



# **Ottery St Mary**

# **Forest School Handbook**



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## Forest School Handbook

The Ottery St Mary Forest School Handbook has been produced to clearly articulate the benefits, procedures and risk assessments associated with our forest school provision, drawing together documents and processes already in place into one useable document.

### 1. Why do we value Forest School at Ottery St Mary Primary School?

Ottery St Mary Primary School is lucky enough to benefit from large outdoor grounds, which include a dedicated Forest School space. Our pupils live near Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and our hope is that they learn to value the natural spaces around them and enjoy experiences in nature safely and responsibly.

Forest School is an integral part of our curriculum. Through regular outdoor sessions, children gain hands-on experiences that encourage **curiosity**, **problem-solving**, and **teamwork** in a natural environment. Forest School builds **confidence**, **resilience**, and **independence** as students engage in activities like building shelters, identifying wildlife, and working with natural materials. These experiences foster a sense of **responsibility for the environment**, nurturing young learners who appreciate and understand the importance of caring for the natural world. Forest School complements our indoor learning by enhancing **physical**, **social**, and **emotional well-being**, providing a balanced approach to education that encourages growth in ways that classroom-based learning alone cannot achieve.

Forest School also plays a key role in developing essential life skills, which we see as invaluable for our pupils. By working in diverse weather conditions and facing the challenges of outdoor tasks, children learn **perseverance** and **adaptability**. Activities are structured to allow pupils to take **safe risks**, which builds their **decision-making abilities** and **self-confidence**. For example, using tools under supervision teaches responsibility and practical skills while reinforcing **safety awareness**.

## 2. Forest School Ethos and Principles

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

The Forest School Association have identified 6 key principles of Forest School, more information can be found on their website. We have identified how these principles link to our school values (Explore, Challenge, Learn) and school rules (Respect, Care, Listen).

Forest School Principle	Our Values & Rules	Explanation
The Long-Term Principle	Explore	Forest School takes place regularly over a long period, encompassing seasonal changes. The structure of forest school is based on observations and collaborations between facilitators and learners.
The Nature Principle	Care	Forest school prioritises learning in a natural environment and fosters a positive relationship between learners and natural spaces. Nature is used to inspire and motivate. Our learners are encouraged to care about their environment and the world around them.
The Risk Principle	Challenge	Forest school is designed to build on learner's innate motivation and interests. Forest school experiences are based on risk / benefit processes that are tailored to the age and stage of the learner. Learners are encouraged to understand risk and risk / benefit.
The Holistic Learning Principle	Learn	Forest school aims to develop the physical, social, cognitive and linguistic skills of the learners. Experiences are linked to the pupil's learning where relevant as well as to the changing nature of the seasons.
The Leadership Principle	Listen and Learn	Forest School is led by a L3 Forest School practitioner who seeks and has access to opportunities for CPD and development of best practice. Roles, responsibilities and risk / benefit analysis documents are clearly shared with all stakeholders. Forest school practice is reflective and undergoes review.
The Community Principle	Respect and Care	Teaching and learning in the forest school is learner-centred. Play and choice are integral to sessions and the overall curriculum. The environment and sessions foster mutual respect between peers and all those working in the forest school. Learners are encouraged to take a reflective approach in sessions, building emotional intelligence and a sense of pride.

### 3. Our Forest School Setting and Activities

The Forest School at Ottery St Mary is at the top of the school field. It includes many established trees, muddy banks and some steps. At the bottom of the Forest School area is a sheltered fire pit which includes seating for a small group of children. There is an amphitheatre space which looks over the school field. There is a fenced off pond area which has a wooden platform and a shallow pond. Although there are toilets in the swimming pool enclosed area, this is often locked so children are encouraged to use toileting facilities in the school building before coming down to the forest school.

The Forest School benefits from a mud kitchen, a climbing rope, rope ladder to a swing, slackline and dedicated allotment raised beds and a shed to contain tools and equipment. The site is accessed by a padlocked gate from the KS2 playground. Much of the upper area of the forest school is visible from the KS2 playground, however the lower levels (which includes the amphitheatre and fire pit) are not visible from the playground.

Activities covered in the forest school may include:

- Den building
- Use and practice of a variety of knots
- Safe use of fire lighting and cooking
- The identification of plants and animals
- Pond dipping
- Exploration and care for the natural world
- Safe use of tools to support learning
- Identifying seasonal changes
- Developing social skills and teamwork
- Supporting emotional wellbeing
- Playing in the outdoors
- Taking risks in a safe way

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities in the Forest School

### Governors

- Ensure a shared understanding of the ethos and principles of Forest School
- Ensure informed of health and safety / risk assessment activities associated with Forest School

### Headteacher

- Ensure sessions comply with regulations and guidelines
- Ensure Forest School Leader is competent to monitor risks and lead activities through session

### Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader will have overall responsibility for the supervision and planning of sessions. The leader will:

- Be a Level 3 qualified forest school lead, or working towards this qualification having attended training
- Hold an up to date Outdoor First Aid qualification including Paediatric First Aid
- Follow Risk Benefit Assessments
- Undertake dynamic Risk Benefit Assessment where necessary
- Clearly communicate to all adults supporting their roles and responsibilities
- Clearly communicate the key safety information to all at the start of the session
- Ensure tools are used and stored safely
- Organise emergency procedures
- Raise concerns about health and safety to SLT
- Follow school safeguarding and behaviour policies

### Additional adults

- Follow the instructions of the Forest School Lead
- Monitor and support the health and safety of everyone in the Forest School setting
- Model good practice
- Carry out delegated responsibilities
- Support children to manage their own risk
- Raise concerns about health and safety to the forest school lead or SLT
- Follow the school safeguarding and behaviour policies

### Pupils

- **Follow the School Forest School Rules**

**Respect:** We enter the Forest School respectfully and understand that we are sharing this natural environment with plants and animals.

**Care:** We investigate, learn, and play in a caring manner towards our classmates and the natural environment.

**Listen:** We listen carefully to the safety instructions we are given at the start of each Forest School session and during the activities.

