

2025/26

Arcadia Forest School Policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments



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1. Relevant Legislation:

The Forest School Leader is familiar with the following legislation and its relevance to Arcadia Forest School

- Health and Safety at Work Act (www.hse.gov.uk)
- RIDDOR 1995 – Reporting of Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (www.hse.gov.uk)
- COSHH 2002 – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (www.hse.gov.uk)
- Children’s Act – (www.hmso.gov.uk)
- First Aid at Work Regulations 1989 (www.hse.gov.uk)
- Personal Protective Equipment Regulations (www.hse.gov.uk)
- Food Safety Regulations 1995 (www.food.gov.uk)
- GDPR 2018

2. Policies:

As Arcadia’s Forest School is part of Ormiston NEW Academy, the following policies are relevant.

2.1 Health and Safety:

<https://oatcompliance.co.uk/policy-page/onewa.co.uk/health-and-safety-statement-of-intent> (OAT)

<https://onewa.co.uk/admin/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2024/09/Health-and-safety-roles-and-responsibilities-organisation-and-arrangements-2024.pdf>

Additionally, The Forest School Leader holds primary responsibility for ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of all participants during Forest School sessions. This includes:

1. Risk Assessment and Management

- Conduct **site and tool/activity specific risk assessments** before each session and update them regularly.
- Identify potential hazards (e.g., uneven terrain, water bodies, weather conditions) and implement control measures.
- Carry out **dynamic risk assessments** throughout sessions to respond to changing conditions.
- Ensure safe boundaries are established and communicated to participants.
- Manage fire safety, including designated fire areas and water buckets for extinguishing.

2. Emergency Preparedness

- Carry a **fully stocked first aid kit** and ensure personal competence in first aid.
- Have access to emergency contact numbers and a reliable means of communication (e.g., mobile phone or radio).

3. Supervision and Ratios

- Ensure minimum of 1:6 supervision ratios as per Forest School guidelines.
- Monitor participants' activities to prevent unsafe behaviour and intervene promptly when necessary.
- Ensure participants have suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor conditions.

4. Safe Use of Tools and Equipment

- Provide **clear tool talks and ensure appropriate FS leader supervision** for the use of tools and fire lighting.
- Check all tools and equipment for safety before use and maintain them in good condition.
- Enforce **personal protective equipment (PPE)** where required.
- Ensure participants have suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor conditions.

7. Legal and Policy Compliance

- Adhere to relevant **health and safety legislation**, safeguarding policies, and Forest School principles.
- Maintain accurate records of risk assessments, incidents, and first aid treatments.

8. Continuous Monitoring and Review

- Regularly review health and safety procedures and update the handbook as needed.
- Reflect on practice and incorporate feedback to improve safety standards.

2.2 First Aid:

<https://onewa.co.uk/admin/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2024/03/First-aid-policy.pdf>

*The Forest School leader will hold the specific Forest School qualification, in addition to paediatric first aid. **The forest school leader will also carry a first aid kit, which is regularly checked, in all forest school sessions.***

2.3 Behaviour:

<https://onewa.co.uk/admin/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2025/09/Behaviour-from-1-Sep-2025.pdf>

2.4 Inclusion and Equality:

<https://onewa.co.uk/admin/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2024/04/EqualityandDiversity-2023.pdf>

2.5 Weather Policy:

<https://onewa.co.uk/key-info/adverse-weather-closure-info>

The main principle of forest school is embracing a range of weather conditions, therefore students will be supported in wearing appropriate clothing to support this, however, in extreme weather conditions whether the sessions can take place will be at the discretion of the forest school leader.

In the event of electrical storms or winds higher than 32mph/Beaufort Scale 7, the Forest school session will be cancelled.

2.6 Safeguarding:

<https://onewa.co.uk/admin/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2025/09/Child-Protection-and-Safeguarding-Sep-2025.pdf>

2.7 Data protection:

<https://onewa.co.uk/admin/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2024/12/Data-protection-and-freedom-of-information-policy-Dec-2024.pdf>

The following policies are specific to Arcadia's Forest School:

2.8 Roles and Responsibilities:

The Forest School Leader will hold the Level 3 Forest School leader's qualification and first aid. Forest School Leader will plan and deliver the sessions ensuring all the policies, procedures and risk assessments are adhered to. The forest school leader's decision regarding the appropriateness of activity and the calculated risk of any activity is final. *The Forest School leader will securely store, check and maintain all tools and equipment, ensuring they are safe for use. The forest school leader alongside the site manager, will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Forest School area, ensuring that it is safe and well prepared for planned activities. The Forest school leader is responsible for the planning and delivery of all Forest School sessions, including the management and direction of the Forest school assistant.*

The Forest School support assistant will ensure all forest school documents, including risk assessment, are read and adhered to. The Forest School assistant will work at the direction of the Forest School leader to ensure safe working procedures and ratios are followed at all times.

