

Health & Safety

All children starting a Forest School must have a completed consent form and medical form, detailing their name, address, age, parent's names, contact details, emergency contact numbers, additional needs and other information relevant to the child

For nursery groups where families would not usually be present they will be invited to visit the group to familiarise themselves with the setting and routines.

Benefit Risk Assessment and Risk Management Procedure

The ability to assess and manage risk is a fundamental part of life and a skill children need to learn for their own safety and well-being. Whilst staff have a duty of care towards children at Forest School this does not mean 'wrapping them in cotton wool'. We take seriously our responsibility not only to keep children safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves.

This is summed up well by the *Play Safety Forum - Managing Risk in Play Provision 2012*

'Good risks and hazards are acceptable and hold few surprises.

Good risks and hazards in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development.

These might include equipment with moving parts, which offers opportunities for dynamic, physically challenging play; changes in height that give children the opportunity to overcome fears and feel a sense of satisfaction in climbing; and natural loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity and imagination.

Bad risks offer no obvious developmental or other benefits.

Bad risks and hazards are those that are difficult or impossible for children to assess for themselves, and that have no obvious benefits.

These might include sharp edges or points on equipment, weak structures that may collapse, and items that include traps for heads or fingers.'

The risk assessment process is the cornerstone of managing health and safety. It focuses on the risks that really matter; the ones with the potential to cause real harm. A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what could cause harm to pupils, volunteers, staff and the public, making it possible to weigh up whether enough precautions have been taken, when more should be done to prevent harm or when an activity should not go ahead.

Definitions

Hazard	Something with the potential to cause harm. For example, fire, a sharp tool, playing at height or the behaviour of a person
Risk	The chances or likelihood of the harm occurring, together with an indication of how serious the harm may be, for example, the chance that someone could touch a hot surface, cut themselves with a sharp tool, and the possible consequences
Control measure	Action taken to prevent someone being harmed, for example, guarding the hot surface, teaching correct use of sharp tools or training staff on dealing with challenging behaviour

A Risk Assessment Form is completed, describing the hazards involved and setting out control measures that should routinely be employed to reduce associated risks.

Risks Ratings

Risk ratings are determined using the tables below to help assess the likelihood of an event happening and the severity of the consequences should it happen.

Risk Rating = (L) Likelihood X (C) Consequence

TABLE 1: LIKELIHOOD OF INJURY WITH EXISTING CONTROLS IN PLACE

Likelihood	Criteria	Rating Value
Almost certain	The event is expected to occur in most circumstances	5
Likely	The event will probably occur in most circumstances	4
Possible	The event might occur at some time	3
Unlikely	The event may occur only in exceptional circumstances.	2
Rare	The event is not expected to occur.	1

TABLE 2: CONSEQUENCE OF INJURY WITH EXISTING CONTROLS IN PLACE

Consequence	Criteria	Rating Value
Extreme	Fatality or multiple major injuries	5
Major	Significant injury (incl. as a result of violent behaviour), or ill health to pupils, employees or members of the public Examples include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fractures (other than fingers or toes) • amputations loss of sight, burn or penetrating injury to the eye • any injury or acute illness resulting in unconsciousness, requiring resuscitation or requiring admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours • exposure to a hazardous substance likely to lead to ill health 	4
Moderate	Injury requiring medical attention not in the 'major' class above	3
Minor	Minor injury to pupils, employees or members of the public e.g. needing on site first aid	2
Insignificant	No injury	1

The tables below show the action that should be taken once a risk rating is calculated, whether or not it is necessary to further reduce risk before an activity can go ahead. The residual risk is re assessed after further control measures are taken.

		Consequence				
		Extreme (5)	Major (4)	Moderate (3)	Minor (2)	Insignificant (1)
L i k e l i h o o d	Almost Certain (5)	25	20	15	10	5
	Likely (4)	20	16	12	8	4
	Possible (3)	15	12	9	6	3
	Unlikely (2)	10	8	6	4	2
	Rare (1)	5	4	3	2	1

Action levels		How the risk should be managed
16-25	Unacceptable	Do not go ahead with activity, make immediate improvements.
10-15	Significant	Identify controls needed & set timescale for improvement.
05-09	Adequate	Consult current policies and procedures.
01-04	Acceptable	No further action, but ensure policies and procedures are reviewed and kept up to date.