## 5. Forest School Procedures

### Before forest school sessions:

- Conduct a thorough sweep of the site before a session.
- Check for any damage to site (litter, animal faeces etc) and dispose of safely
- Check trees for damage or dead branches that may cause injury
- Pathways kept clear and free from nettles and brambles
- Check for bees / wasps nests or other animal activity which may cause hazard (digging etc)
- Check weather conditions and adapt plan accordingly
- Extreme weather such as winds above 40mph will result in closure of forest school
- Check first aid kit – replenish if needed
- Ensure children are suitably dressed for the conditions and activities
- Ensure all medical needs are understood and equipment such as inhalers / epi pens are accessible
- Ensure at least 2 adults are available to support a full class session and that ratios of adults available are suitable for the group (considering additional levels of need and age of group)

### During forest school sessions:

- Review rules of forest school at start of session (eg 'Respect Care Listen', signals to regather, '123 test')
- Highlight any adaptations which may need to be made to usual procedures
- Monitor weather conditions and assess risk
- Children reminded not to pick or eat plants berries or mushrooms
- Check regularly all children are safely engaged in activities
- Follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) for activities planned
- Review activities planned and modify when necessary following dynamic risk benefit assessment
- KS2 children leaving the forest school to sign register and inform adult before returning to school building
- Adapt provision and activities if there is an unexpected or necessary change to the ratio of adults to children

### After forest school sessions:

- Clear away all equipment and resources
- Ensure any fire is completely extinguished
- Count all tools and resources back in
- Ensure clear communication of any incidents or events in forest school to responsible adult
- Assess impact to environment
- Record any safeguarding, first aid or behaviour concerns in line with school policy

### Forest School Rules: Respect, Care, Listen

**Respect:** We enter the Forest School respectfully and understand that we are sharing this natural environment with plants and animals.

**Care:** We investigate, learn, and play in a caring manner towards our classmates and the natural environment.



**Listen:** We listen carefully to the safety instructions we are given at the start of each Forest School session and during the activities.

## 6. Weather and clothing guidance

Weather will be checked prior to sessions and national and locally issues weather guidance will be followed. High winds (eg above 40mph) will result in the closure of the Forest School. Muddy conditions following heavy rain will be assessed for likelihood of slips and falls.

### Sun policy

- All children are expected to have a water bottle in school
- Water bottles will be bought down to forest school and easily accessible during the session
- If a child does not have their bottle, they will have a drink before leaving the classroom and immediately upon their return
- Clothing should be light however, still cover legs and arms to prevent scratches and stings
- Check appropriate footwear
- Children may wear a cap or hat
- Children will be encouraged to apply sun cream before entering school or prior to the session
- If days are particularly hot, activities should be considered that involve using the trees as shade
- Alternatively, tarpaulin can be used to create shade
- Children will be given regular opportunities to rest in the shade
- Time outside will be kept to a minimum if it is particularly hot

### Clothing advice:

Parents are advised to check the weather prior to a forest school day and ensure their child has appropriate clothing.

Forest school clothing could include:

- Wellies or old trainers suitable for muddy conditions
- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Warm layers if needed (hat, gloves, scarf)
- Long sleeves and trousers to protect against stings and scratches

**If you would like help sourcing appropriate clothing, please contact the school. The Ottery Larder is an excellent free resource which often has a large stock of children's clothing suitable for Forest School.**

## 7. Equality and Diversity

We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010. The school's general duties with regards to equality are:

- Eliminating discrimination
- Fostering good relationships
- Advancing equality of opportunity

We will not discriminate against, harass or victimise any pupil, prospective pupil, or other member of the school community because of their:

- Sex
- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership

We aim to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with special emphasis on promoting equality and diversity, and eradicating prejudicial incidents for pupils and staff. Our school is committed to not only eliminating discrimination, but also increasing understanding and appreciation for diversity.

We believe that a greater level of success from pupils and staff can be achieved by realising the uniqueness of individuals. Creating a prejudice-free environment where individuals feel confident and at ease is a commitment of the school, and equally as relevant to the Forest School environment. This environment will be achieved by:

- Being respectful
- Always treating all members of the school community fairly
- Developing an understanding of diversity and the benefits it has
- Adopting an inclusive attitude
- Adopting an inclusive curriculum that is accessible to all
- Encouraging compassion and open-mindedness

We are committed to having a balanced and fair curriculum. We believe that our pupils should be exposed to ideas and concepts that may challenge their understanding, to help ensure that pupils learn to become more accepting and inclusive of others. This includes ensuring fair access to the Forest School curriculum for all pupils. All children will be invited to participate in the Forest School activities and reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure this is possible and safe.

## 8. Emergency Procedures



### First Aid

The Forest School Lead is Outdoor and Paediatric First Aid trained. The majority of supporting members of staff in the school are also first aid trained and therefore, can support with this.

**If first aid is needed whilst working with tools, all tool work will stop for the duration of the first aid. If first aid is needed whilst the fire is lit, it will either be administered by the adult who is not supervising the fire, or the fire area will be cleared of pupils and the fire monitored by an additional adult.**

Any first aid required, will be recorded in line with school procedures upon return to the school building.

**Major first aid:** The Forest School leader will be responsible onsite until professional assistance arrives. Should an incident occur, the following will happen:

- The Forest School Lead, TA or responsible adult will contact the office (walkie-talkie).
- The office will then contact emergency services and parent/carers.
- The children will be gathered at a safe gathering point.
- The children will be counted by the supporting adult and depending on the nature of the incident, will return to the school building ASAP.
- This will be recorded on CPOMS upon return to school.

### Signalling the children

Forest school sessions begin with a briefing about safety. This includes reminding children of the signals they must follow. Ordinarily, to regather the children a drum will be beaten. However, in the case of emergency procedures which require a quick response (eg fire, evacuation, 'ready for anything' protocol) a whistle will be blown.

### Missing Child

If a child is suspected of being missing, then the Forest School Lead will beat a drum (or otherwise pre-agreed signal) and gather children at a safe gathering point where a head count will be taken. All tools will be securely locked away and an initial sweep of the Forest School area will take place. The supporting adult will remain with the group while the Forest School Lead establishes the last time and place the missing child was seen. Contact will be made to the office through the walkie-talkie. If outside agencies become involved, all members of staff will follow their advice. At this point, the group will be taken back to the setting/classroom.