Both the Forest School Leader and Forest School assistant will have a full awareness of the Forest School ethos and positively role model this in all sessions.

2.9 Ratios policy:

The forest school will operate at a maximum of a 1:6 ratio. Specific activities may require a lower ratio to ensure safe working procedures, this will be detailed in specific activity risk assessments. *For general tool use the maximum ratio will be 1:3 and a 1:2 ratio for firelighting/approaching a fire.*

2.10 Conservation Policy:

The staff and students at forest school will take care of the forest school site, nurturing all flora and fauna in a considered and sustainable way, specifically using the ecological impact assessment to care for and enhance the Arcadia Forest school site we will follow the 3 year land management plan, increasing biodiversity on the site. *All students taking part in Arcadia Forest school will take part in developing the forest school area and caring for the site to develop a sense of ownership, learning skills to take care of natural areas in later life. In order to be sustainable natural materials will be re-used wherever possible and planting replaced as part of the 3 year land management plan. Where natural materials can't be used we will endeavour to ensure there is as little waste as possible and items are re-used.*

2.11 Risk Management and Assessment Policy:

Arcadia Forest School follows the risk versus benefit risk assessment procedure. To complete this procedure, the Forest School Leader must first establish and clearly define what the benefits are to the individual for running a certain activities. The Forest School Leader will need to identify and list perceived hazards to the individual/ and or group. The forest school led will categorised the level of risk as low, medium or high. After that the Forest School Leader will state a list of control measures that will be put in place to help mitigate that risk level. Finally, the Forest School Leader will then state the perceived risk level when the measures have been put in place. The control measures should have some limiting effect on the risk level. These risk assessments will be shared and read but all supporting adults and will be available of our website. They will be reviewed and updated yearly by the forest school lead.

The forest school leader's discretion on the safety of an activity is final.

Key components are:

- Site
- Activity
- Health and Medical
- Equipment and clothing

2.12 Food/Cooking Policy

Some activities may include children cooking on the open fire. The Forest School Assistant will hold a level 2 food hygiene qualification, ensuring all food prep adheres to health, safety and hygiene standards. The Forest School Leader and Forest School assistant will be aware of any food allergies or dietary requirements of the group and ensure these are taken into account.

3. Procedures:

As Arcadia's Forest School is part of Ormiston NEW Academy, the following policies are relevant:

3.1 Accusations against adults: [Whistleblowing.pdf](#)

3.2 Complaints procedures: [Complaints-Policy-Dec-2024.pdf](#)

3.3 Code of Conduct for Adults: [Staff-code-of-conduct.pdf](#)

Additionally, the adults supporting or delivering Forest School should maintain a positive attitude towards the outdoors, learning a new skill and all elements of weather. Ensuring the Forest School ethos is positively role modelled at all times. Both the Forest School Lead and the Forest School assistant will demonstrate a can do, resilient attitude towards the outdoors, weather and all activities. The Forest School Lead and the Forest School assistant will create a safe and welcoming culture where children feel confident to try new things and learn from mistakes.

The following procedures are specific to Arcadia's Forest School:

3.4 Risk Assessment procedure:

Risk Assessments should be undertaken for all activities, by the forest school leader, ahead of the session taking place using a benefit risk assessment procedure. After the risk has been assessed as a high, medium or low threat, mitigations will be put into place to reduce risk and the forest school leader will decide whether the risk outweighs the benefit.

All supporting adults will read risk assessments before the session, ensuring they comply with all recommendations.

The forest school leader will dynamically risk assess throughout the session.

3.5 Emergency Procedures:

Whilst we attempt to mitigate risk, wherever possible, we have the following procedures in place in event of an emergency.

Injury to an adult or student:

- Forest school leader to assess the injury, if the forest school leader is injured the assisting adult should call for support; administer first aid if appropriate or call 999 and closely follow their guidance.
- Assess danger of surroundings, put away tools and extinguish fires, call for additional adult assistance if ratios are compromised.
- **Forest School Assistant to take charge of remainder of group whilst Forest School Lead deals with first aid.**
- **In a significant first aid incident, where an ambulance is called, the Forest School session would be cancelled, with the Forest School assistant returning the children to school.**

Fire or lockdown threat:

- In the event of the fire alarm, students are well drilled on these procedures and will follow their usual fire evacuation plan by going to the fire evacuation point on the rear field
- If lockdown signal is sounded, the forest school leader will have the final say on whether it is most appropriate to re-enter the building or hide in the forest school area depending on the nature of the threat, which will be communicated via the school lockdown channels

Area becomes unsafe during session:

- This will be the forest school leader's discretion whether the area can be cordoned off or if the session should be ended.

