

Forest School Handbook



Bolshaw
Primary
School



Contents

Section 1 Introduction to Forest School 3

- The Forest School approach to learning.

Section 2 Learning and development 5

Section 3 Information for all participants 8

- Kit list
- Personal protective equipment

Section 4 Roles and responsibilities 10

Section 5 Policies and procedures 11

- Operating procedures
- Emergency Action Plan 14
- Bolshaw Primary School policies 15
- Forest School approach to risk taking 16

Section 6 Risk benefit assessments

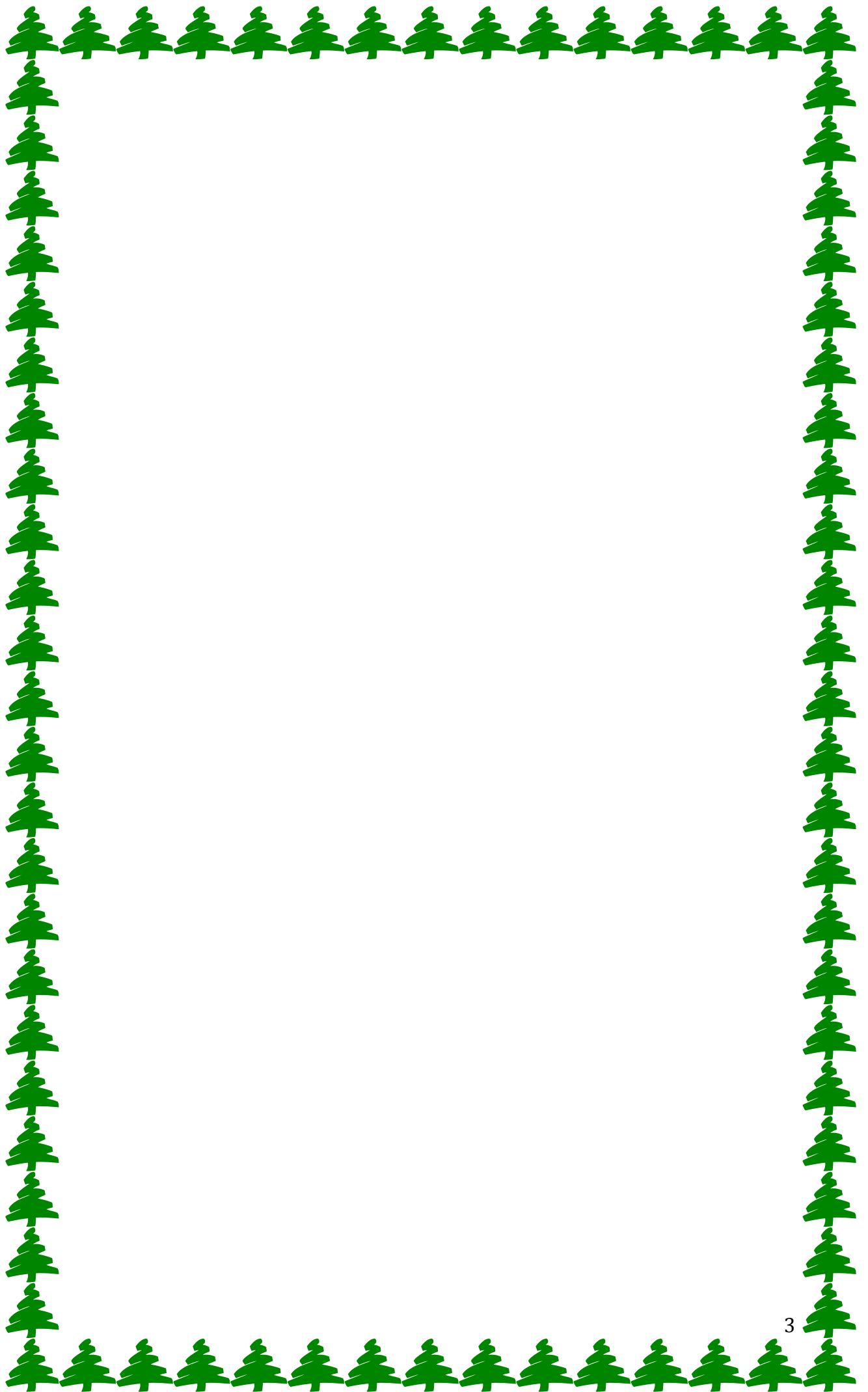
- Site – Creature Corner
- Tool use – peelers, knives, bow saw, billhook, loppers
- Camp Fires & Kelly Kettle
- Den building
- FS Dynamic Risk and Risk scale guide