Four types of risk assessment will be conducted:

➤ **Site Risk Assessment**

A full site assessment will be made taking into account any hazards found in the layers within the woodland and hazards relating to other users of the woodland. This is carried out before Forest School commences, but should be amended where any changes to the site are observed

➤ **Activity Risk Assessment**

Assessments will be carried out on all the aspects of activities, including creative experiences, games and tool use

Activity assessments should be carried out by the forest school practitioner prior to a session

Once correct procedures have been established these generic activity risk assessments become part of the standard operating procedures

Activity assessments will be reviewed on a regular basis or if circumstances change and will be revised where necessary

Assessments on individuals attending the session who may have additional needs

➤ **Ongoing Dynamic Risk Assessment**

This refers to the minute-by-minute observations of staff and requires professional judgements during the session and potentially interventions in response to changing situations

➤ **Daily Risk Assessment**

Daily pre-visit risk assessments will be carried out by the Forest School Leader prior to a day's activity, as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical

Boundaries checked and clearly marked

Rubbish removed using gloves when needed

Check for hanging deadwoods, ensure it is removed or area marked 'out of bounds' before children arrive. If any doubts regarding tree safety a qualified tree surgeon will be contacted to assess and advise.

Weather conditions assessed paying particular attention to strong winds

Check for poisonous plants; if any present make all aware of location

Uneven ground identified, foxes earth or rabbits burrows, marked if necessary

Sharp branches at children's head height identified, cut back if necessary

Number of adults checked to ensure adult to child ratio suitable

All staff, volunteers and children will be informed of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise risk. They will also be encouraged to be involved in risk assessment, as appropriate, as part of their learning. The Forest School Leader will ensure all legal guidelines regarding off-site activities are met - adequate insurance and parental permission. Children's safety and well being is the priority of Fox Wood Forest School at all times.

Emergency Procedure

In an emergency

- A whistle will be blown as a signal to stop what you are doing
- Everybody will listen for instructions
- Where appropriate immediate action will be taken to keep children or adults from danger
- The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident
- If necessary first aid will be given to the casualty
- Rest of group will be supervised away from the incident and moved to safety if in danger
- An incident report will be completed after all incidents including near misses

In case of injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance:

- **In serious cases of injury**, Forest School Leader will dial 999 using mobile phone
- School will be notified, the school will be responsible for notifying the parents
- One member of the staff will meet ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site
- If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with the child
- Parents will be updated about the situation by staff
- If appropriate the forest school leader will contact the **Critical Incident Support Line 07623 912974**
- **In case of minor injury**, Forest School Leader will contact the parent of the injured child so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor or home.

Local Doctors: Parish Fields Practice 01379 642023 Lawns Medical Practice 01379 642021

For groups where parents are present the child will be given first aid as necessary and the parent will be given support to decide the best course of action for their child's well being.

Requesting attendance by Emergency Services -

Dial 999 and ask for the emergency service required

Be ready with the following information:

1. Telephone number
2. Location: (laminated cards with locations and directions attached to red emergency bag)
3. A brief description of the problem or symptoms of the person who is injured/ill
4. State that the crew will be met by _____ at the entrance to the woodland.

Speak clearly and slowly and be ready to repeat the information if asked

In the event of an accident or near miss

All serious incidents will be investigated by the Forest School Leader and staff in order to assess whether correct procedure was followed and whether changes need to be made to current practice. Any information gathered will inform future risk assessment and policy making.

Parent/carers will have the opportunity to discuss incidents with the Forest School leader.

An accident log book will be kept with the first aid kit in the emergency bag, all accidents will be recorded, a copy of the entry will be made available for the child's parents/carer.

All signs of marks/injuries to a child, when they arrive at Forest School, or that occur during time at Forest School, will be recorded in the accident log book as soon as noticed or witnessed by a staff member. The incident will be discussed with the parent at the earliest opportunity. Where there is concern regarding a child's wellbeing regarding an injury, the Forest School leader will also notify Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Board (NSCB).