## **Outbreak of Fire**

In the event of a fire, children will be counted and assemble at their fire assembly point (KS2 playground). A headcount will be taken. If there is an uncontrollable fire in the Forest School, the Forest School Lead will blow the whistle and shout 'Fire'. Everything will be left where it is, and children should follow the instructions of the Forest School Lead. A head count will be taken by a member of staff and everyone guided out of the Forest School as quickly and safely as possible. The Forest School Lead will make contact with the office (walkie-talkie). A final head count will be made, and the children taken to their fire assembly point (KS2 playground).

## **Evacuation of Site**

The evacuation signal is the continuous whistle by the Forest School Lead. Children will leave Forest School by the closest exit and meet on the field at a signalled meeting point. A head count will be taken, and children will return to classroom.

## **Evacuation in the case of extreme weather**

In the case of extreme weather conditions, it may be necessary to evacuate the Forest School. In the event this happens, the whistle will be blow and children will exit the Forest School. Adult helpers will gather the children and conduct a head count whilst the Forest School Lead ensures the Forest School area is clear and all tools/equipment are collected (if safe to re-enter the Forest School). Children will return to classroom.

## **Ready for Anything (School Lockdown)**

In the event of a lockdown, communication from the school to the Forest School Leader will be via walkie talkie. Any tools that are out will be locked away and any fires will be extinguished. The Forest School Leader will gather the children using the whistle if needed. The group will gather and shelter in place at the bottom of the Forest School area or move down to the bottom of the school field and wait for further information via the walkie-talkie. A head count will be taken. In an instance where Ready For Anything protocol is required due to a danger within the Forest School (eg dangerous animal), evacuation will be to the school building.




## **After an emergency in the Forest School**

The school will undertake a review of an emergency in the Forest School. Where necessary this may lead to change in practice and adaptation of Risk Benefit Analysis and Standard Operating Procedures. Psychological aftercare will be considered for the adults and children who experienced the emergency.

<b>Subject of Risk Benefit Assessment</b>	<b>Ottery St Mary Forest School Site</b>	<b>Brief description of activity, location, feature and equipment used</b>	Any activity, ('free' play, adult led activities, den building, mud kitchen, planting) that takes place in the Forest School Site at Ottery St Mary Primary School. Including use of the mud kitchen area, slopes and allotment space. Specific activities in the Forest School Site are subject to separate risk benefit assessments (tool use, tree and rope climbing, fire lighting and cooking, pond dipping)
<b>Name and role of assessor</b>	Tamsyn Pickett Forest School Lead	<b>SLT member reviewing RBA</b>	Frankie Glover Finlay Assistant Headteacher
<b>Date of assessment</b>	18.11.24	<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	01.09.25
<b>Activity or feature</b>	<p>Typical activities include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Free' play (allowing children to play under supervision of adults)</li> <li>• Use of mud kitchen</li> <li>• Free and structured games (eg hide and seek)</li> <li>• Balancing, climbing slopes and travelling through the Forest School site</li> <li>• Teamwork and problem solving</li> <li>• Gathering sticks and den building</li> <li>• Science, numeracy and literacy activities</li> <li>• Creating art work</li> <li>• Planting trees, hedges or plants</li> </ul>	<b>How will participants benefit?</b>	<p>Fresh air, relaxation, physical, mental and social health and wellbeing improvements.</p> <p>Enhanced knowledge of subjects which form the focus of the session.</p> <p>Stimuli for creativity, teamwork and problem solving.</p> <p>Communication and social interaction between adults and children.</p> <p>Connection with nature / the natural world.</p> <p>Enjoyment and fun.</p>
<b>Who is at risk?</b>	OSMP staff and volunteers, pupils / those participating in the session		

<b>Possible hazards and risks</b>	Slips, trips and falls resulting in injury. Running into, bumping or falling on objects that will injure, including rocks, tree branches and trunks as well as man made sharp edges. Dangerous litter being handled, stepped on or fallen on leading to injury or harm.	<b>Precautions and measures to control the severity or likelihood</b>	Site sweep to identify trip / slip hazards Identification and removal of hazards prior to session. Safety briefing for activities shared at start of session. <b>See SOP</b>
	Impacts and collisions whilst playing games that lead to significant injury.		Safety briefing and rules shared. First aider and first aid kit available
	Becoming lost or running away leading to harm or fear.		Adult supervision of Forest School and any available exits Walkie- Talkie communication with office
	Inclement weather (such as high wind, snow and ice) leading to increased possibility for injury or harm, or unusual injury (such as flying objects or falling trees).		Weather assessment undertaken prior to session (See SOP) Emergency procedures for evacuation of site (see handbook) Walkie-talkie communication
	Ingestion of toxins or poisons from flora and fauna. Zoonosis – Toxoplasmosis, E-Coli 157, Lyme disease and Weil’s disease.		Site sweep to identify hazards including animal faeces etc Briefing to children to remind not to eat anything found in Forest School <b>See SOP</b>
<b>Precedents or comparisons</b>	Forest School provision is a well-established educational approach in place in many school settings across the country. The Forestry Commission encourage school trips and activities to take place in woodland settings.	<b>Judgement</b>	Overall, use of the Forest School setting at Ottery St Mary Primary School offers significant wellbeing and educational benefits to our pupils. Risks and hazards are present, but due to the ‘in school’ aspect of the location, these hazards can be safely managed.