Section 7 Ecological Impact

- Site assessment for Creature Camp
- Three year sustainability plan

Section 8 Additional documents

- Communications - Letters to parents/carers
- Articles of interest





Section 1 Introduction to Forest School

What is Forest School?

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.'

Forest School Association (FSA) definition

The Forest School approach to learning.

Principles of Forest School as agreed by the Forest School community in 2011:

- 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.



Forest School at Bolshaw Primary School

The forest school principles are embedded in the sessions we run at Bolshaw Primary. We use Creature Corner (the wild area) as our base and the wider school grounds too.

The ongoing nature of sessions gives children the opportunity to explore and experience the natural world in all weathers, through practical activities and games.

The child led approach and the supportive presence of adults combined with positive communication, opportunities for questioning and reflection allow time for the children to grow in self-esteem, independence and build confidence in their own abilities.

Each session is carefully planned, risk/benefit assessed, resourced and led by the FS leader, whilst following a learner centred approach, where the children can take the lead, once they feel confident, enabling them to learn through self directed play, exploration and activities.

The FS ethos encourages deep-level learning and progression drawing on several learning theories including the use of a growth mindset, which mirrors our whole school ethos.

Forest school has been shown to be beneficial for all ages and stages and compliments and enhances learning in many other areas of the school curriculum.

How do I find out more?

Go to the Forest School Association website.

