fences. At Sutton one of these backs onto a main road. Possible 'rubbish' dumped on grounds over fence (bottles, cans...)	Children and adults could be cut/injured by foreign objects to the site.	M	Make a site sweep before every session as part of pre-session checks, concentrating on perimeter fence area. Tell children not to pick up 'unexpected' items, but to inform an adult. Alert adult helpers to be vigilant.	✓	L

<p>Canopy layer</p> <p>e.g. hanging deadwood</p>	<p>Hanging deadwood</p>	<p>Children and adults could be struck by falling deadwood, potential head injury.</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>Make visual check before every outdoor session.</p> <p>Wooded area at Hickling/Sutton not to be used in high winds. Stay clear of two large trees at Catfield during windy weather.</p> <p>Report any dangerous trees or branches to site manager to be dealt with.</p> <p>Tree surveys carried out regularly.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>L</p>
<p>Shrub layer</p> <p>e.g thorny or poisonous species</p>	<p>Prickles and sharp snags where pruning has happened.</p> <p>Holly berries and prickles, brambles.</p>	<p>Children and adults may be cut, scratched or get splinters.</p> <p>Berries are poisonous if eaten.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>H</p>	<p>Warn children that they need to be alert and 'feel' the area.</p> <p>Play games away from bushes.</p> <p>Place tape on any large, protruding points, or zone off area using tape or rope to tell people it is out of bounds.</p> <p>Remind children to keep hands away from mouths at the start of each session. Insist on hand washing immediately after each session. Carry water/hand gel for hands at snack times.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>L</p> <p>L</p>
<p>Field layer</p> <p>e.g hazardous plant species, trip hazards</p>	<p>Stings from nettles.</p> <p>Logs and large branches hidden by long grass.</p> <p>Poisonous fungi</p>	<p>Children and adults could be stung/poisoned and have an allergic reaction.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>Remind children to look before they touch; teach them how to identify nettles and how the stings can be treated.</p> <p>Give safety talk to participants on poisonous plants/fungi.</p> <p>First aid kit on site.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>L</p>
<p>Ground layer</p> <p>e.g. uneven ground, slopes & surfaces, hidden obstacles</p>	<p>Grass bank and mounds at all three sites can become slippery and muddy when wet.</p> <p>Hidden/unseen logs</p>	<p>Children and adult helpers could fall or trip causing cuts, grazes, injury to bone or muscles.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>FS leader to check as part of daily site check</p> <p>Ensure clear pathway to the seating area/fire circle</p> <p>Walking on the bank or the mound will not be allowed when it is excessively wet or muddy.</p> <p>Grass is cut regularly.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>L</p>

				Poles and long branches for den building can be stored in the 'stick store' when not in use.		
Structures e.g. Shelters, camp area, rope structures, seating	Large poles and branches handled and moved to build shelters, collapse of shelter	Children and adults suffering trips falls or breakages	M	At start of programme no structures are present on site Any structures created during the programme to be checked by FSL as part of daily site risk assessment procedure for security, stability and safety. Any unstable or unsafe structures to be dismantled or made safe. Children must ask if they need to use rope and it is then used under adult supervision.	✓	L
Animals/insects e.g livestock, dogs, deer, ticks, wasps etc.	Insect bites and stings	Children and adults could be stung and/or have an allergic reaction.	H	Safety talk to all at start of session, including any areas that maybe 'hot spots' for wasps/bees (FS leader to identify during daily site check) Consent forms to have details of any known allergies Medication specific to pupils available for any specific reactions and conditions – and school medication policy followed	✓	L
Seasonal Weather conditions e.g prevailing winds, extreme temperatures	Hypothermia, hyperthermia, sun burn	Children and adults start to feel unwell.	M	Weather forecast checked prior to session – FS leader will cancel session if weather is deemed severe (e.g. high winds) Group able to leave site by returning to school at any time should weather change. Participants are made aware of suitable clothing/kit before session starts	✓	L

Appendix 3 - Activity Risk Assessment: FIRE

Written and signed by J. Wones, *JW* March 2016, reviewed annually

Benefits of using fire:		- can boost morale, particularly when mood is low due to weather, promotes group ethos and a central point, can be used to prepare hot drinks by the Forest School leader		
Hazards	Risks	Level of risk	Action	New level of risk
Fire siting and set-up of circle	over-enthusiasm and eagerness to help; running and poor behaviour	high	The whole process will have been rehearsed; children will be reminded of rules of conduct before we set out, told what to expect and be limited to watching and helping collect wood; as soon as location is known area to be coned off for preparation - limits of circle clearly defined; adult constantly in this area; adults will be alerted to rules, and will be made aware of who exactly is allowed near the fire; First Aid box, water and Fire Blanket to be kept available at all times.	low
Wood collecting	Tripping and falling while collecting wood; trying to collect wood at high level; inappropriate behaviour	moderate	Children will have been told not to reach or jump for anything without first alerting an adult; rules (stick carrying and dragging) will be well established and policed by all including children; hard hats will be available for adults involved in this work.	low
laying fire	none	low	Remind children constantly where they should be; 2 or 3 only at a time to help with setting the fire.	low
lighting fire	smoke inhalation, poor attention	moderate	An adult is at the fire pit at all times – children understand rules of fire circle and are monitored; adults to be made to feel able to intervene when they see inappropriate behaviour; children know penalty is exclusion from the activity.	low
attending to fire	smouldering wood; smoke, sparks, burns, poor behaviour	moderate	Children will have been told to remain seated around the pit, how to move around the outside of the fire circle and to walk when leaving the area. First Aid kit for minor injuries; water on standby.	low
Extinguishing fire and clearing area	smouldering wood; steam; poor behaviour	high	Demonstrate heat of black wood by pouring water on while children are seated at a safe distance; adults only will deal with the fire and put it out.	low

Benefits of using tools:			- develops new practical skills, strengthens muscles, good physical activity, can support building confidence	
Hazards	Risks	Level of risk	Action	New level of risk
Storing any tool	Tools left out could injure children/adults		Tools are all counted in and out and are kept in suitable containers in one designated spot. Children must never be allowed to help themselves. Tools are given out for a purpose and all adults should model their correct use, storage and transportation at all times.	Low
Using any tool	Cuts, injuries to all participants	High	Ratio of adult to child is 1:1. Adult decides whether child has skills ready to use tool. Pupils are aware of the zoned area for tool use and 'blood bubbles', ensuring they do not enter another person's. 'Tools down' procedure taught (1 sound of the whistle.) Walking only ever permitted with a tool. FS leader to check tools are maintained and in good working order regularly.	Low
Using a potato peeler or knife		High	3 point safety stance, knife held in dominant hand and cutting action is always away from the body.	low
Using a bow saw		High	Safe standing stance taught. One hand to be kept on the handle, the other hand to be holding the wood securely on the A frame. Covers to be put on blades when not in use.	low
Using loppers		High	Safe standing stance. When carrying hold under fixed arm horizontal to ground, ensure blade points toward the floor.	low
Making holes with a palm drill, hand drill or gimlets		High	Safe standing/3 point stance. Use G clamp to secure wood. Keep the tool vertical.	low
	Trips, slips whilst carrying tools can cause injury			