First Aid

Mobile phone - adult helpers should all carry a mobile phone and numbers should be exchanged amongst adults prior to the start of a session. Check for signal strength. Phones should not be used as cameras during session, other than by the Forest School Leaders where permission has been given by parents.

Emergency whistle - Forest School leaders and staff should carry whistles in case of emergencies

Emergency bag: An emergency bag is kept for serious incidents, it contains a log book to be completed after a serious incident. The log book will clearly state when the emergency bag was last used and it will be signed and dated to verify that all the kit has been checked and replenished when necessary.

First Aid kit: The kit should contain the following, (taking group size into consideration):

- Gloves (in sealable bags, which can then be used for safe disposal of soiled items)
- Swabs
- Bandages (cotton, in various sizes)
- Plasters
- Micro-pore tape
- Scissors
- Emergency blanket
- Accident book

Emergency procedures laminated card, containing emergency and missing person scripts
Medical information and emergency contact details for all in group, including adults

Other essential items

- Medication for individuals
- Designated first aid water 0.5 litre of fresh tap water
- Wet wipes, hand gel, biscuits, and drinking water
- Emergency shelter
- Gaffa tape - to seal tools which have become unfit for purpose during session

Forest School Leaders will hold an up to date Outdoor Paediatric First Aid qualification.

Medicines

- Medication should only be taken at Forest School when absolutely essential and will only be given with parental consent.
- Medicines must be given to the Forest School leader in a named container with information on dose completed on the Medicines form.
- Non-prescribed medication will not be given.
- Parents are responsible for supplying information regarding the medicines their child needs.
- Medicines will be kept alongside the First Aid Kit in the Emergency Bag.
- If medicines need to be refrigerated then parents or school should provide a small cool bag with an ice pack.

Food, Drink & Cooking Procedures

Cooking and sharing food together over a fire is an exciting activity for children and it helps to build a happy and connected community within the Forest School, therefore cooking and sharing food will be planned for. The following procedures will be followed in order to keep children safe and healthy.

- Foraged food may occasionally be shared with children. In increasing children's knowledge of edible plants and berries it is recognised that children might be tempted to pick berries and plants whilst at Forest school and outside of Forest School and that there is no safe way of ensuring that children will always be able to correctly identify safe foods.

Depending on the age of the children, they will be taught which plants, berries, nuts and leaves in the woodland are edible, inedible or poisonous, **but they will be instructed never to eat anything they find anywhere outdoors without adult supervision**, for two reasons;

- So that they do not make a mistake and eat something harmful to them.
 - So that they leave plants, berries and nuts for the wildlife that depend on them for food.
- Children will be reassured that fruit from the woodland can be safe to eat, but that they need adult supervision (i.e. parent) to ensure that they are safe.
 - Children will only eat at Forest School in the following circumstances:
 - When food and drink has been prepared specifically for the group by the group leader or another member of staff, or by the children under the supervision of staff.
 - Or when packed lunches are brought in by the children - if lunch is scheduled to be part of a session parents would be notified in advance.
 - Mushrooms will never be foraged from the woodland as it is easy to confuse species and the consequences of consumption can be fatal.
 - Forest School sessions will be nut free with regards to food that is brought for children to eat. However Hazel trees are common in British woodland, so particular attention will be given to hazel when sap is high and when hazel is in fruit as both can be hazardous to allergic children. This issue will be discussed with parents of children with nut allergies.
 - The Forest School Leader will be responsible for checking if any member of the group has an allergy or intolerance, or religious reasons for not consuming certain foods; in such cases parents will be consulted to ensure a substitute food is provided either by the Forest School Leader or the parents.
 - Children will wash their hands before preparing or eating food.
 - The Forest School Leader will be responsible for ensuring any food cooked on the fire is cooked all the way through
 - When cooking on a stick children will use green wood and remove the bark before cooking to ensure that it is clean

- Time will be allocated to stop and have a drink, water and cups will always be available. Children may also help themselves to water throughout the session, they will be asked to sit down in the log circle to have their drink. Younger children may need help to get a drink.
- Snacks may be provided, particularly in longer sessions - depending on staff/parents wishes.

