



# Blue Hills Federation



## FOREST SCHOOL POLICY & PROCEDURE

SEPTEMBER 2023

### The Blue Hills Federation

The Blue Hills Federation is a collective of three primary schools – Clunbury CE Primary School, Newcastle CE Primary School and St Mary's Bucknell CE Primary School. All three schools share one Executive Headteacher and one Governing Body. When using the term 'Blue Hills Federation' within this policy, it is in reference to all three schools. When policy only applies to one school that school will be named specifically. Newcastle CE Primary School does not have a nursery or a preschool, therefore any references to nursery or pre-school do not apply to Newcastle CE Primary School.

### Our Vision

Proverbs 22:6 - Good News Bible

***'Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their lives.'***

We are a caring Church Federation bringing together and serving many communities. We provide nurturing environments that facilitates learning for all. We encourage everybody to become confident, sociable and responsible citizens who achieve to the best of their ability in preparation for a fulfilling future.

### Our Values

Trust and Truth; Joy and Happiness; Love and Respect; Thankfulness;  
Friendship and Family; Perseverance and Resilience

**Review Date: September 2026**

## **Ethos, Aims and Objectives**

Above all else, the school is a place for children to grow and develop. We intend to provide an environment within which all the children in our schools will be safe and comfortable, feel secure, happy and motivated and fulfil their potential. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, self-motivated, courageous, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It particularly supports the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. We aim to give children an understanding of this ethos of Forest School's experience. Activities are based around our long-term plans, to include all areas of the curriculum.

The Blue Hills Federation has many additional policies which will be adhered to alongside this policy during forest school sessions within our settings.

Legislation considered for policy:

Health and Safety at work act 1974

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Race Relations Acts 1976 & 2000

Sex discrimination Act 1986

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Children Act 2004

## **Implementation**

Risk assessments, good practice, Forest School activities, rules for tools and fire etc can all be found within the Forest School Handbook which contains everything you need to know about Forest School sessions for example, procedures, risk assessments, environmental impacts etc.

## **Equality, inclusion and diversity**

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion runs through all Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture etc. See equal opportunities policy and Special needs policy.

## **Health and Safety**

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and the others around them. Children will be reminded of the rules of safe play if they are considered too dangerous. Ratios within the Forest School site remain the same as we are still on the setting premises. General risk assessments will be carried before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. Specific risk assessments will be in place to cover specific activities e.g. from using potato peelers or bill hooks. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessments will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A forest school leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice. See Health and Safety Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools
- Open fire
- Rope and String
- Shelter building
- Collecting natural materials

## **First Aid**

The Forest School Leader has an enhanced first aid certificate to specifically cover outdoors and will administer the care when needed. The forest school leader will; ensure the safety of all other children within the group and the possible need to evacuate them indoors. Seek emergency help if needed. There will be a first aid kit take up to the Forest field and extra first aid equipment is located within the setting. Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms, contact HSE if it is a serious accident. Emergency procedures are within the handbook which is taken into the site each session. Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi-pens etc are taken to the site. See Administration of Medication Policy.

## **Use of Tools**

Children and adults will be trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory. Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children. They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used. Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and how to use them before they are used. Tool use will be on a ratio of one to one.

## **Use of Fires**

- The Forest School Leader must always be present when a fire is lit and it must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire and a burn kit available. Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.
- Walk behind the log seats and stand behind
- Step over and sit down on the log seat
- Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults to be role models)

## **Environment**

The Blue Hills Federation will promote environmental awareness and care for our environment. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported. The sites will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. Brambles and nettles will be allowed to grow in areas of the site. Branches at eye level and below will remain on trees as long as they do not represent a certain hazard i.e. near seating area. During the winter months large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Forest School leader: will have a level 3 Forest School leader qualification, DBS enhanced disclosure and an outdoor first aid qualification.

Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland
- Administration of first aid and first aid kit
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing
- Organising emergency procedures

## **Staff/Volunteers**

Will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of the rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times, support the Forest School leader to run the sessions and remain confidential. See confidentiality Policy.

## Emergency Plan – Clunbury CE Primary School

The Forest School site is on setting premises; it is the field above the school car park. Ambulances can access the field from the car park. Using the school postcode will get you to the Forest School site.