## Standard Operating Procedures: Use of Forest School Site




	<p>Paediatric first aider present Medical box with pupils First aid kit in Forest school</p>		<p>Adventurous activities are not undertaken unless the Forest School Lead or those certified as competent are leading.</p>		<p>Leader of session to ensure charged Walkie-Talkie is available and that office aware of location of pupils.</p>
<p><b>Before forest school sessions:</b></p>			<p><b>During forest school sessions:</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a thorough sweep of the site before a session.</li> <li>• Check for any damage to site (litter, animal faeces etc) and dispose of safely</li> <li>• Check trees for damage or dead branches that may cause injury</li> <li>• Check pathways kept clear and free from nettles and brambles</li> <li>• Check for bees / wasps nests or other animal activity which may cause hazard (digging etc)</li> <li>• Check weather conditions and adapt plan accordingly</li> <li>• Extreme weather such as winds above 40mph will result in closure of forest school</li> <li>• Check first aid kit – replenish if needed</li> <li>• Ensure children are suitably dressed for the conditions and activities</li> <li>• Ensure all medical needs are understood and equipment such as inhalers / epi pens are accessible</li> <li>• Ensure at least 2 adults are available to support a full class and that ratios of adults available are suitable for the group</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review rules of Forest School at start of session <b>Respect, Care, Listen</b></li> <li>• Highlight any adaptations which may need to be made to usual procedures based on conditions</li> <li>• Monitor weather conditions and assess risk</li> <li>• Check regularly all children are safely engaged in activities</li> <li>• Children reminded not to pick or eat plants berries or mushrooms</li> <li>• Review activities planned and modify when necessary following dynamic Risk Benefit Assessment</li> <li>• KS2 children leaving the forest school to sign whiteboard register and inform adult before returning to school building</li> <li>• KS1 / EYFS children leaving the forest school to be accompanied by an adult, adaptations made to provisions based on any impact to ratios this causes</li> <li>• Adapt provision and activities if there is an unexpected or necessary change to the ratio of adults to children</li> </ul>		
<p>Ensure gates leading out of school (bottom of field, playground gates) are closed or supervised by a member of staff.</p>					
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Emergency procedures as detailed in Forest School handbook will be followed</b></p>					




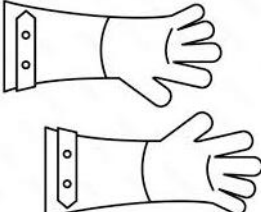




<b>Subject of Risk Benefit Assessment</b>	<b>Fire Lighting and Cooking</b>	<b>Brief description of activity, location, feature and equipment used</b>	Lighting, maintaining, and putting out of small, contained fires. All fires are held in some form of container (eg fairy fires in shells) or fireplace (ie in the dedicated fire pit). Cooking of simple meals and heating of water (for drinks, cleaning and science experiments). Pupils are invited to participate in the gathering of fuel for the fire, in maintaining the fire under supervision of a trained adult and in ensuring the fire is extinguished under the supervision of a trained adult. Flint and steel, sticks and matches may be used in addition to cotton wool or other kindling. The fire pit is located at the bottom of the forest school, with a high sheltered roof and dedicated seating around the perimeter.
<b>Name and role of assessor</b>	Tamsyn Pickett Forest School Lead	<b>SLT member reviewing RBA</b>	Frankie Glover Finlay Assistant Headteacher
<b>Date of assessment</b>	18.11.24	<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	01.09.25
<b>Activity or feature</b>	<p>Typical activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling around the fire</li> <li>• Boiling a kettle of water on the fire</li> <li>• Preparation of fuel / tinder by gathering and snapping twigs</li> <li>• Carrying of flammable materials and ignition materials (flint and steel, matches)</li> <li>• Supervised use of ignition materials</li> <li>• Putting out of fire</li> <li>• Preparation of food including chopping, mixing, slicing and cleaning</li> <li>• Cooking of food over fire or hot ashes</li> <li>• Eating of prepared food</li> <li>• Clearing and cleaning items used in food preparation</li> </ul>	<b>How will participants benefit?</b>	<p>Enjoyment, excitement, and spiritual reflection. Learning about risk management, responsibility, and organisation. Developing a deep connection to nature. In using fire as a (cooking) tool, children learn to respect it and use it wisely. Participants will learn simple science (fire triangle) including the suitability of materials to ignite and keep a fire going, how to balance the right amount of oxygen and heat loss. Individuals will also learn about simple food preparation, meals and food types and food hygiene basics. Putting a fire out, clearing up and taking items away will teach responsibility and respect. Preparing, cooking and eating simple foods on an open fire, pupils will connect with food production, and enjoy social time. Simple meals will highlight healthy and seasonal choices.</p>
<b>Who is at risk?</b>	OSMP staff, Pupils / those participating in the session, those who may be exposed to the smoke from fire (eg pupils in swimming pool)		

<b>Possible hazards and risks</b>	Burns from the sparks or items placed on the fire or recently removed from the fire (e.g. saucepans or sticks).	<b>Precautions and measures to control the severity or likelihood</b>	Safety briefing including how to safely add fuel to fire. Adults remove pots and pans wearing safety gloves. First aid kit present. (See SOP)
	Smoke inhalation could trigger asthma or similar conditions or could contain toxins from recycled or poorly dried wood.		Monitor wind conditions and adjust seating to avoid excessive inhalation of smoke. Medical box, inhalers and asthma list available. Adults aware.
	Group member falling into fire (tripping around the fire pit)		Safety briefing demonstrating how to safely move around fire. Monitor and remove trip hazards.
	Group member leaning on fire container for any reason, causing it to tip.		Modelling how to make a stable base and move by fire included in safety briefing. (See SOP)
	Scalds from boiling water and fats used in cooking, following a spill or steam escape. Burn from eating food which is too hot. Injury from eating directly from a skewer.		Boiling water / cooking over fire to be led by adult wearing safety gloves. Children briefed on safety. When roasting marshmallows children hold stick at the end, guided on how to count and assess marshmallow is cool enough, remove cooked marshmallow with fingers to eat.
	Uncontrollable spread of fire.		Weather and environment conditions monitored prior to fire lighting. Water and fire blanket present by all fire activity.
	Food poisoning or illness from poorly prepared food.		Adults undertaking cooking qualified in food safety. Staff apply food hygiene controls. Access to handwashing.
	Allergic reactions to foods / ingredients.		Allergy list in medical box consulted, ingredients checked for allergens
	Cuts from knife use when preparing food.		Knife use modelled by adult, equipment checked for safety. Knives counted back in at end of session and stored securely
Injury or unsafe conditions due to broken or unsuitable equipment (both for cooking and fire lighting)	All equipment will be managed well, with a limited number available and good storage - knives or fire lighting items are secured safely at the end of a session.		
<b>Precedents or comparisons</b>	The Forest School Association has good protocols and proven history of using fire with a wide variety of groups, including pre-school. It also asserts qualifications are not needed. The Play Safety Forum highlights that fire is a play tool and learning tool, in their publication 'Managing Risk in Play Provision'.	<b>Judgement</b>	Fire does present risk, due to small incidents having potentially unacceptable consequences. Effective group management and vigilance can reduce the likelihood of these risks. Cooking on an open fire requires skills and responsibility and can be a life-long skill. The positive benefits outweigh the risks, considering likelihood. The importance of teaching fire safety as a life skill is vital.