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>



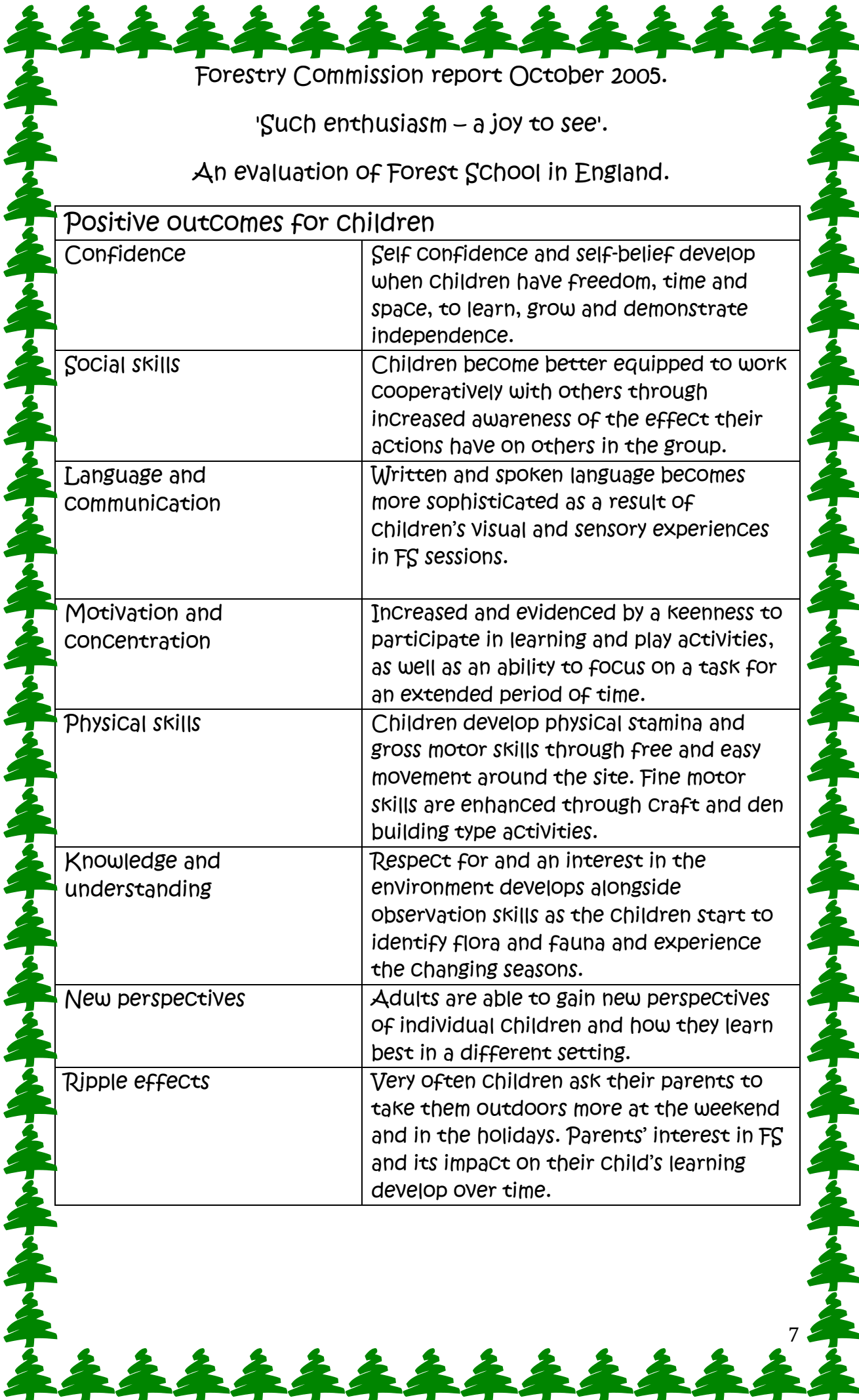
Section 2 Learning and development

The forest school leader aims to promote learning by providing well planned and resourced sessions which include opportunities for playing games, risk taking, teamwork and individual tasks, as well as learning and using practical skills. In parallel to this a holistic view of each child's abilities and needs is threaded through every session, which provides opportunities, time and space for them to learn and develop at their own pace, in a wide range of physical, social and emotional areas. Some of the positive outcomes for children observed in FS sessions are listed on page 6 in a Forestry Commission report extract.

Each FS session has a clear structure involving safety reminders, new skills and of course there is time for the children to follow their own interests or develop an ongoing project like a den or craft project. We usually end by tidying up and gathering together to reflect on our time together. During this time the children and adults are encouraged to reflect on the session and think about their learning, focus on the season and nature, and things they would like to do or revisit in the following weeks. This time is precious and the children become increasingly confident to share and contribute ideas.

Every session is planned with the group and individuals in mind and builds week by week on their learning and development. New skills and games are introduced alongside activities and games suggested and led by the children. Involving the children in the planning really boosts their ownership of their learning and builds self-confidence, especially for those who do not do so well in the Classroom environment. This raised confidence and sense of achievement, can translate to increased levels of attainment back in the Classroom.

The FS leader ensures that all adult helpers are well briefed before each session. Knowing the overall outcomes enables them to engage fully with the activities and to use an enquiry style approach with the children, involving the use of open-ended questioning to encourage deeper learning rather than just answering with a fact. During each session the FS leader and other adults are fully engaged in activities alongside the children and will make observations (photos, notes and discussions with children), which help to inform planning for future sessions.



Forestry Commission report October 2005.

'Such enthusiasm – a joy to see'.

An evaluation of Forest School in England.