Toilets

Two toilets provided on site

Children will be asked to tell an adult when they are going to use the toilet

If a young child needs help using the toilet they should ask, firstly their parent or carer if they are present, then a member of staff.

A second adult must be present when a child needs assistance with toileting, except in the case of parents helping their own children.

Volunteers can assist a child in using the toilet if another adult is present.

Severe Weather Procedures

Whilst it is intended that Forest School will go ahead in all weathers the Forest School leader will be responsible for checking the weather to ensure children are not taken out in extreme or unsafe conditions.

The Forest School leader will:

- Check local weather forecasts
- Assess the site prior to taking a group of children out
- Leave cancellation as late as possible
- Conditions that may lead to a cancellation of a session:
 - Strong winds
 - Tree branches are blowing at 20 degrees or more
 - Lightning
 - The decision to cancel due to strong winds will vary according to the site, some sites have more open space away from trees with large branches.
- Be aware that it is possible for tree limbs and branches to drop on any day - checking the safety of the trees will form part of the daily site risk assessment
- Organise activities to help children warm up:
 - Exercise - fun games that involve lots of movement
 - Shelter
 - Fire - provided there are enough adults for one adult to be only responsible for the fire without making child to adult ratio too high
- Assess how well the children are managing with the weather conditions throughout the session and where necessary a sessions may be cut short

Cancellation

In cases of severe weather, or after having conducted a daily site risk assessment where it is clear that a session cannot take place the participants will be contacted as soon as possible.

In some instances it will be possible to run a session from an alternative site where children are not playing under trees.

Forest School Clothing Recommendations

Where possible everyone taking part in Forest School should follow these clothing recommendations:

- Appropriate, waterproof footwear should be worn at all times - ideally, these will be welly boots or stout walking boots. In wet weather wellies will be essential as children will be allowed to play in the mud.
- Thick Socks - wellies are not very warm. Insoles are helpful for children who particularly feel the cold
- Warm coat - preferably waterproof
- Jumper or fleece - Real wool is very warm but expensive - a 2nd hand adults wool jumper shrunk to kids size is toasty warm for those that get cold easily!
- Trousers and long sleeves should be worn to provide some protection from scratches and stings from brambles, thorns, holly, nettles, insects including tics, and sun burn
- Short sleeves t-shirts - acceptable on very hot days, but give less protection
- Sun hat for summer - Fox Wood is a newly planted woodland that doesn't offer a great deal of shade yet
- Waterproofs should be brought for all Forest School sessions; including a waterproof jacket and where possible waterproof trousers - these are expensive, it might be possible to pick some up 2nd hand.
- Hats and gloves, plus spare gloves in winter
- Hair band - for long hair to keep children safe near fires
- As the weather turns cold lots of layers will be essential, children will not enjoy themselves if they are too cold. Layers can always be removed if they're too warm.

A spare set of warm clothing will be available for emergencies.

Everyone taking part should wear clothes that are suitable for the weather conditions.

Updated March 2019

Tool Use and Maintenance Procedure

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self confidence

Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader and will be inspected before each session to ensure safety.

Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect.

Volunteers will receive basic training on the use of individual hand tools before being allowed to use them with children.

The following guidelines will be implemented:

- Staff to child ratio of will depend of the age and level of skill of individual children. 1:2 or 1:1 if a child is considered to need more support
- Tools will be kept in the Forest School tool box or tool bag and only removed with the permission of Forest School staff or volunteers
- Running with tools is prohibited
- Pointing with tools is prohibited
- All tools will be used two arms length away from other people
- Trip hazards will be removed from the working area

- Blade guards to be removed and put back by Forest School staff or volunteers, older children can be shown how to do this
- All tools must be returned to the tool box at the end of the session
- For some tools a protective glove is sometimes used on the hand supporting the piece of wood to be cut, but never on the hand holding the tool so that a good grip is maintained
- Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed
- At sessions where parents are present they will be responsible for supervising their children with tools

Bow-Saw & Hack Saw

General information/Safety rules/Transportation

A bow-saw can have two types of blades

- Pegged and even teeth are used for seasoned and dry wood.