## Standard Operating Procedures: Fire Lighting / Use of Fire

	<p>Paediatric first aider present Medical box with pupils First aid kit in Forest school</p>		<p>Adventurous activities are not undertaken unless the Forest School Lead or those certified as competent are leading.</p>		<p>Leader of session to ensure charged Walkie-Talkie is available and that office aware of location of pupils.</p>
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## Essential for Fire Lighting

					
<p><b>Fire blanket available</b></p>	<p><b>Heat resistant gloves available</b></p>	<p><b>Filled water bucket and sponge available</b></p>	<p><b>Hair / loose clothing tied or tucked away</b></p>	<p><b>Assess wind and weather conditions</b></p>	<p><b>Safety and rules briefing</b></p>




- Assessment of weather conditions including wind speed and direction and conditions which may lead to spread of fire such as excessive dryness
- **Safety demonstration** at the start of every fire activity
- Assess the behaviour and safety of the group participating, must be following the school rules of **Respect, Care, Listen**
- Fires are lit within the pit or in safe containers (ie colanders) in supervised area free of trip hazards and are kept to a dinner plate size or smaller
- Children do not enter fire perimeter unless invited by an adult, no more than 4 children are invited to the fire at one time
- Children shown how to kneel with stable base by fire pit
- When adding more fuel, children hold the stick at the end and gently place on fire
- Fuel will not be touched once it is on the fire
- Seating may be adjusted based on wind direction to prevent excessive smoke inhalation

**Emergency procedures as detailed in Forest School handbook will be followed**







<p>Fires are put out under supervision of an adult and thoroughly checked to be extinguished before leaving the site</p> <p><b>Subject of Risk Benefit Assessment</b></p>	<p><b>Tool Use</b></p>	<p><b>Brief description of activity, location, feature and equipment used</b></p>	<p>Tool activities guided by Forest School Lead. Including possible use of bladed tools such as knives, scissors, axes, loppers, saws, potato peelers, de-barking tools or secateurs. Hammering tools such as mallets or hammers. Use of hand drills and screwdrivers. Use of handcraft or DIY tools such as screwdrivers and spanners. Clamping tools such as workbenches, ratchet straps and clamps. Digging tools such as spades, forks, or hole diggers.</p>
<p><b>Name and role of assessor</b></p>	<p>Tamsyn Pickett Forest School Lead</p>	<p><b>SLT member reviewing RBA</b></p>	<p>Frankie Glover Finlay Assistant Headteacher</p>
<p><b>Date of assessment</b></p>	<p>18.11.24</p>	<p><b>Date to be reviewed</b></p>	<p>01.09.25</p>
<p><b>Activity or feature</b></p>	<p>Typical activities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hammering pegs into the ground.</li> <li>• Peeling bark, cutting, sawing, whittling and snipping twigs or small branches.</li> <li>• Cutting and mixing food.</li> <li>• Chopping, sawing or snapping wood.</li> <li>• Drilling small holes in wood with power tool and hand tool.</li> </ul> <p>Hammering nails into wood and screwing into wood.</p>	<p><b>How will participants benefit?</b></p>	<p>Developing Hand/eye co ordination and skills with tools. Handling sharp tools responsibly, and using them in a practical and positive way. Learning responsibility for yourself, tools, and others, including risk assessing and making good decisions. Seeing knives as tools, not weapons. Self-esteem and confidence will grow though taking part in using tools that require trust and responsibility. Being able to build objects or make tools. Understanding natural resources and materials and sustainable harvesting.</p>
<p><b>Who is at risk?</b></p>	<p>OSMP staff and volunteers, Pupils / those participating in the session</p>		

<b>Possible hazards and risks</b>	Bladed tools – cuts through skin, penetrating injuries, minor amputations (fingers and toes). Particularly when working on hard materials, knotted wood and fine (small) objects such as twig ends.	<b>Precautions and measures to control the severity or likelihood</b>	Safety modelling prior to any tool use by competent adult leading the activity including noting any particulars of the material being used and correct positioning to reduce chance of injury. Restricted tool access - no tools left lying around during session – either they are being used or stored. Briefing of splinter risk and not running fingers down wood edges.
	Increased hazard of cuts or penetrations to torso or where major blood vessels are. Being struck by heavy and hard object (eg hammers).		A safe tool area will be set up for each activity, allowing for ‘safety bubble’ distance between pupils. Pupils will be shown how to hold and use tools safely to avoid cuts to self and others.
	Dropping items on feet, hands or other body parts that injure through blunt trauma or sharp edge.		Safety demonstration including safe handling of equipment and monitoring of behaviour.
	Being struck on head or face with any tool, through movement including that of others, recoil or slipping in use.		‘Safety bubble’ to factor in possibility of injury through recoiling or movement of tools. All children briefed on safety, not just those participating in the activity.
	Crush injuries from heavy objects or clamping.		Heavy objects to be handled by adults. Clamping to be modelled safely.
	Tools moving suddenly, leading to cuts or incisions.		First aid kit and first aid trained staff on hand. See SOP
<b>Precedents or comparisons</b>	‘Managing Risk in Play Provision’ encourages responsible tool use in play. Forest Schools encourage and manage tool use in outdoor settings with a variety of groups. In school workshops and technical subjects have allowed tool use for many decades. Cooking and everyday tasks involve tool use, including blades and striking objects.	<b>Judgement</b>	The severity of the risks is quite high, but good group management and systems will reduce the likelihood of severe injury. Using tools is a lifelong skill. It is also proven that using hazardous objects as tools can reduce their use as weapons. Considering this, safe supervised tool use is an important learning experience for all ages.

