

Health and Safety Policies & Procedures

Nature Explorers aims to provide a physical and emotional environment which fully supports the ethos of Forest School. Activities support appropriate risk taking and playful exploration.

Emergency and Incident Management Policy

Nature Explorers understands the importance of a practiced plan in the case of emergency and of notifying appropriate organisations of in the case of such emergencies or contingencies.

Emergency and Incident Procedures

In case of an accident requiring external assistance, the Forest School Leader and/or first aider will notify the main desk at reception, where the duty staff member has radio communication across the site. Depending on the nature of the accident, the emergency services will be called 111/999 and an adult will be sent to wait for paramedics to arrive by the car park and direct them to the site. The parents will be notified as quickly as possible and will be updated on which steps have been taken, and if necessary, given directions to the hospital/doctor's surgery where the casualty has been taken.

In case of sudden illness, participants will be monitored and cared for by a qualified first aider, and the parents will be notified and asked to collect their child as soon as possible. If emergency medical treatment is required, the first aider/Forest School Leader will call 111/999 and follow the procedures as for an accident requiring external assistance.

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the children in their care when they are not accompanied by their parents. Those children whose parents are accompanying them remain the responsibility of their parents at all times, although the Forest School Leader will endeavour to keep all participants safe and well. Any sick or injured members of the group will be attended to by a qualified First Aider. Both Steph and Frank are qualified to deliver outdoor paediatric first aid, and several of the West Stow team are fully trained.

There is access to the site for an ambulance or paramedic through the car park into the village. If we are outside the site within the main Country Park, our coordinates will be relayed to the emergency services via GPS on our telephones. All incidents will be recorded and a copy of the incident report will be sent to any parents involved, plus the management team at West Stow as soon after the incident as is possible. Steph will send digital photocopies of the form via email, but a hard copy can be made available upon request. A hard copy will be held on file according to our Data Protection policy.

Sessions may be cancelled at the Forest School Leader's discretion if he or she deems it to be unsafe to run the session, if the site has had to be closed for any reason, or if the FS Leader is unwell. Where possible, all participants and their parents will be given at least 24 hours' notice, but this may not always be possible. In the first instance, an email will be sent to all participants, as well as a text message. If these are not acknowledged, the participants will be called using the contact number given.

Fire Policy

Nature Explorers believes that proper use of fire is an important part of children's learning.

Fire Procedures

Forest School sessions will often involve a fire, either in the stove or the fire pit area. There are many reasons for having a fire including heating water for hot drinks and cooking on, but also acting as a focal point for social activities like storytelling, singing and crafting. A fire brings a heightened sense of community, and awareness for their environment. Practically, there are skills involved in identifying suitable tinder and gathering tinder, as well as learning a variety of techniques to light fires, promoting survival skills. A key feature of Forest Schools is learning to manage appropriate risks and having a fire is a great opportunity to assess the risks involved.

Nature Explorers are permitted to light fires according to our fires and stoves risk assessments, in the areas that have been designated for use. The parks officer at West Stow has copies of all of the risk assessments and will be involved in any decisions about using other areas for fires.

Fire lighting may only take place under the supervision of a trained Forest School Leader. Access to the fire lighting equipment will be limited to only the Forest School Leaders. A trained first aider must always be present, and a first aid and burns kit on site, along with water, a fire blanket, and at least two clear fire exit routes. All participants are to be made aware of the boundaries and rules when the fire is lit, and there will be a limit to the number of people using the fire at any one time. Everyone else must stay back behind the safety line, which is at least 1.5m out from the fire.

There will be a designated adult who will take responsibility for maintaining the fire, and they must ensure that if they switch roles with another adult, that the other adult is fully aware that the responsibility has passed to them. This is the only person who may stoke the fire, and add more wood and tinder. The fire areas are clearly marked and will be fully extinguished after each session. This must be checked by the Forest School Leader before they depart.