Medical emergency (allergic reaction, asthma attack, seizure)

- Follow the protocols relevant to the student
- Forest school leader to administer medication or first aid as appropriate
- Call 999 if required

3.6 Lost Child Procedure:

During Forest school we adopt preventative measures to attempt to mitigate the risk of losing a child, these include high staff to student ratios and clear boundaries that the children are familiar with; Ormiston NEW Academy also operate on a closed site. Forest school staff will follow the following procedures:

- Regular headcounts
- Clear emergency signal
- Deaf or Non verbal children will be given clear methods of communication

In the unlikely event a child was noticed missing the forest school lead would:

- Put away all tools
- Put out any fires
- Gather remaining children and undertake a headcount
- Call for additional adult support
- Search the area with repeated use of the emergency signal for a maximum of 10 minutes
- Call 999 and parents/carers

Whilst the Forest School lead co-ordinates the lost child search, the forest school assistant would become in charge of the remaining students. In the event of calling 999, the forest school session would be cancelled, with the forest school assistant returning the children to school.

4. Loose Dog/Member of the Public Procedure:

Due to the closed nature of Ormiston NEW Academy's site, the risk from a loose dog or member of the public is very low. However, the following procedures are planned for to mitigate this risk during any forest school visits. If a member of the public entered the site without prior permission lockdown procedures would be followed.

- If approaching public meet in a friendly manner, prevent from venturing further, keep their distance from the children and encourage to move along.
- If photographs were taken politely asked for these to be removed for safeguarding purposes.
- In the event of refusal, gather the children and leave the area. Log via CPOMS and report to the DSL. Report to the police.
- If dogs approach on a lead observe until they move on.
- If dogs approach off the lead attempt to quickly locate owner.
- Prepare children on what to do if a loose dog approached.
- Remove children calmly if dog to be considered a danger.

3.7 Fire Procedure:

Fire procedures are the responsibility of the forest school leader. It is essential that the fire index is checked before any fire lighting takes place and that a well maintained fire kit is in place.

Students should be seated a minimum of 1.5 m away from the fire, **with any long hair tied back, there must be no running around the fire and children should only approach the fire to toast under the instruction and close supervision of the forest school leader with a maximum 1:2 ratio.**

Fires should only be built to a size appropriate to the activity planned and should be extinguished immediately when the activity is over, ensuring all white embers are black.

Once cool, the ash should be disposed of responsibly.

3.8 Tool Use Procedure:

Ensuring that tools are used safely and are well maintained is the responsibility of the forest school leader.

- All tools should have a risk assessment that has been read and understood by all adults
- Only the forest school leader issues tools, after checking they are in full working order at the start of each session
- When tools are being used a tool circle will be set up to maintain ratios
- A tool talk is delivered, by the forest school leader, every time they are used
- Tools must be kept in a tool bag and securely stored when not in use
- Knives and peelers must be kept in a locked box
- The forest school leader will model safe use and handling each time the tool is used
- The forest school leader will closely monitor student tool use, using the appropriate ratios
- The forest school leader must collect and check tools at the end of each session, securely storing and repairing/replacing/disposing of any damaged or worn tools.

3.9 Clothing and PPE:

Students and staff will always wear long sleeves, trousers and closed toe shoes. Where gloves are required for activities requiring holding wood, these will be provided by the forest school leader and will be detailed in the risk assessment for the specific activity.

For all activities related to fire lighting, there will be a pair of fire gauntlets as part of the fire kit to be used for the handling of anything hot by the forest school leader.

Students will be provided with waterproof and protective clothing and shoes for wet and cold weather. In the summer months students will be required to wear a hat and sunscreen.

3.10 Sanitation-toileting and handwashing:

Students will be within 5 minutes walk of a toilet on Arcadia's forest school site at all times, however, they will be encouraged to use the toilet prior to the session and at the end. Students will wash hands at the outdoor sink at the end of every forest school session, additionally a bucket of warm, soapy water will be provided for particularly messy activities.

3.11 Daily Procedure:

Before a forest school session the forest school staff will:

- Ensure planning is in place and has been fully understood
- Check for kit against the plan
- Check site is safe before children enter
- Check weather forecast and adjust if needed
- Prepare activities
- Check first aid and fire kit

During a forest school session the forest school staff will:

- Consider a dynamic risk assessment at any point
- Remind students of expectations for forest school at the start of every session
- Conduct warm up and ice breaker games
- Discuss and support with activities
- Include and facilitate free play
- Regularly headcount and check in with all students
- Factor in tidy up and reflection time

After a forest school session the forest school staff will:

- Check site and pick up any mess/litter
- Replenish first aid stock
- Clean equipment and tools
- Report any damage or risk