## Standard Operating Procedures: Tool use

	<p>Paediatric first aider present Medical box with pupils First aid kit in Forest school</p>		<p>Adventurous activities are not undertaken unless the Forest School Lead or those certified as competent are leading.</p>		<p>Leader of session to ensure charged Walkie-Talkie is available and that office aware of location of pupils.</p>
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## Essential for Tool Use

					
<p><b>Tools either in use or stored safely</b></p>	<p><b>Safety Bubble briefing for all pupils</b></p>	<p><b>Safety and rules briefing</b></p>	<p><b>Hair / loose clothing tied or tucked away</b></p>	<p><b>Assess environmental conditions</b></p>	<p><b>Check tools - count in at end of session</b></p>

- Equipment checked prior to tool use session, unsafe tools identified and fixed or taken out of circulation. **Tools should be clean and rust free.**
- Tools counted out and back in at end of session.
- Group briefing, demonstration and instruction as needed, particularly emphasising keeping behind the cutting edge.
- A safe tool area will be set up for each activity, allowing for 'safety bubble' distance between pupils.
- Maximum of 2 pupils taking part in tool use activity at a time in designated area.
- Children only enter tool use area by invitation of adult.
- Children to **walk** within and upon approach to tool use area.
- Clear demonstration prior to tool use including how to position self, safety bubble and how to look after the tools in use.
- Briefing of splinter risk and not running fingers down wood edges.
- Gloves to be worn when judged appropriate.

**Emergency procedures as detailed in Forest School handbook will be followed**




<b>Subject of Risk Benefit Assessment</b>	<b>Tree and Rope Climbing / Use of Ropes</b>	<b>Brief description of activity, location, feature and equipment used</b>	Any activity which involves scaling or climbing the established trees in the Forest School setting, or scaling the bank via the climbing rope, or the set up and use of slack lines / ropes for traversing, or rope swings.
<b>Name and role of assessor</b>	Tamsyn Pickett Forest School Lead	<b>SLT member reviewing RBA</b>	Frankie Glover Finlay Assistant Headteacher
<b>Date of assessment</b>	18.11.24	<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	01.09.25
<b>Activity or feature</b>	There are several established trees in the Forest School area which are suitable for climbing. There is a climbing rope set up which can be used to scale the steep bank in the Forest School. A rope swing and a slack line can be set up as temporary climbing activities.	<b>How will participants benefit?</b>	Gross motor skill, balance, co-ordination and physical development. Learning safe ways to travel in different terrain. Building self esteem and confidence. Developing a love of nature and respect for natural landscapes. Group working and social skills will be developed by participants, including turn taking and socially supporting each other. Learn about materials (strength, flexibility, knot tying etc) and tree types (strength, flexibility and rooting). Engagement with natural environment. Builds resilience and then confidence through success and challenge. Fun, achievement and physical enjoyment of the activity
<b>Who is at risk?</b>	OSMP staff and volunteers, Pupils / those participating in the session		



<b>Possible hazards and risks</b>	A rope or seat may snap or knot fail, dropping person(s) to the ground from too high, leading to significant injury.	<b>Precautions and measures to control the severity or likelihood</b>	Rope swing is set up and tested prior to any rope swing usage. Log is kept of when equipment was bought and weight capacity. All ropes used specifically for climbing, rope swings, slack lines or similar should be of known source (not retired ropes from elsewhere).
	A branch or tree may snap, bend or uproot, dropping the person(s) on to the ground from too high leading to significant injury.		Trees are monitored regularly. Pupils are advised to not climb branches which are thinner than their wrist. (See SOP)
	A tree or branch may also fall on the person(s) when this occurs as well, leading to significant injury or death.		Trees on site are monitored prior to Forest School use, particular note is taken for dead or unsafe branches.
	Significant injury may be caused if the fall is from height, or onto sharp or hard objects, or is very sudden/violent.		Environment around trees, slope and swing assessed for protruding / hard objects which may impact a fall. Children are taught '1,2,3 test' in tree climbing safety briefing (See SOP)
	Other participants could collide with swinging Participant. Swinging participant could collide with tree(s), leading to serious injury if hard enough.		Length of swing takes into account area where pupils could collide. Pupils briefed on safety space around swing.
	Participants may walk into attached ropes, leading to injury through contact with rope or sudden trip or upending.		Pupils advised when ropes are in place, reminded to be aware of surroundings.
	Participants could hang from the rope in a way that injures them seriously – damage to limb by wrapping rope around, or strangulation of neck.		When ropes in place, pupils monitored during use. First aider on site. Vigilance and zero tolerance of wrapping the rope around any part of the body.
	Slips whilst climbing the bank using rope may lead to injury of self or others.		Area around bank / rope assessed for objects which may cause greater injury and conditions are checked to ensure surface is suitable for climbing / not excessively muddy.
<b>Precedents or comparisons</b>	<i>"Climbing trees and falling out of them is all part of growing up and having small injuries helps children learn about risks. We take the view that it's a good thing to try to equip children and young people and help them make informed decisions about the risks that they take".</i> Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Rope climbing and tree climbing have regularly taken place in the OSMP forest school.	<b>Judgement</b>	Tree climbing is an enjoyable, memorable, confidence building activity that can develop physical literacy and risk management skills in all ages. The same applies to use of ropes and climbing with ropes. The risks posed are manageable when related to the competence of the group, simple ground rules, and a staff member who makes good judgement and has good group management.






