



ST. GERARD'S  
CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY AND  
NURSERY SCHOOL

# Forest School Policy

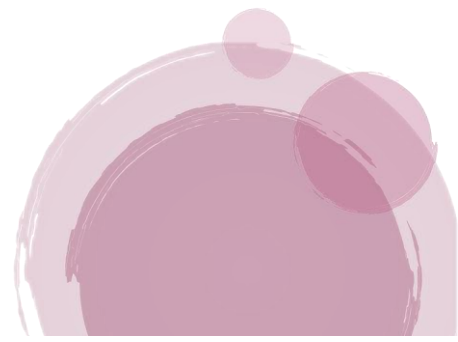


## St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

"Guided by God, St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an inspiring and aspirational community where we learn to love, hope, dream and achieve."

# SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

“St Gerard’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”.



## Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2022) 'Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools'
- DfE (2020) 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years'

## Roles and responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff adhere to the relevant policies and that pupils are aware of their responsibilities.
- Contacting a play inspector to certify that the chosen location is safe to use, where necessary.
- Liaising with the Health & Safety Coordinator to ensure that staff and pupils are aware of any potential hazards.
- Ensuring that a separate Forest School Activities Risk Assessment is conducted to identify, evaluate, and manage the specific risks associated with the Forest School, its location and the activities planned.
- Ensuring that there are arrangements in place for monitoring and reporting incidents associated with the Forest School.
- Ensuring that parents/carers are informed with sufficient notice about planned Forest School activities and any requirements, e.g. clothing and equipment needs.
- Liaising with the SENCO, where necessary, to ensure the Forest School is inclusive for pupils with SEND and reasonable adjustments are made to ensure additional needs are accommodated.
- Appointing a Forest School leader with the relevant experience and qualifications, e.g. a Level 3 Certificate from the Forest School Association.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy on an annual basis and communicating any changes to staff, parents, and pupils.

The School Office is responsible for:

- Arranging the procurement of any equipment or clothing required for the Forest School.
- Ensuring value for money when arranging the procurement of equipment or clothing for the Forest School.
- Ensuring that the school's insurance covers the Forest School and all planned activities.

The Forest School leader is responsible for:

- Conducting a detailed health and safety check before Forest School activities.
- Adhering at all times to the Forest School Activities Risk Assessment.
- Carrying a fully stocked first-aid kit during all Forest School sessions.
- Holding an up-to-date Outdoors First Aid certificate and leading first aid arrangements.
- Inspecting equipment and tools before use to ensure they are safe for use, and that damaged or defective items are not used.
- Keeping and maintaining an incident log to record any incidents that occur during Forest School activities.
- Planning and delivering Forest School sessions, in collaboration with the headteacher, that are engaging, informative and develop pupils' skills and appreciation of the environment.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Assessing additional individual needs of pupils with SEND prior to Forest School activities and promoting measures to ensure pupils with SEND can participate safely.
- Ensuring the SEND Policy is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Liaising with the headteacher to ensure additional provision is available for pupils with SEND as required.
- Ensuring that the provision put in place for pupils with SEND is monitored for effectiveness throughout the duration of the Forest School activities.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is adhered to at all times during Forest School activities.
- Consulting the Forest School leader on measures necessary to ensure pupils are safeguarded adequately during activities.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy at all times during Forest School activities.
- Ensuring that pupils are always accounted for and supervised.
- Reporting any concerns and incidents to the Forest School leader and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting any safeguarding incidents to the DSL and asking for guidance as appropriate.
- Reporting concerns regarding the provision for pupils with SEND to the SENCO.
- Ensuring that pupils are always respectful to each other, staff and the natural environment.
- Managing pupils in line with the Behaviour Policy when necessary.

### **Safeguarding**

Volunteers for the Forest School will only be allowed to supervise pupils alone if they have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

Volunteers without an enhanced DBS check will be supervised by a member of staff at all times.

Measures will be implemented to ensure that pupils' exposure to members of the public during Forest School activities is minimised as much as possible.

Pupils will be instructed and reminded frequently to remain close to the group, and to avoid leaving the sight of staff and interacting with members of the public.

All members of staff will report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL immediately.

The DSL will deal with safeguarding concerns in a timely and appropriate manner in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

### **Location**

The location is within the school grounds and is suitable for allowing pupils to explore the natural world and build their confidence in an outdoor environment.

Pupils are reminded of the hazards of the site prior to entering and are reminded to remain vigilant throughout.

The location will be surveyed weekly by the premises manager to ensure it is safe for pupils to use.