- The raker blade is specifically designed for cutting green wood with every third or fourth notch having a V shape.

Saws are carried down by the side with the teeth pointing downwards and the guard firmly in place

Saw covers should always be on while carrying or whilst in tool bag.

Never leave a saw flat on the ground, hang them up with the cover on, on a saw horse or leaning against a tree

Use a saw horse or a natural sawing break to support the wood

Hands must be kept away from the blade

Use new saw blades yourself to wear them in before use with young children

How to conduct a tool safety check

Examine the integrity of the handle and where the blade fixes to the handle

Check the sharpness of the blade by cutting a piece wood

A blunt or rusty blade must be replaced, it cannot be sharpened

How to maintain, clean and store the tool

Use cloth and oil to ensure all dirt and moisture is off the blade

Keep guard and saw dry and store in a safe, controlled place

Fixed-blade Knife

General information/Safety rules/Transportation

Fixed-blade knives are used for whittling and cutting

Knives should always be in a sheath when not in use or being carried

Never wear a glove on working hand and never cut towards yourself

Keep the holding hand away from the blade, but maintain control of material to allow cuts to be safe

Always assume safe position, such as elbows on knees or cutting to the side of your body

Cut away from yourself and down towards the ground

Educate children about the 'danger triangle' and the position of femoral artery

How to conduct a tool safety check

Check that the sheath is undamaged

Look for any signs of denting and rust.

Check for sharpness, run blade over back of thumbnail, it should leave a small line if sharp

Check that the handle and attachment are secure and do not wobble

How to maintain, clean and store the tool

Clean the knife with a rag

Rust is more likely to appear on a carbon steel blade and needs to be sanded off

Keep knife and guard are dry

Use a sharpening stone or other knife sharpener to keep blade sharp after each use - a blunt knife poses a greater danger to the user

Loppers and Secateurs

General information/Safety rules/Transportation

Secateurs are used for cutting twigs and small branches (finger sized)

Loppers are used for bigger branches, (less than 5cm diameter)

Loppers should be carried at the side holding on to the bottom handle,

Always have both hands on the handles

Loppers and secateurs are the correct way up if the blade looks like smiley crocodile!

How to conduct a tool safety check

Examine handles, hinges and blade for signs of damage or rusting

Check the blade is sharp using the back of your thumb nail

Secateurs have an extra closing mechanism, make sure this is working properly

How to maintain, clean and store the tool

Use a cloth and oil to wipe the blade

Use a sharpening stones when required

Fire Safety Procedure

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. We aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location for fire

Only agreed areas will be used for campfires

Fires will be made on flat ground and any woodchip, bark or leaf litter must be brushed away

Fires will not be made on peat soil, stony ground, and rough ground such as areas with lots of tree roots

Fires should not be sited where there is low overhanging trees/branches directly above the fire

Fires should be kept approximately 4m from shelters, particularly those built from easily combustible materials

Fire areas will be enclosed by large logs or built in a small barbecue, or similar metal container, or storm kettle to prevent their spread

Safety

A lit fire will be attended by an adult at all times

Fire will be surrounded by seating which will be at least 1 metre away from the fire pit

Objects that could create trip hazards are not to be left within the fire circle

When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to walk within the fire circle without permission.

Fire blanket and a bucket of water are kept just outside circle for extinguishing

Clean water bucket for cooling burns and first aid kit also kept on edge of circle

Long hair must be tied back when coming near to fire to cook or put logs on it

Loose clothing, ties, belts, tassels must be secured, be aware of synthetic fabric that is particular flammable

Seating

When invited to sit around the fire, children must find a seat by walking around the outside of the circle and stepping over into the circle and then sitting down - this avoids crossing through the fire circle.

Children must sit with legs drawn in and not outstretched to avoid creating a trip hazard

Once seated children must remain seated until invited to tend to fire or cook over it by an adult.