The fire site will be periodically maintained both by Nature Explorers and by West Stow to ensure the ground around the area is undamaged. As we are using a permanent pit, there will be less damage to the surrounding ground. The stove will be routinely cleaned and checked for rust and damage. If any hot embers remain at the end of a session, these must be removed from the site in a metal bucket or doused with water until cold to the touch.

Food and Eating Policy

Nature Explorers believes food is an important part of nurturing community at Forest School and that food and eating are important teaching tools. Additionally, Nature Explorers believes that Forest School provides a good opportunity for practising environmentally friendly behaviours

Food and Eating Procedures

For many of the Nature Explorers sessions it will be necessary to incorporate a snack/mealtime during the session. There will normally be a dedicated time to stop for a break and some food, which will be made clear to all the participants. Participants are encouraged to bring their own snacks and lunches with them, but not to bring any nuts onto the site. There may be occasions where we have a celebratory meal on the fire, in which case, participants will be invited to bring in something to share. This must have any allergens clearly labelled.

Nature Explorers will endeavour to promote healthy eating where possible, and we will often cover topics about sustainable food sources and locally sourced food during the sessions. Participants are asked to bring as little plastic wrapping as possible, and to dispose of any waste off the site. We hope to minimise any waste at the sessions, and where possible will try and recycle or decompose any waste. Most of the food that is brought to Forest School sessions is sourced locally where possible. The children will be attempting to grow their own vegetables at West Stow, and this will hopefully encourage them to eat more sustainably.

Foraged foods such as berries, leaves and flowers may only be eaten with permission from parents after identification by a Forest School Leader. We will be able to collect elderflowers in the summer to make cordial, nettles to make tea, and maybe blackberries in the autumn. Under no circumstances should any fungi be eaten at Forest School sessions, and any foraged food from ground level will be carefully washed before eating.

Hygiene Policy

Nature Explorers acknowledges the importance of good hygiene in keeping children and adults safe from infectious diseases.

Hygiene Procedures

At our Forest School site we are fortunate to have access to a toilet, which is adjacent to the visitor's centre. This has disabled access and baby changing facilities. There are also toilets available at the entrance to the car park, and within the café at West Stow. Handwashing is available in any of these bathrooms, but there will also be a handwashing station within the site, with access to soap and water.

All participants will be encouraged to wash their hands before eating and after any activity involving mud or water. Packed lunches may only be eaten once hands are all washed and are stored in a waterproof box until needed. The cups for hot chocolate are washed after each session. A clearly marked drinking water bottle will be available at every session and will be kept separate from any other water. Participants will be encouraged to have their own water bottle and snacks within their bag, and to eat it away from the ground to avoid contamination.

Insurance Policy

Nature Explorers understands that all Forest School session must be covered by appropriate insurance

Insurance Procedures

Steph Holland, trading as Nature Explorers is insured as a Forest School Provider by Birnbeck Insurance, with effect from 03/01/19 for a period of 12 months with Catlin Insurance at Lloyd's, via a special scheme for forest school practitioners administered by Birnbeck Insurance Services and Self Assured Underwriting Agencies Limited.



BIRNBECK INSURANCE SERVICES
129 High Street • Worle • Weston-super-Mare • Somerset • BS22 6HQ
Tel: 01934 522252 • Fax: 01934 520100 • Email: office@birnbeck.com
www.birnbeckinsurance.co.uk

Details of policy: Level of indemnity is confirmed at £5,000,000, with a £250 excess applying to any claims.

The actions of unpaid assistants/volunteers are also covered by this policy, but they must be acting upon Steph Holland's orders, work agenda and risk assessments for such cover to apply.

Cover

Cover for:	Public/Products Liability Insurance
Policy Number:	SALSALIA/J118593/0332/19
Period of Cover:	03/01/19 – 03/01/20
Insurer:	Catlin, via Birnbeck Insurance Services and SAUA Limited

Forest school practitioner providing activities for children & adults of all ages. General forest school work including shelter building, use of hand tools (including knives), tree climbing to 5m, use of swings, rope swings and play equipment for children and adults, occasional lopping/coppicing, felling (diameters less than 6"), foraging, low level charcoal making (twigs/tins/cans), green woodworking, pond/stream dipping, face painting, birthday parties, camp fires, overnight camps etc.