The address of the school: Clunbury CE Primary School, Clunbury, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 0HE.

In the event of bad weather, we will evacuate the Forest School site and go back inside the school.

School Telephone Number: **01588 660 207**



## Emergency Procedure

- Forest School Leader, Syan Lavery, will administer the first aid.
- The Support staff present would look after the remaining children and ring the school office and speak to the Administrator, Abby Garnett, for further assistance.
- Further help and the emergency services would be contacted by the school office Administrator.

## Emergency Plan – Newcastle CE Primary School

The Forest School site is on setting premises; it is the field behind the school. Ambulances can access the field from the car park. Using the school postcode will get you to the Forest School site.

The address of the school: Newcastle CE Primary School, Newcastle, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 8QL.

In the event of bad weather, we will evacuate the Forest School site and go back inside the school.

School Telephone Number: **01588 640 260**



## Emergency Procedure

- Forest School Leader, Dawn Jones, will administer the first aid.
- The Support staff present would look after the remaining children and ring the school office and speak to the Administrator, Steph Reynolds, for further assistance.
- Further help and the emergency services would be contacted by the school office Administrator.

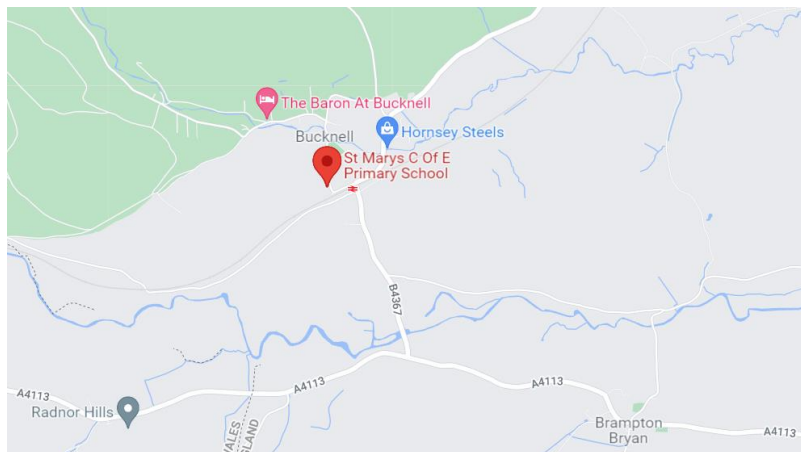
## Emergency Plan – St Mary’s Bucknell CE Primary School

The Forest School site is on setting premises; it is the field behind the school. Ambulances can access the field from the car park. Using the school postcode will get you to the Forest School site.

The address of the school: St Mary’s Bucknell CE Primary School, Chapel Lawn Road, Bucknell, Shropshire, SY7 0AA.

In the event of bad weather, we will evacuate the Forest School site and go back inside the school.

School Telephone Number: **01547 530 264**



## Emergency Procedure

- Forest School Leader, Tarena Beddoes, will administer the first aid.
- The Support staff present would look after the remaining children and ring the school office and speak to the Administrator, for further assistance.
- Further help and the emergency services would be contacted by the school office Administrator.

## An Introduction to Forest School

### What is Forest School?

Forest School is an exciting opportunity for children and young people to participate in a series of lessons or sessions in a forest or woodland environment. Forest School can be interpreted in many different ways to cater for individual groups. So, a group of 4 year olds may enjoy a series of sessions in the forest school based around a teddy bears’ picnic, while a group of 10 year olds could use the same outdoor ‘classroom’ to learn practical craft skills and safe use of tools.

Sessions can be designed to cover all areas of the curriculum, whoever the group is and whatever the learning objectives are. The common factor of all Forest Schools is that children enjoy a series of visits to ‘their’ woodland, thus allowing them to build upon relationships with each other and the staff.

### What are the benefits of Forest School?

Forest School caters for learning styles and abilities. Forest school is a wonderful opportunity - a chance to learn in an outdoor setting by carrying out practical hands-on tasks. It provides all children

(and adults) with a variety in their day and encourages learners to develop new skills that would be difficult to grasp indoors.