If children need to change seats they should step outside the seating area and then walking around the outside to a new seat, they must not cross through the fire circle.

To deal with smoke children will be advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/friend to count with them)

If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke should be avoided!

Lighting the fire

Adults will be responsible for lighting fires

Children may light fires when invited to do so, under supervision, with a high adult to child ratio, the actual numbers will depend on age and maturity of children

Fires are lit using fire strikers, cotton wool or natural tinder and petroleum jelly, a fire steel or matches

No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.

No plastics are to be burnt.

Children will be taught how to gather suitable kindling from the woodland and lay it out in separate piles on a tarpaulin if the ground is damp - little finger sized, thumb sized and wrist sized

Newspaper will be kept as a back-up if there is a lack of suitable dry kindling

If fires are lit regularly, logs will be taken in to the woods to burn so as not to deplete the natural resources

Children may add fuel to the fire only when invited to do so

Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire

Hands should never go over the fire.

What goes in the fire stays in the fire!

Extinguishing

All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session

Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash

Any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.

At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased

Ash needs to be dispersed when it has completely cooled, it can be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition

Type of Fire

Criss-cross fires are used to provide a large amount of heat and light and are fast burning

Long Log fires are good for cooking as they are slow burning and require little fuel

Indian fires are good for boiling as they are very slow and use very little fuel

Storm (Kelly) kettle

When lighting fires for storm kettles there is additional risk from hot metals, therefore the Forest School Leader's discretion will be used in assessing the maturity of the group and the child-adult ratios on the day before deciding if the children can be involved in lighting and feeding the fire.

The storm kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground.

Children must be seated at least 1 metre away from the storm kettle

Children can feed the fire when invited to do so after they have been shown how to do so safely. (stick held at the end and dropped in from the side; hand should never be placed over the top of the kettle)

If additional draft is required, this should be achieved with a fanning motion (with a tool mat or similar) with warnings about sparks. The vent hole should not be blown into due to the risk of sparks being thrown out and landing on the person's back or head

Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water

Storm kettles should never be boiled with the cork in

If older children (in Year 5 and 6 only), are to pour liquid from the storm kettle, they must be shown how to do this safely whilst the kettle is still cold, so that they have a chance to practise without the danger from steam and scalding. The cork chain should be used to tilt the kettle.

Procedure for Dealing with Dogs & Members of the Public

Fox Wood is a private locations however dogs off lead have been known to wander in.

Some children may be afraid of dogs

- If a dog appears the child can be joined by at least one adult
- If a dog approaches the group and appears likely to cause trouble all participants will be advised stay still and act calmly - ideally keeping hands tucked up under opposite armpits or by their sides.
- The leader will speak to the dog owner.

Insect and Waterborne Diseases

Wherever children play there is the chance of exposure to ticks and to disease causing bacteria carried by wild or domestic animals, whether that be in the back garden, the local park or woodland, therefore it is a good idea to be aware of the risks and know the precautions that can be taken to reduce the risks and to be able to recognise symptoms which might indicate a problem.

Leptospirosis is a type of bacterial infection spread by animals

(Bacteria that can in rare cases lead to Weil's disease)

In 90% of cases, leptospirosis only causes mild flu-like symptoms which usually develop suddenly around 7 to 14 days after exposure to the leptospira bacteria. However, it is possible for symptoms to develop from between 2 and 30 days after exposure.

The Symptoms:

- a high temperature (fever) that is usually between 38C and 40C (100.4-104-F)
- chills
- nausea and vomiting
- sudden headaches
- loss of appetite
- muscle pain, particularly affecting the muscles in the calves and lower back

- conjunctivitis (irritation and redness of the eyes) cough
- a short-lived rash

Symptoms usually resolve within 5 to 7 days. However, in about 10% of cases people go on to experience more serious symptoms, a severe form of leptospirosis known as Weil's disease.

Many different animals can carry the bacteria, but it is most commonly associated with rats and mice, farm animals and dogs. You can become infected with the leptospira bacteria if contaminated water or soil comes into contact with your eyes, mouth, nose, or any open cuts in the skin. Leptospirosis is found throughout the world, including Europe, but is more common in tropical and subtropical areas; rates of leptospirosis are very low in the UK. Most cases of leptospirosis are mild and are treated with a five to seven-day course of antibiotic tablets.