Positive outcomes for children

Confidence	Self confidence and self-belief develop when children have freedom, time and space, to learn, grow and demonstrate independence.
Social skills	Children become better equipped to work cooperatively with others through increased awareness of the effect their actions have on others in the group.
Language and communication	Written and spoken language becomes more sophisticated as a result of children's visual and sensory experiences in FS sessions.
Motivation and concentration	Increased and evidenced by a keenness to participate in learning and play activities, as well as an ability to focus on a task for an extended period of time.
Physical skills	Children develop physical stamina and gross motor skills through free and easy movement around the site. Fine motor skills are enhanced through craft and den building type activities.
Knowledge and understanding	Respect for and an interest in the environment develops alongside observation skills as the children start to identify flora and fauna and experience the changing seasons.
New perspectives	Adults are able to gain new perspectives of individual children and how they learn best in a different setting.
Ripple effects	Very often children ask their parents to take them outdoors more at the weekend and in the holidays. Parents' interest in FS and its impact on their child's learning develop over time.

Section 3 Information for all participants

At Bolshaw learning outside is an integral part of our curriculum and contributes to children developing an understanding of and respect for the environment. The forest school approach offers additional benefits; the children have time and freedom to explore and have fun, while learning new skills and attitudes, which will over time transfer into their everyday lives.



We are very fortunate to have a woodland, wildlife area and extensive grounds at Bolshaw, which offer space for outdoor games, craft, art, music, den building, camp fires, cooking, using tools, observing and connecting with nature and much more. These activities, initiated both by the children and adults, offer opportunities for problem solving, exercise, cooperation, learning practical skills and time to build positive relationships in a small group setting.

Weather and clothing

'There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.' – A. Wainwright

Please send in clothing for your child to change into for their Forest School sessions. Clothes and footwear may get very muddy, so do ensure your child is not wearing anything you do not want to get dirty.

Clothing (kit list for children & parents)

- Long trousers (avoid jeans and heavy tracksuits as they tend to get very cold and wet)
- Long sleeved top
- Fleece or jumper
- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof over trousers
- Socks, and waterproof boots, wellies or sturdy shoes
- Hat (sun or winter)
- Gloves

Please put your child's name in all their clothing.

What about the weather? Low temperatures and rain will not cause a cancellation, unless accompanied by strong winds or lightening. More thin layers are best for warmth and can always be removed if too warm. The thickness of clothing will depend on the season. Please use old clothes and let your child know that they CAN GET DIRTY and you don't mind! Sun cream should also be applied if weather is hot.