Medical and First Aid Policy

Nature Explorers understands that it is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to ensure that all children and adults at the Forest School sessions have access to appropriate first aid treatment.

The administration of medicines is at the discretion of the Forest School leader but this should not contradict our Equal Opportunities Policy

Medical and First Aid Procedures

All of our sessions will have a minimum of two adults present, and when possible at least one adult per five children over the age of five years. There will always be at least one adult present who has a level 3 outdoor paediatric first aid qualification and all volunteers will be encouraged to attend at least a basic first aid course for themselves.

There will always be a first aid kit on site, and in the possession of the first aider when exploring the rest of the park. It is the responsibility of the first aider to inform the Forest School Leader if anything is used or needs replacing. The Forest School Leader will ensure that there is at least one charged mobile phone with signal in the possession of one of the adults present. The first aid kit contains all the essentials for outdoor activities including bandages and plasters, cool packs, gloves, scissors and safety pins. No medication will be administered to any children without specific consent and direction from their parents. Any regular medication they require must be in a labelled bag with their doctor's name and number and dosage details. This can remain with the Forest School Leader throughout the session.

Any medical conditions must be declared on the contact form, especially any serious allergies, heart condition, epilepsy, or physical disabilities. Steph has training for delivering an auto-injector (Epipen) for anaphylaxis.

First aiders: Steph Holland, Emily Volkert, Claire Unwin

Risk Management Policy

Nature Explorers understands that risk-taking is an essential part of holistic development, when it is appropriate to the child and the environment

Risk Management Procedures

In order to manage risk at Forest School, we have clear and robust policies and procedures in place, which we adhere to. Benefit Risk Assessments are carried out for every activity and these are reviewed regularly. A qualified Forest School Leader is always present. They will have appropriate First Aid qualifications, will maintain their CPD and follow all six Forest School principles.

By including risk-taking in our Ethos and following all of the Forest School principles, Nature Explorers promotes appropriate risk-taking. Inductions are carried out with all adult volunteers and staff, who will have appropriate experience, training and qualifications for any activity they are supervising. All our policies and procedures are available for parents and volunteers to read, and all volunteers and staff will be asked to read and sign each one. Benefit Risk Assessments will be carried out and will be reviewed and updated regularly. Nature Explorers will provide risk-taking opportunities that are appropriate for the age and ability of the participants.

Children who are allowed to take appropriate risks become stronger, more resilient, confident and resourceful. They learn to assess the level of the risk and use problem-solving and social skills to approach the risk.

An individual Benefit Risk Assessment will be carried out for each activity and these will be reviewed and updated annually, or as the need arises. They will be adapted to suit different age groups, environmental conditions and changes to equipment. A site risk assessment will be carried out at the start of each block of sessions and a daily site check will take place before each session. West Stow also carry out their own daily site checks according to their own policies and procedures.

An annual review of all risk assessments will be completed on 5th January 2020.

Tools and Equipment Policy

Nature Explorers acknowledges that tools are an important part of children's learning at Forest School and operate best when they are well maintained.

Tools and Equipment Procedures

Most of the activities during our Forest School sessions will not require special personal protective equipment, but occasionally it may be useful to wear gardening gloves when handling plants like nettles and brambles, fire gloves when cooking on the fire and protective gloves when using certain tools. At all times, participants should wear appropriate clothing or the weather/environment, including waterproofs and sturdy shoes.

All the tools are kept in a locked tool box within the locked shed on site. Only the Forest School Leader has access to the keys. All tools and equipment will be checked weekly and will be cleaned before the next session if they are wet or dirty. Tools will be cleaned and maintained using the maintenance kit that is kept with the equipment at all times. Knives and saws will be sharpened when necessary, or have their blades replaced, and drill bits will be checked and replaced if necessary.