Precautions:

- Cover any new cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing or waterproof gloves before mud or water play
- Wash hands after playing in mud or water Wash hands before eating
- Remind children not to put their hands in their mouths

If you are aware that your children have unhealed cuts and grazes before they attend a forest school session please cover them with a a waterproof plaster.

Ticks Bites and Lyme disease

Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures found in woodland and heath areas. They feed on the blood of birds and mammals, including humans. Ticks that carry the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease are found throughout the UK and in other parts of Europe and North America. Lyme disease can often be treated effectively if it's detected early on. But if it's not treated or treatment is delayed, there's a risk you could develop severe and long-lasting symptoms.

Tick bites aren't usually painful and sometimes only cause a red lump to develop where you were bitten. However, in some cases they may cause swelling, itchiness, blistering and bruising.

Early symptoms

Many people with early-stage Lyme disease develop a circular rash at the site of the bite, usually around 3 to 30 days after being bitten. The rash is often described as a bull's-eye rash. The affected area of skin will be red and the edges may feel slightly raised.

The size of the rash can vary and it may expand over several days or weeks. Typically it's around 15cm across, but it can be larger or smaller. Some people develop several rashes in different parts of their body. However, around 1 in 3 people with Lyme disease won't develop this rash.

Some people with Lyme disease also experience flu-like symptoms in the early stages, such as tiredness, muscle pain, joint pain, headaches, a high temperature, chills and neck stiffness.

Later symptoms

More serious symptoms may develop several weeks, months or even years later if Lyme disease is left untreated or is not treated early on. These can include:

- pain and swelling in the joints (inflammatory arthritis)
- paralysis of your facial muscles, memory problems and difficulty concentrating
- problems affecting the nervous system - such as numbness and pain in your limbs,
- heart problems - such as inflammation of the heart muscle (myocarditis) or sac surrounding the heart (pericarditis), heart block and heart failure

- inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) - which can cause a severe headache, a stiff neck and increased sensitivity to light Some of these problems will get better slowly with treatment, although they can persist if treatment is started late.

You should see your GP if you develop any of the symptoms above after being bitten by a tick, or if you think you may have been bitten. Let your GP know if you've spent time in woodland or heath areas where ticks are known to live.

How you get Lyme disease: Ticks can transfer the Lyme disease bacteria to a human by biting them. Ticks can be found in any areas with deep or overgrown vegetation where they have access to animals to feed on. They're more common in woodland and heath areas, but can also be found in gardens or parks.

Ticks climb on to your clothes or skin if you brush against vegetation they're on. They then bite into the skin to feed on your blood. You're more likely to become infected if the tick remains attached to your skin for more than 24 hours. Ticks are very small and their bites are not painful, so you may not realise you have one attached to your skin.

Who is at risk and where are ticks found? People who spend time in woodland or heath areas in the UK and parts of Europe or North America are most at risk of developing Lyme disease.

Cases of Lyme disease have been reported throughout the UK, but areas known to have a particularly high population of ticks include: Exmoor, The New Forest and other rural areas of Hampshire, South Downs, parts of Wiltshire and Berkshire parts of Surrey and West Sussex, Thetford Forest, Lake District, North York Moors and Scottish Highlands. It's thought only a small proportion of ticks carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease, so being bitten doesn't mean you'll definitely be infected.

Treating Lyme disease: If you develop symptoms of Lyme disease, you will normally be given a course of antibiotic tablets, capsules or liquid.

Preventing Lyme disease: There is currently no vaccine available to prevent Lyme disease. The best way to prevent the condition is to be aware of the risks when you visit areas where ticks are found and to take sensible precautions.