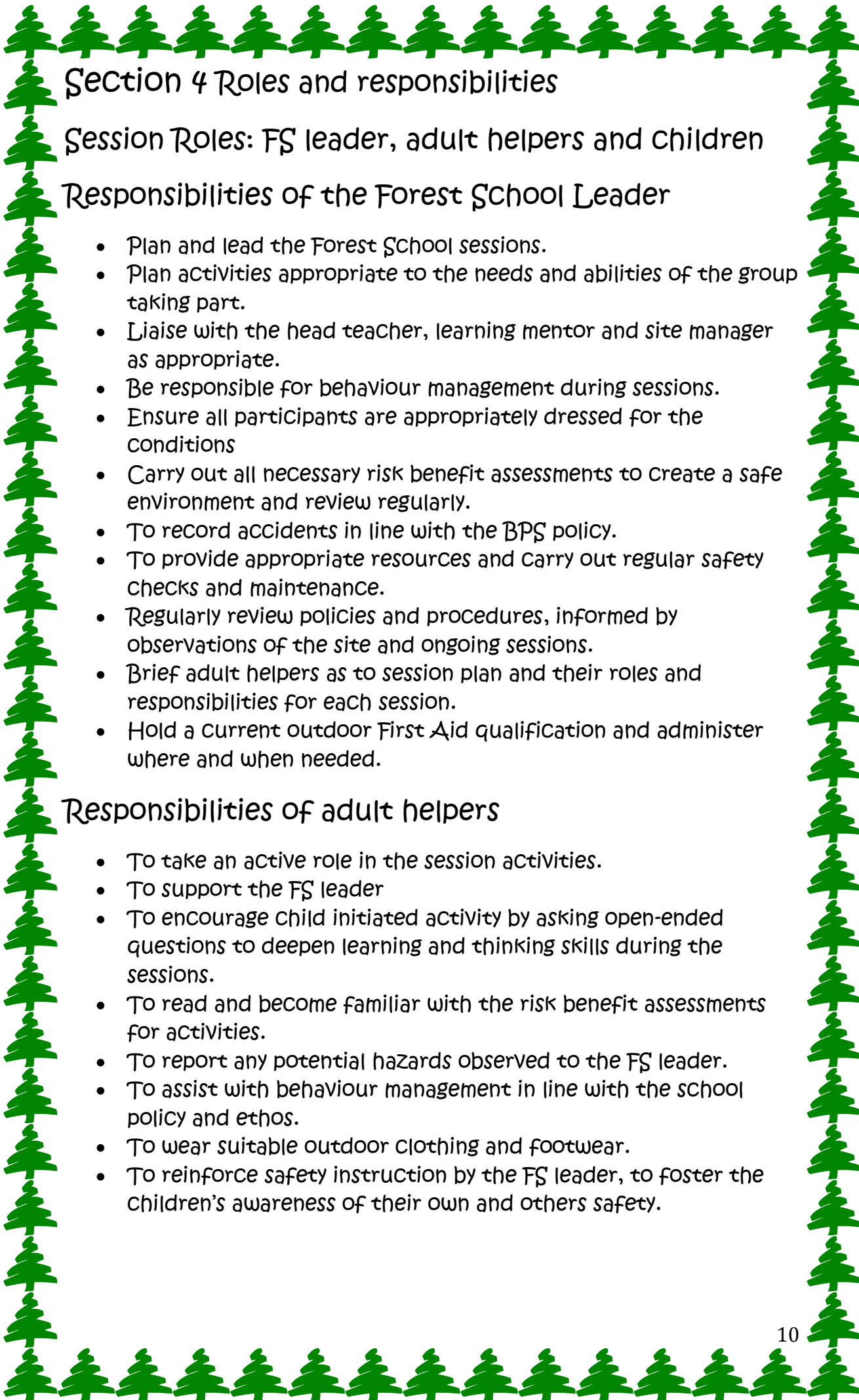


- Personal protective equipment

The forest school leader will provide any special equipment needed for activities, such as strong gloves.

(See also risk assessment section 6 for more detail.)





Section 4 Roles and responsibilities

Session Roles: FŞ leader, adult helpers and children

Responsibilities of the Forest School Leader

- Plan and lead the Forest School sessions.
- Plan activities appropriate to the needs and abilities of the group taking part.
- Liaise with the head teacher, learning mentor and site manager as appropriate.
- Be responsible for behaviour management during sessions.
- Ensure all participants are appropriately dressed for the conditions
- Carry out all necessary risk benefit assessments to create a safe environment and review regularly.
- To record accidents in line with the BPS policy.
- To provide appropriate resources and carry out regular safety checks and maintenance.
- Regularly review policies and procedures, informed by observations of the site and ongoing sessions.
- Brief adult helpers as to session plan and their roles and responsibilities for each session.
- Hold a current outdoor First Aid qualification and administer where and when needed.

Responsibilities of adult helpers

- To take an active role in the session activities.
- To support the FŞ leader
- To encourage child initiated activity by asking open-ended questions to deepen learning and thinking skills during the sessions.
- To read and become familiar with the risk benefit assessments for activities.
- To report any potential hazards observed to the FŞ leader.
- To assist with behaviour management in line with the school policy and ethos.
- To wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear.
- To reinforce safety instruction by the FŞ leader, to foster the children's awareness of their own and others safety.

