

Inspire, Enjoy, Achieve

Forest School Policy

June 2021

Reviewed September 2023

Review September 2025

**RATIONALE**

It is the mission of Cotton End Forest School to develop the full potential of everyone at our school in an environment guided by the school values. To help fulfil our mission, we have introduced Forest School provision at our school in order to help educate the whole child. This policy has been specifically written so that all parents, staff, volunteers and governors at Cotton End have a shared understanding of the Forest School ethos and its implementation at our school. The contents of this policy should be read alongside the following policies: Health and Safety Policy; Behaviour Policy; Safeguarding Policy; Special Educational Needs Policy; Equality Policy and Teaching and Learning Policy.

Within this policy, the term ‘Forest School Leader’ refers to a member of staff, adult volunteer or bought in professional who holds a fully recognised Level 3 Forest School Practitioners qualification.

**AIMS**

The aim of this policy is to provide an insight into the ethos of Forest School as operated at Cotton End.

Forest School builds on a child’s innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risk, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

Our Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

* Develop self-esteem.
* Develop self-confidence.
* Form positive relationships with others.
* Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others.
* Learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults.
* Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.
* Learn specific skills which link into the curriculum.
* Develop knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a forest environment.

Cotton End Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and changes in the environment. Appropriate clothing will be worn. During high winds or lightening it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods. The children’s interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONSERVATION**

One of the principles of our Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children at Cotton End are taught respect and responsibility for the world around them.

Both children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

We aim to promote respect for wildlife and our woodland environment. This will be achieved partly through detailed long-term, medium-term and lesson planning.

Careful reference will be made to our woodland management plan and ecological impact assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School Site.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

In the first instance please refer to Cotton End’s Health and Safety Policy. The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times throughout any Forest School activity and session. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders.

The Forest School programme provides children with opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. Whilst being independent in their learning, they will develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their actions have consequences.

The Forest School Co-ordinator will carry out risk assessments at the beginning of school year which will take account of seasonal changes, but will be ongoing throughout the school year. In addition, a safety sweep will be undertaken before each session by the Forest School leader leading the session.

Forest School Location

**Address:** Cotton End Forest School

High Road

Cotton End

MK45 3AG

01234 740100

**Grid reference:** TL083452

**Site 1: Right hand side of Forest of Marston:** TL081453

**Site 2: Left hand side of Forest of Marston grid reference:** TL081452



**Cotton End Forest School**

**Site 1**

**Site 2**

The Forest School Leaders and other practitioners regard their duty of care when working with pupils as extremely important.

For the safety and protection of all individuals – children, staff and volunteers - we ensure the following: Everyone involved in Forest School is briefed on health and safety and risk assessment of the site. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding incorporating Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan. This is undertaken as part of induction and orientation of all staff and volunteers.

Staff and volunteers must undertake to adhere to the guidance contained within all these policies. All members of staff at Cotton End Forest School undertake Child Protection training. Any concerns are reported to the Head Teacher or one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), the named Child Protection Officers, to ensure the school’s child protection policy can then be followed.

The Forest School Leaders and other school staff delivering sessions all have an enhanced level DBS check.

Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. Please view term-appropriate kit expectations below. Sunscreen and hats should be worn in the summer months. It is part of school policy that staff do not apply sunscreen to children, they must do this themselves.

**FOREST SCHOOL KIT**

All children across the school at Cotton End are expected to have the same kit, which is to be left at school all year round. Forest School Leaders may send kit home when they deem necessary for cleaning and to check kit is still appropriate for the child. Children are expected to have access to their Forest School kit at all times.

Winter Uniform:

* Wellies.
* Waterproof trousers and coat.
* Warm, winter coat.
* Woolly hat
* Scarf
* Gloves
* Dry socks (spare)

Summer Uniform:

* Long sleeved t-shirt.
* Waterproof jacket.
* Long bottoms (leggings or tracksuit bottoms)
* Appropriate footwear – trainers, wellies or walking shoes, NO sandals.
* Sun hat.

**ASSESSING AND REDUCING RISK AT OUR FOREST SCHOOL**

At our Forest School we undertake a range of activities which contain a theoretical degree of risk. Through careful supervision, full training and good practice, we aim to ensure that accidents are avoided and that risks are reduced to manageable and acceptable levels.

We have full written risk assessments in place for:

* Site
* Weather conditions and general welfare
* Group/Individual Buildings and shelters
* Rope and String
* Fire
* Food
* Use of tools, including: billhooks, saws, penknives and potato peelers, and mallets.

All these Risk Assessments can be found on the school server and in the Forest School Subject Leader folder, stored in the School work-room. Written Risk Assessments are the starting point for our safe practice and procedures in Forest School. They are constantly reviewed and regularly updated in order to reflect the safest practice possible at Cotton End.

**FIRST AID**

All Level 3 Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid.

A First Aid Kit is always available on the Forest School site, in the Forest School backpack. It is the Forest School Leader’s responsibility to ensure that the First Aid Kit is brought onto the site at the commencement of the session and returned to school after each session. It is the Forest School Leader’s responsibility to inform the Office staff, or the Forest School Co-Ordinator when first aid resources are running low.

In cases of minor injury, such as cuts and grazes the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and complete a bump note for the injured person to take home.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

It is vital that emergency procedures are adhered to. These are in place to safeguard pupils and adults alike. If a serious incident takes place, it will be essential to carry out an investigation promptly. Should a serious incident or accident occur, the Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of other participants by adopting the ‘1, 2, 3 – Base Camp’ call.

Participants will be made aware of this procedure for calling everyone together in initial sessions of Forest School.

In cases of emergency the Forest School Leader or other trained adult will administer first aid to the casualty. They will inform the school office who will alert parents and/or emergency services if necessary. They will inform the head teacher if the incident requires further medical treatment.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Forest School Leaders hold a fully recognised Level 3 Practitioners qualification; have fully enhanced DBS and outdoor first aid qualifications. Forest School Leaders have the overall responsibility for:

* Safety and risk assessment
* Planning of sessions, evaluation and feedback
* Liaising with school staff and governors
* Administration of first aid
* Responsibility for first aid kit, accident book, etc.
* Supervision of tool use
* Supervision of fires and cooking area
* Understanding the needs of children with SEND
* Emergency procedures

**VOLUNTEERS AND TRAINEES**

With support from the Forest School Leaders volunteers and trainees are responsible for:

* Modelling good practice
* Supporting and talking to pupils to extend their learning as appropriate
* Additional support when Forest School leader is supervising tools or fire activities
* Additional delegated jobs

**EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

The Forest School Leaders have developed a long-term progressive plan. They undertake to reflect and evaluate each session after its completion. At the end of each term the leaders meet to reflect on current activities, take into account any feedback from all participants and then use this to inform future planning.