How to reduce the risk of infection by:

wear appropriate clothing - a long-sleeved shirt, tucked into trousers and trousers tucked into socks

- wear light-coloured fabrics that may help you spot a tick on your clothes
- use tick repellent on exposed skin - but be aware that these are not 100% effective
- inspect yours/your child's skin for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including your head, neck and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband) - remove any ticks you find promptly using a tick removal tool
- check your children's head and neck areas, including their scalp
- make sure ticks are not brought home on your clothes
- check that pets do not bring ticks into your home in their fur

How to remove a tick: If you find a tick remove it gently gripping it as close to the skin as possible, preferably using fine-toothed tweezers. Pull steadily away from the skin without twisting or crushing the tick. Wash skin with water and soap afterwards, and apply an antiseptic cream to the skin around the bite.

Don't burn the tick or use substances such as alcohol or Vaseline to force the tick out. You can buy inexpensive tick removal devices, which may be useful if you frequently spend time in areas where there are ticks. A tick can be as small as a poppy seed so it is important to check thoroughly.

Most insect bites are uncomfortable but are not harmful in the long term. Bacteria found in the soil and the natural environment is on the whole beneficial to our health and important for training our immune systems to function correctly. So whilst the information above may sound worrying, it is good to be

aware of what might cause harm. Please keep in mind that the chances of serious illness are low and that the benefits of playing outside in the natural environment are numerous.

Forest School Leaders Health & Safety Responsibilities

To establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment for Forest School sessions the Forest School Leader will:

- Hold an up to date outdoor paediatric first aid certificate
- Establish and be familiar with all emergency procedures
- Establish and maintain procedures, policies and risk assessments, reviewing regularly based on observations and developing knowledge of the Forest School setting
- Ensure that all risk assessments and pre-site visits take place before children are permitted on site
- Investigate any accidents, incidents or near misses, using information gathered to inform future risk assessment and policy making
- Plan and lead all Forest School activities with support of staff and volunteers
- Provide an inclusive curriculum by being aware of any particular additional educational needs and ensuring that planned activities are within the capabilities of the children taking part
- Ensure alternative plans are in place should a planned activity be compromised by health and safety concerns
- Take responsibility for discipline during Forest School sessions
- Teach all members of Forest School to maintain their own and others health and safety by involving them in the risk assessment process at appropriate opportunities
- Maintain the recommended adult-child ratio
- Maintain the First Aid Kit, and any tools and equipment brought into Forest School
- Be aware of and take appropriate action regarding any particular medical needs, (ensure that inhalers and epipens are carried during forest school sessions)
- Ensure that all participants follow the clothing recommendations
- Ensure children and adults have access to drinking water
- Assist with toileting if children request help (except for Parent and Child groups where parents take responsibility for toileting)
- Ensure that Forest School staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities

Staff & Volunteers Health & Safety Responsibilities

Staff and Volunteers will support the Forest School leader and help to maintain a safe and healthy environment in the following ways:

- Volunteers should wear a Forest School identification badge visibly over outdoor clothing
- Take an active role in Forest School activities and assist with any discipline issues within the group (see Behaviour Policy)
- Assist with the walking of children on roads to off-site locations (see Walking On Roads Policy)
- Assist the Forest School Leader in ensuring equipment is safe, reporting any concerns immediately
- Assist the Forest School Leader in teaching children to maintain their own and others' health and safety
- Report accidents or hazards to the Forest School Leader immediately
- Take responsibility for making themselves aware of safety issues, such as emergency procedures and the whereabouts of the first aid kit - guidance will be given and policies and risk assessments made available.
- Provide their own suitable outdoor clothing and footwear
- Ensure children bring inhalers and epipens for forest school sessions (with the support of staff and/or parents)
- Not allow themselves to be in a one to one situation with a child, unless they are in clear view of other members of the group
- Assist children with toileting when required, with a second adult present (see Toileting Procedure).
- Volunteers should not administer any medication to children, this is the role of a first aider, or school/nursery staff where permission has been given by parents
- Should not discuss the children at Forest School with anyone outside of the school or nursery setting

In Parent and Child groups parents will assist the forest school leader in maintaining the health and safety of their children.

Forest School Insurance

The Forest School leaders will take out full liability insurance annually in order to cover all activities.

Fox Wood is currently insured by Birnbeck Finance Ltd