Roles and responsibilities in an emergency situation

In the event of emergency adult responsibilities may need to change depending on the scenario. All adults attending should be aware of and read the emergency action plan.

Emergency Action plan page 14

Responsibilities of children

- To listen, learn and follow the safety rules at forest school.
- To behave and communicate in a positive way with all adults and members of the group.
- To respect and look after themselves, others and the environment.
- To use resources responsibly and avoid waste and damage to Creature Corner and school grounds.
- To try new activities and take risks they feel able to cope with.
- To learn and have fun!



Group 1 Year 5 2015

Collecting resources and experimenting



Den building and responsible tool use – tent peg and mallet.





Section 5 Policies and procedures

Operating procedures

First Aid

At every session there will be a first aider present with current qualification.

A first aid kit will be on site, in the safety sack.

A mobile telephone will be on site in the safety sack with emergency and school numbers saved.

Minor first aid will be given on site during the sessions and recorded in line with school policy.

See **Emergency Action plan** for serious incidents.

Toileting

Before each session the children will go to the toilet in school.

If needed during the session:

Infants and lower juniors: an adult helper will accompany the child/children into school to use the facilities via their year group entrance doors.

Upper juniors: the children will go into the school independently to use the facilities via the 5/6 door.

Lost Child - Follow Bolshaw Primary school procedure

- The appropriate Key Stage Leader will be informed immediately. All staff present will be informed and deployed to start an immediate, thorough search of the Key stage, followed by a search of the surrounding area, ensuring that all other children remain supervised throughout. Children in the outdoor area of provision must be brought into the classrooms and the registers must be taken to make sure no other child has gone astray.
- Doors and gates must be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The Key Stage Leader will carry out a second search of the area and inform the Head and the Deputy teacher who will carry out a search of the school.
- If the child has still not been accounted for, the parents/carers are contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.

- During this period, staff will be continually searching for the missing child, whilst other staff maintain as near to normal routine as possible for the rest of the children in the school.
- The Key Stage Leader will talk to staff and record when and where the child was last seen.
- The head teacher will meet the parents/carers and the police.
- Any incidents will be recorded in writing.

Tool safety and maintenance of resources

Before the children use any tool a full tool safety talk will be given and repeated at subsequent sessions.

The F5 leader will ensure tools are correctly maintained and stored securely before, during and after sessions.

All other resources used for activities will be regularly checked and maintained by the F5 Leader.



Timing of sessions

This will vary according to the group sessions planned. F5 sessions will be a minimum of two hours in length. Enrichment sessions should be a minimum one hour.

Boundaries All sessions will be on the school site and any boundaries will be set as appropriate for each session with safety a priority.

Creature corner (the wild area) is securely fenced creating a clear boundary.

The field area is fenced, but further limits maybe set as appropriate to the age of the children and activity.

Coloured rope and cones can be used to set temporary boundaries if needed.

Arriving at sessions

1. The FS leader will meet the children in class or collect from the playground as appropriate for the time of the session.
2. The children get changed into outdoor clothes.
3. Register children and number count.
4. Go outside with the FS leader and follow instructions for activity, carrying equipment, a game on route or walk sensibly to Creature Corner to start the session as appropriate.



A typical two-hour session

Starter activity often a game

Gather in the fire circle and talk through FS rules and safety for self, the group and the environment.