Forest School provides learners with small achievable tasks suited to their own abilities, thus allowing everyone to succeed and therefore build their confidence, self-esteem and independence.

Participating in a series of visits to the Forest School means that children learn to appreciate the natural environment, an appreciation which will stay with them into adulthood and encourage them to live sustainable lifestyles and hopefully develop an interest in conservation and wildlife.

### **What can Forest School do for children with Behavioural problems?**

Many children with behavioural special needs find it difficult to learn in a traditional environment. Children's behaviour is also affected by many other factors including their home lives, their relationship with other children and their self-esteem.

By providing activities at Forest School that all children can achieve, the leader can build a child's self-esteem and therefore improve their behaviour. In addition, good behaviour is reinforced and therefore repeated when the leader offers praise for work done during the sessions.

Forest School encourages children to talk about their feelings about activities - what they have enjoyed, what they were good at - which helps them to develop their emotional intelligence and hence improve their behaviour.

### **What activities happen at Forest School?**

With a bit of thought and imagination, Forest School sessions can be planned to fit in with any area of the curriculum at any stage, and provide a valuable variation on traditional methods.

Groups may use the Forest School to do environmental art, minibeast hunts, look at animal homes and habitats or learn to use tools.

In addition, Forest School encourages children to develop the wider skills of communication, teamwork, listening to and following instructions and also hits targets within PSHE and education for sustainable development.

### **What sort of equipment is used at Forest School?**

Traditional Forest School activities are based at a log circle around a fire in a woodland setting. 'Pure' Forest School would involve children using tools (saws, loppers, billhooks) to carry out practical tasks such as coppicing, making whistles and building shelters. However, the sort of equipment to be used at the session depends on a number of factors:

- The objectives of the session
- The age and ability of the children
- The ratio of adult helpers to children

For example, if the leader has been working with a group for a long time and knows their abilities and has plenty of helpers, children may be allowed to use saws under supervision. However, if it is the first time the group has visited the woodland, the leader wouldn't try to use tools at all.

As an alternative to tools, equipment used may include bug pots, magnifying glasses, tree identification guides etc.

### **Where does Forest School take place?**

Forest School should ideally take place in fairly mature woodland, where the tall trees shade the ground and reduce ground vegetation such as brambles. Our Forest Schools are situated in the school grounds on the fields above/behind the car parks, they are developing sites where the trees are not fully established and at great heights.

Factors to consider when accessing a Forest School site include:

- Dangerous trees
- Boundaries
- Are there obvious boundaries or will you need to put up a fence?
- Hazards
- Barbed wire, water, nettles, brambles, dangerous road, animal holes?
- Are there steep slopes, is the ground uneven?

### **Policy for a missing child at Forest School**

We will:

- Endeavour to make the buildings and outside areas as secure as possible
- Ensure that the children are supervised carefully and only handed over to the designated person
- Ensure that there is the correct ratio of adult to child at all times

### **Procedure to follow in the event of a child missing in and around the premises**

- On suspicion of a missing child the Forest School Leader will conduct a role call without alarm to the other children
- Using radio/mobile communication, the Leader will contact the school administrator requesting additional staff to come to the site to search for the missing child
- The Administrator will inform the Headteacher or the Lead Teacher
- Forest School support staff will look after remaining children and return them to the school
- The Leader, with additional support staff from the school, will conduct a thorough search of the area and grounds in the immediate vicinity
- If after searching both the site and school and the child is not found, the Leader will inform the Administrator to contact the police and the child's parents/carers
- A full report will be produced by the Leader
- The Administrator will remain in contact with the family and offer support
- The incident will be evaluated and the policy and procedure will be reviewed
- The security and practice will be improved if necessary

See also our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and Missing Child Guidance and Checklist

### **Toileting and Hygiene**

All children are encouraged to go to the toilet in school before walking to the site for a Forest School session. On walking to the site the car park gate is checked to be shut and the children can begin session.

If during the session a child needs to go to the toilet, the attending adult checks the car park and the children can go into school independently. They are all aware of being safe when crossing the car park. Partners are encouraged so that children walk sensibly together to the toilet. The attending adult can ring the office for an additional adult from school to come and accompany any SEN Child that requires help.