## Standard Operating Procedures: Ropes

	<p>Paediatric first aider present</p> <p>Medical box with pupils</p> <p>First aid kit in Forest school</p>		<p>Ropes, slacklines, trees and the surrounding environment is checked and assessed prior to activities.</p>		<p>Leader of session to ensure charged Walkie-Talkie is available and that office aware of location of pupils.</p>
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Rope Swings	Rope bridges, including slack line:	Ropes to support climbing:
<p>Will be constructed by Forest School Lead and include a Dynamic Risk Assessment of the tree, the rope and attachment (knot) and immediate surroundings such as floor and obstacles. May be constructed by pupils under the close supervision of the Forest School Lead.</p> <p>Participants feet on rope swings will be under the head height of the Participants at maximum swing/elevation.</p> <p>Effective group briefing and management by Forest School Lead, including teaching to climb down (not fall off) and vigilance for others entering swing area or overly zealous swinging.</p> <p>Vigilance and zero tolerance of wrapping the rope around any part of the body.</p>	<p>Will be constructed by Forest School Lead after undertaking a Dynamic Risk Assessment of the trees, the ropes and attachments (knots) and immediate surroundings such as floor and obstacles. May be constructed by pupils under the close supervision of the Forest School Lead.</p> <p>The rope bridges will be lower than the height of the participants heads, and typically will be much lower around ankle to hip height.</p> <p>Ropes will be tight enough to prevent wrapping around body parts, even in the event of a fall.</p> <p>Briefing and management by staff, including teaching to step off not fall off and vigilance for others getting too close or walking through area.</p>	<p>Particular care to be taken if the ropes are loose ended and vigilance to prevent rope being wrapped around any part of the body.</p> <p>At no point will participants be helped by staff or other participants onto such equipment, limiting heights. Small, natural materials may be used as steps on, but not ladders or above head height of the participants.</p> <p>Any ropes used for such play will be visually inspected by Forest School Lead for damage before use, using common sense.</p> <p>Any area a participant could conceivably fall should be cleared of hazards that could lead to significant injury.</p>

**Emergency procedures as detailed in Forest School handbook will be followed**





## Standard Operating Procedures: Tree Climbing

	<p>Paediatric first aider present Medical box with pupils First aid kit in Forest school</p>		<p>Trees and the surrounding environment are checked and assessed prior to activities.</p>		<p>Leader of session to ensure charged Walkie-Talkie is available and that office aware of location of pupils.</p>
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Pre activity assessment of ground conditions, looking for potential dangers in environment surrounding tree (rocks, sharp objects, unsafe flooring, fallen branches). Trees which are unsafe to climb will be identified to the group. Children to be reminded of safe tree climbing skills at the start of session, covering:

- 1 child at a time in a tree
- No peer pressure to climb
- Only climb where you are able to reach unaided (no bunk ups) and descend safely.
- Do not use branches thinner than your wrist
- Assess for dead / rotten branches
- No climbing in wet conditions
- Assess route up and down tree

A summary of the above will be shared with children using the reminder ‘**Tree Climbing 1.2.3 Test**’

			
<p><b>1 person</b> climbing a tree at a time</p>	<p>Don't climb higher than the <b>height of 2 children</b></p>	<p>Keep <b>3 points of contact</b> with the tree as you climb</p>	<p><b>Test</b> – check the branches and environment before and whilst you climb</p>

**Emergency procedures as detailed in Forest School handbook will be followed**

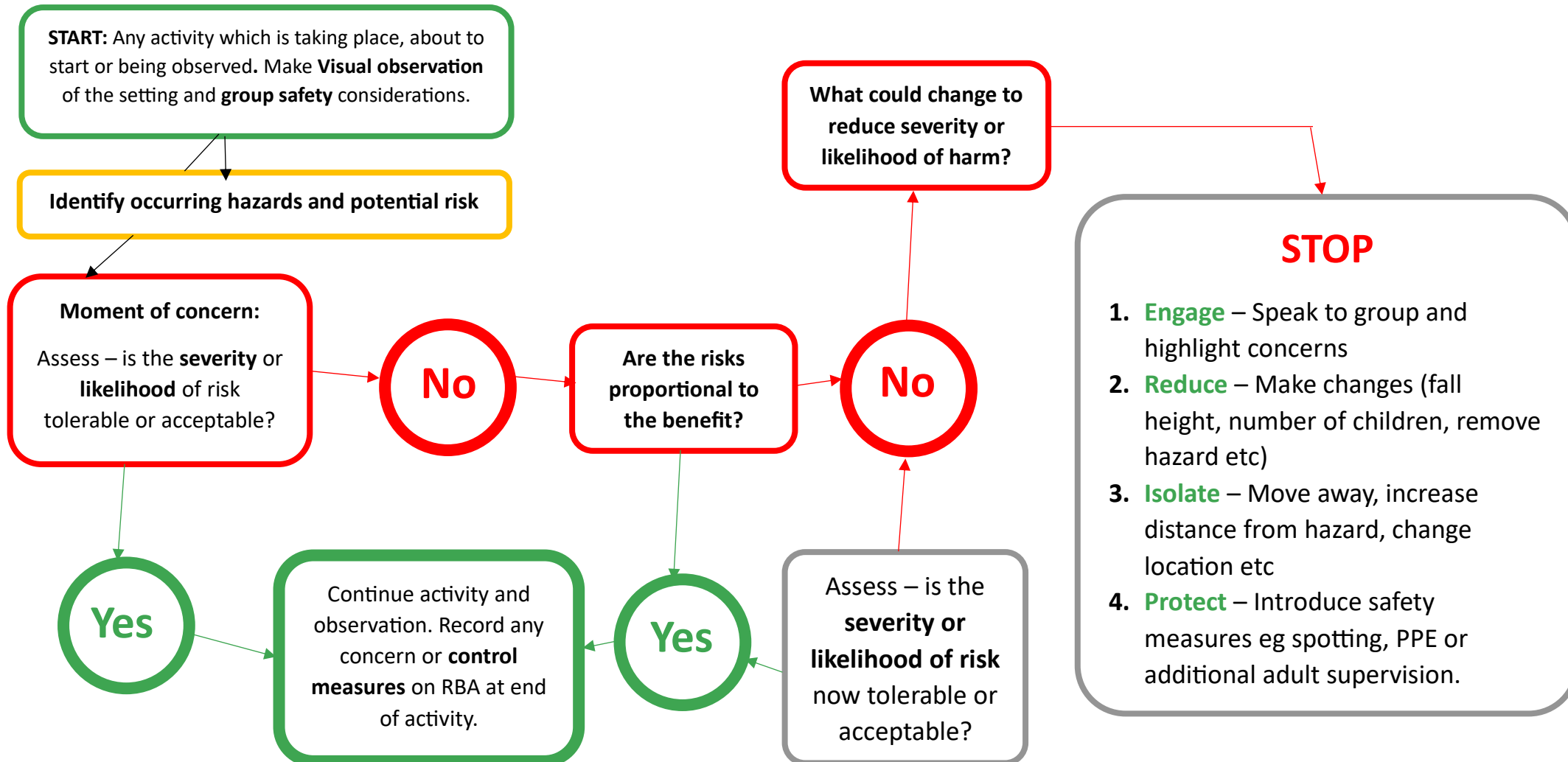
<b>Subject of Risk Benefit Assessment</b>	<b>Pond Dipping / Pond activities</b>	<b>Brief description of activity, location, feature and equipment used</b>	<p>Typical activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of pond and surrounding habitat</li> <li>• Use of pooters or microscopes to look at insects etc</li> </ul> <p>Pond dipping with nets and investigation of water 'dipped' in tray</p>
<b>Name and role of assessor</b>	Tamsyn Pickett Forest School Lead	<b>SLT member reviewing RBA</b>	Frankie Glover Finlay Assistant Headteacher
<b>Date of assessment</b>	18.11.24	<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	01.09.25
<b>Activity or feature</b>	The Forest School area includes a fenced off pond. Pond dipping activities take place in small groups under the supervision of adults and involve scooping water into trays and use of nets.	<b>How will participants benefit?</b>	<p>Fine motor skill development</p> <p>Appreciation for and understanding of natural environments and habitats</p> <p>Understanding of the hazards of water-side activities and water safety skills</p> <p>Group working / turn taking</p> <p>Enrichment of science curriculum in context of local landscape and habitats</p>
<b>Who is at risk?</b>	OSMP staff and volunteers, Pupils / those participating in the session		