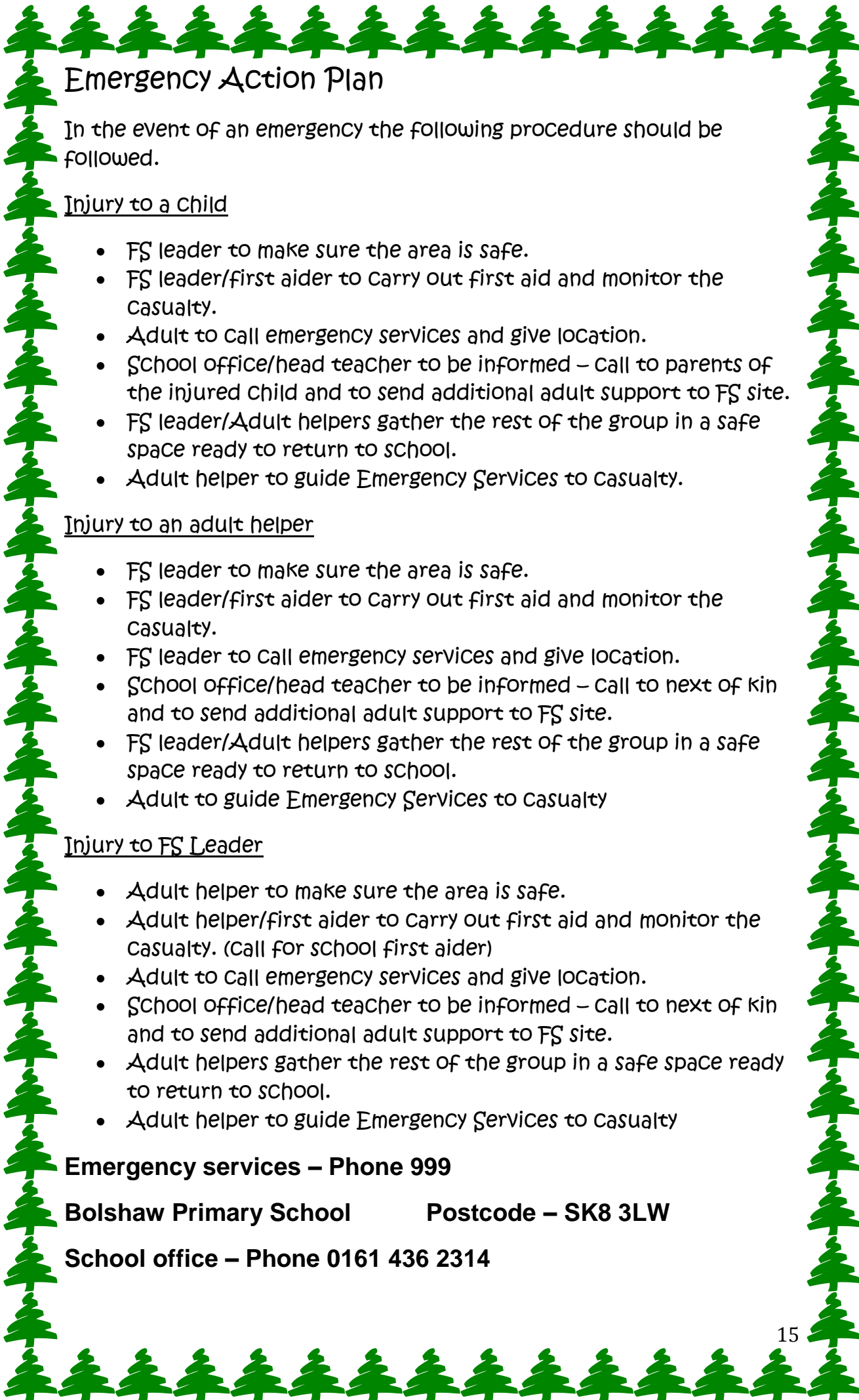
FS leader introduces a new skill, Craft, Challenge or activity and makes the group aware of the resources available.

Next there is time for the children to explore and follow their own choice of activity. Forest school sessions are planned and have a structure, but within this there is plenty of flexibility to follow the

children's lead and facilitate exploration of individual interests, particularly as they become more independent and confident.



Tidy up resources and then gather as a group to review and reflect on the session and identify activities for future sessions. This is often a chance for a song, story telling, a drink, jokes and sharing experiences too.