Children are told of the importance of hand washing. Before a snack – hand washing facilities are available on the field with hand sanitizer.

### **Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding**

In Forest School we have a Positive Behaviour ethos. We follow the Positive Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Policy of the Blue Hills Federation.

Many children with behavioural special needs find it difficult to learn in a traditional environment. Children's behaviour is also affected by many other factors including their home lives, their relationship with other children and their self-esteem.

By providing activities at Forest School that all children can achieve, the Leader can build a child's self-esteem and therefore improve their behaviour. In addition, good behaviour is reinforced and therefore repeated when the Leader offers praise for work done during the sessions. Forest School encourages children to talk about their feelings regarding activities; what they have enjoyed, what they were good at - which helps them to develop their emotional intelligence and hence improve their behaviour.

**The Blue Hills Federation Forest Schools adhere to all policies adopted by the Blue Hills Federation, including those policies referring to equality, diversity and special educational needs.**

### **Clunbury CE Primary School: Insurance and Landowner Agreement**

Public liability insurance that is in place with the school, covers the Forest School. It is insured for lighting fires and the Forest Leader. The land has been with Clunbury CE Primary School for many years and there is an historical verbal agreement with Clive Seabury. Clunbury CE Primary School have the long-term use of the area and it is signed by all parties. The Forest School site is on setting premises; it is the field above the school car park. Tree safety is maintained with the Shropshire Council who are responsible and have checks with the school.

**Landowner contact details:** Clive Seabury - 01588 660 257

**Tree Safety:** 01743 252 819

**Ground Maintenance:** Tivoli 01563 548 050

### **Newcastle CE Primary School and St Mary's Bucknell Primary School: Insurance and Landowner Agreement**

Public liability insurance that is in place with the schools, covers the Forest Schools. It is insured for lighting fires and the Forest Leaders. The Forest School sites are on setting premises and are the property of Shropshire Council. Forest School takes place on the school fields, located behind the school buildings. Tree safety is maintained with the Shropshire Council who are responsible and have checks with the schools.

**Tree Safety:** 01743 252 819

**Ground Maintenance:** Tivoli 01563 548 050





**Child going Missing from School during the school day**

**Guidance and checklist**

- When a child goes missing from school during the school day there should be clear procedures in place to follow up on their whereabouts.
- All staff should be aware of these procedures.
- Ensure that registers are always up to date and that each child's attendance is accurately recorded.
- If an absent child is reported to the police they will be treated as a missing person; it is therefore important that all reasonable efforts to trace a child should be made first.
- Once the absence is discovered the child's parents/carers should be contacted immediately. The nature of the absence should be discussed. If the parents/carers believe that there are risks involved, they should be told to inform the Police on 0300 333 3000 to make a missing person report.
- All missing children should be reported to the police by the end of the school day if not located AND you have been unable to inform their parents/carers.
- If you are not sure if a child should be reported to the police as missing, telephone them for advice.
- For children not arriving at school at the beginning of the school day, follow your non school attendance procedures; ensure that you have specific processes in place for children who fall into the high risk/vulnerable category.

When a child is identified as missing during the school day, complete the following checklist:

**Name of pupil.....D.O.B.....**

Action	✓
Ensure the child is not on the school premises (and that reception staff alert you immediately they receive any information)	
Check with the child's friends when they were last seen. (Establish from friends if the child has a mobile phone and if so attempt to make contact. Send a text message to them).	
Contact the child's parents/carers and advise they should contact the police if they have any concerns	
Contact absent parents (unless they are not allowed contact with the child)	
Contact any emergency contacts from the child's records	
If the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, or is a Child in Need inform the key social worker or if unavailable the team leader	
If the child is a child "at risk/vulnerable" report immediately to social care and the police (ensure any health concerns are communicated)	
If you are unsure if the child should be reported to the police, have an informal discussion with them. Ask to speak to a Police supervisor on 0300 333 3000	
If the child is still missing by the end of the school day and you have been unable to talk to the parents/carers, report them as missing to the police	
When the child is located, explore reasons for their absconding	

Date checklist completed:..... ( Copy to appropriate file)