The safe operation of all tools will be explained before allowing any participants to use them. The Forest School Leader will demonstrate safe working techniques for the tool needed for an activity. Every tool will have a risk assessment carried out, which will be reviewed regularly.

Saws – these must be used in a clear area with plenty of space around them in a clear working area. They will need a stable surface to work on, and possibly a team mate to help them hold the wood still. The saw blade should be clean and sharp. When sawing, the dominant hand should control the saw, while the other hand should be passed through the blade to hold the wood steady. It may be necessary to wear a glove to hold the wood to avoid splinters. Periodically, the sawdust should be removed to give a clear surface for sawing.

Knives – there will be a limit to the number of participants who may sign out a knife at any point (maximum of two at a time). They must sit down on a stable surface with a clear working space around them of at least 1m. They must keep their feet flat on the floor and their legs together at all times. The blade must be clean and sharp and ought to be held in the dominant hand. To use the knife, they must always move it away from their bodies and keep the other hand above the blade. Knives should only be used for a specific purpose and must be returned safely to the tool box when the task is complete. Always walk with the knife in its sheath and with the blade pointing down.

Drills – the drill should be in good working order with a sharp drill bit and with cogs that turn easily. Oil if necessary, and replace any blunt or broken drill bits. Place the object to be drilled onto a flat, stable surface – like a log. It can help to ask a team member to help by holding the wood or object still while drilling. A glove may be helpful to avoid splinters.

Secateurs & Loppers – these should be stored in a dry place with the safety catch on and must be kept clean and sharp. When walking with them, ensure the blade is pointing down. A demonstration of safe and appropriate use will be given before they are used by participants.

Ropes – these should be stored in a waterproof bag to keep them clean and dry. When used, any loose rope should be secured around the tree to avoid causing a trip hazard. Any rope swings and bridges must be tested by an adult before any children use them, and the Forest School Leader must check all knots are tied correctly.

All participants will need to be observed and supervised when using tools and equipment. There should be a clear working area when using saws, knives and drills, which participants must not enter if they are not using a particular tool. There will be a limit on how many people may use a particular tool at any time, and for some activities, there will be a ratio of one adult to two children. Each child will have a logbook to record their own achievements in developing skills with tools and knots. When using ropes, there should always be someone on the ground acting as a spotter, and limiting the number of people on the ropes at any one time.

Transport and Walking Policy

Nature Explorers sees strong links between environmental sustainability, health and Forest School. We walk to Forest School whenever we are able.

Transport and Walking Procedures

Access to our Forest School site is only available through the Visitor's Centre at West Stow. All participants are required to be Heritage Pass holders for admission into the site, and will all be required to wear a lanyard ID badge at all times (including the adults). These will be distributed by Nature Explorers upon receipt of payment and proof of Heritage Pass membership. Once at West Stow, we will not have need for transport throughout the sessions and will only explore the site on foot.

Weather and Clothing Policy

Nature Explorers enjoys all types of weather and sees opportunities for play and learning in them. Nevertheless, the safety of participants is never compromised.

Weather and Clothing Procedures

Nature Explorers will monitor the weather forecast 24 hours, 12 hours and 2 hours before each session. If adverse conditions are forecast, Steph will contact the parents with advice on how we will proceed. They will then be kept updated if anything changes.

Appropriate clothing and footwear for being outdoors is essential for all participants, both children and adults. Sturdy footwear with good grip is needed for all sessions. Waterproof clothing, warm layers and extra clothing are essential on cold days – gloves, hats and scarves are recommended throughout the winter. In the summer, a hat and suncream are necessary, as well as bringing a water bottle. Parents are responsible for their own child's attire while they are at Forest School. Children who attend a session in inappropriate clothing may not be permitted to take part. Should the weather conditions change suddenly during a session, the Forest School Leader will provide suitable shelter.

Date policy completed: 5th January 2019

Completed by: S Holland

Date review due: 5th January 2020