Emergency Action Plan

In the event of an emergency the following procedure should be followed.

Injury to a child

- FŞ leader to make sure the area is safe.
- FŞ leader/first aider to carry out first aid and monitor the casualty.
- Adult to call emergency services and give location.
- School office/head teacher to be informed – Call to parents of the injured child and to send additional adult support to FŞ site.
- FŞ leader/Adult helpers gather the rest of the group in a safe space ready to return to school.
- Adult helper to guide Emergency Services to casualty.

Injury to an adult helper

- FŞ leader to make sure the area is safe.
- FŞ leader/first aider to carry out first aid and monitor the casualty.
- FŞ leader to call emergency services and give location.
- School office/head teacher to be informed – Call to next of kin and to send additional adult support to FŞ site.
- FŞ leader/Adult helpers gather the rest of the group in a safe space ready to return to school.
- Adult to guide Emergency Services to casualty

Injury to FŞ Leader

- Adult helper to make sure the area is safe.
- Adult helper/first aider to carry out first aid and monitor the casualty. (Call for school first aider)
- Adult to call emergency services and give location.
- School office/head teacher to be informed – Call to next of kin and to send additional adult support to FŞ site.
- Adult helpers gather the rest of the group in a safe space ready to return to school.
- Adult helper to guide Emergency Services to casualty

Emergency services – Phone 999

Bolshaw Primary School

Postcode – SK8 3LW

School office – Phone 0161 436 2314

Bolshaw Primary School policies relevant to Forest School sessions on school site

Policy	Date	Review	Notes
Safeguarding	2015	annually	Includes SMBC guidance
Health and Safety	2015	annually	
Critical Incidents	2015	annually	Used to inform FS Emergency Action plan
Adult Helper	2015	2017	For class teacher - read forest school leader Includes basics of safeguarding
Behaviour	2016	annually	FS leader will uphold the whole school ethos, but rewards and sanctions, if needed, in FS will vary.
Lost Child	2016	2017	Includes procedure
Confidentiality	2016	2020	Needs to be read and signed by adults helping regularly in FS
Communications	2012	Every two years	Regularly update school diary dates and use school email system (Parent Mail) or Class Dojo for parents' messages. Staff messages to be given verbally, in writing or sent by email on school system.
Inclusion Care & Control	2010	annually	SMBC information and guidance
Anti Bullying	2012	annually	Also includes 2016 SMBC model policy
Sun Safety	2015	annually	Include reminder in information for parents

- SMBC – Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Full electronic and hard copies are available in school office.

Forest School approach to risk taking

Risk taking is part of everyday life and learning to assess the risks and benefits of an activity is an important life skill. Forest school sessions allow children time and space for exploration and to understand their own abilities. The FS leader aims to provide opportunities for children to push the boundaries of their learning taking part in activities that involve challenge and risk in the natural environment. The children are supported and encouraged to weigh up the risks and benefits involved in an activity and to make decisions as they go.

Risk/benefit assessments (Copies filed in school office)

As part of the preparation and planning of sessions; the forest school site, weather, games, crafts, den building activities and tool use are all fully risk/benefit assessed by the FS leader and the individual needs of each child in the group are taken into account. The children are instructed in keeping themselves safe, the group safe and to respect and care for the site, with reminders and reflection during every session. In addition safe use rules specific to tools (tool talk) and activities are introduced as necessary.

Dynamic risk assessment

As well as the risk/benefit assessments done in advance, the FS leader and adult helpers use and encourage dynamic risk assessment for challenging play and learning situations that arise during sessions. (See next page) As part of this, the children are also guided and supported by the adults to weigh up risks/benefits and adapt their games and activities to make them safer and fun for all involved.

All adults are fully involved in the games and activities, offering support to the children as they grow in confidence and move out side their comfort zone into more adventurous and challenging situations.