<b>Possible hazards and risks</b>	Slip / fall on slippery surfaces resulting in injury	<b>Precautions and measures to control the severity or likelihood</b>	Site assessed for slip / trip hazards prior to start of session
	Fall into water. Risk of drowning.		Pupils supervised and briefed on water safety at start of activity. Gate locked when not in use.
	Illness following ingestion of water or infection (eg Weil's disease or poisoning from blue green algae)		Water quality observed, pupils reminded not to ingest water.
	Cuts or abrasions from environment or equipment		Equipment monitored for safety, environment checked prior to session.
	Impact on wildlife and natural environment		Pupils to be supported to safely observe nature / animals such as tadpoles, newts and insects without unduly distressing or harming the creatures and habitat.
<b>Precedents or comparisons</b>	<i>"Pond dipping is a popular activity for children to participate in both in their own leisure time and as an educational activity, it is a low-risk activity with high benefits."</i> Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	<b>Judgement</b>	There are risks associated with learning on the waterside, however these risks can be managed through adult supervision and dynamic assessment of risk. The benefits of developing a greater understanding of nature, habitats and lifecycles in addition to the enrichment of the science curriculum means that pond dipping should remain an important part of our outdoor provision at OSMP.



## 9. Dynamic Risk Benefit Procedure

Not every risk can be pre-judged. Dynamic Risk Benefit assessments can follow the below process:



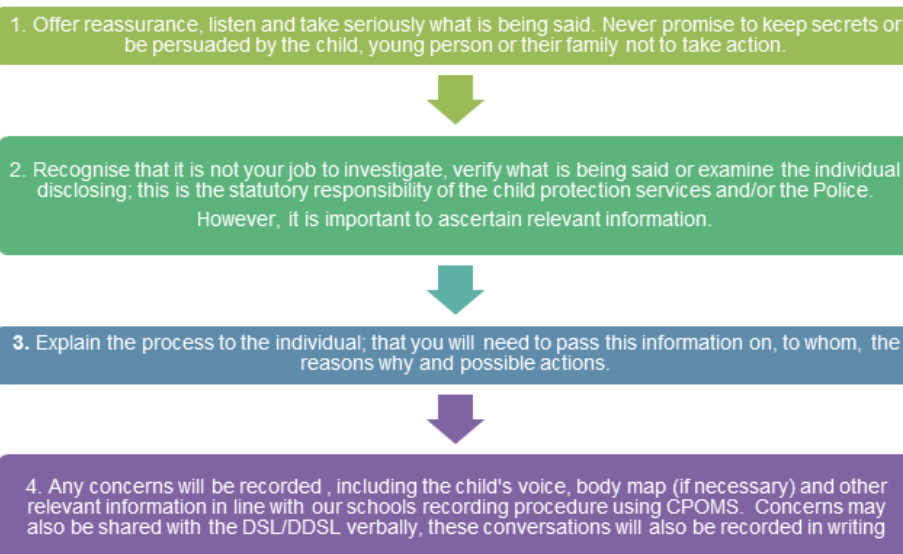
## 10. Safeguarding

### Disclosures:

It is noted that elements of Forest School, for example talking around the fire, may lead to an increased likelihood of disclosure. Adults supporting in the Forest School have received training and the school safeguarding policies and will follow these in the event of a disclosure.

### Safeguarding policies:

All procedures and policies for safeguarding children remain in place. In the event of a disclosure or safeguarding concern, the adult will:



### Allegations against staff:

DO NOT INVESTIGATE.

Make a clear record and pass it onto the headteacher immediately.

If the allegation is against the headteacher, report it to the chair of governors (details on the school website).

**If you do not feel your concerns have been taken seriously, contact the Local Area Designated Safeguarding Officer (LADO) directly on (01392) 384964**



If you are concerned that a child is being abused, or to request support you can call: 0345 1551071  
or

**Email:** Local Authority Safeguarding Hubsecure@devon.gov.uk

**Emergency Duty Team out of hours** 0345 6000 388

Alternatively contact the police on **101** or **999** in an emergency.

## 11. Relevant school policies and links

### School policies:

[Anti-Bullying-Policy-2024-2025.pdf](#)

[Behaviour-Policy-2024-2025.pdf](#)

[OSM-Behaviour-Principles-2024-2025.pdf](#)

[Safeguarding Handbook for Children](#)

[Safeguarding Handbook for Parents/Carers](#)

[Keeping children safe in education 2024](#)

[Ottery-St-Mary-Safeguarding-and-Child-Protection-Policy-2024-2025-Copy.pdf](#)

### Useful Links:

[Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach](#) (Health and Safety Executive)

[First Aid In Schools \(Gov.uk\)](#)

[Nothing Ventured - Tim Gill](#)