The premises manager will remove or control any minor hazards. Any areas that are deemed to pose a substantial risk and cannot be adequately controlled or removed are clearly marked and staff and pupils will not enter them for any reason.

Staff will communicate clearly to pupils the areas they are permitted to explore and issue frequent reminders, where necessary.

Pupils will be taught to show respect for the environment, e.g. they do not litter and leave the area clean and tidy.

### **Supervision**

Staff will supervise pupils at a ratio of **1:8** at all times.

Head counts will be conducted regularly to prevent the risk of pupils leaving the sight of staff and volunteers.

In the event of a pupil going missing, staff will have due regard for incidents and emergencies of this policy.

St. Gerard's school staff are adequately trained to ensure they can safely assist pupils during Forest School activities.

School staff will be informed of any hazards present by the Forest School leader and ensure mitigating measures are in place and adhered to by pupils.

## **Tools**

Pupils will be taught how to use tools and equipment independently and safely during activities.

Staff will demonstrate the safe use of all tools before pupils are allowed to use them.

The Forest School leader assesses the risks posed by particular tools and consequently implements suitable staff: pupil ratios to supervise pupils using these tools.

All activities planned, including those using tools, will be risk assessed by the Forest School leader.

All tools will be kept clean and fit for use; tools which are damaged or defective will not be used.

An inventory of all tools is kept to ensure they can be accounted for, and any lost or misplaced items identified.

If a member of staff, volunteer or pupil suffers an injury during the use of a tool, the activity will be suspended, and the injury will be handled in line with the First Aid Policy.

## **Materials**

Pupils will be encouraged to interact with the environment, which includes touching and moving materials, e.g. rocks and sticks safely and are warned about not ingesting poisonous plants and berries.

Pupils will be allowed to carry sticks, provided they are shorter than the length of their arm and they maintain a suitable distance from others when carrying the stick to avoid injury.

Staff will supervise and encourage pupils to work together to move larger materials, e.g. branches.

Pupils will be asked to return any materials to the environment before leaving the Forest School.

Staff will supervise all interactions with the natural world, e.g. climbing, and intervene where there is a substantial risk posed by the pupil to themselves or others.

Pupils will be taught about the importance of not damaging or defacing living nature, e.g. trees and plants, when interacting with the environment and its materials.

The Forest School leader will provide materials during sessions, e.g. rope, and encourage pupils to use them to interact with their environment.

## **Wildlife**

The Forest School leader will plan sessions in order to allow pupils to engage with wildlife as much as possible while considering safety at all times.

Pupils will be encouraged to discover and learn about the variety of wildlife that lives within the Forest School.

Pupils will be taught the importance of not disturbing natural habitats and respecting wildlife.

Staff, volunteers and pupils will be instructed by the Forest School leader about potential risks from local wildlife and the necessary precautions to take, e.g. how to spot and avoid stinging nettles and poisonous plants.

Pupils will only be allowed to get close to, touch, move or pick up plants or wildlife where it is safe to do so.

Instances of deliberate harm or damage to wildlife will be managed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Pupils will be instructed that they are not to consume any food they find, e.g. berries.

## **Fire**

Fires will only be lit in designated areas surrounded by a safe zone and under the direction of the Forest School leader. A suitably trained member of staff who is equipped to manage fire safety is on site at all times when fire is being taught about or is present.

### **Lighting fires**

The fire will only be lit once it is confirmed that all safety equipment, e.g. a sand bucket, is in place. The fire will be supervised by an adult at all times.

The fire will be created using safe fire-lighting equipment with no accelerants used. Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a sand bucket, will be located nearby in the event of an emergency.

### **Cooking at a campfire**

The Forest School leader will consider what food can be cooked and eaten by pupils using the fire, with any allergies of staff and pupils considered in addition to other dietary requirements. The forest school leader will ensure that food is transported and stored safely, e.g. ensuring meat is chilled.

Food that is to be eaten by pupils will be inspected by a member of staff to ensure it is fit for consumption, e.g. it is thoroughly cooked.

## Extinguishing fires

Safe means of extinguishing the fire, e.g. a sand bucket, will be located nearby in the event of an emergency. A fire blanket will be available at all times.

The Forest School leader will ensure the fire is extinguished safely before the session ends. The fire will be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased. Whenever possible, all fuels will be burnt off to ash.

## Fire safety

Fire areas will be surrounded by logs at least **1.5 metres** from the fire pit. The logs represent the campfire boundary. Seating on tarpaulins will be organised around the outside of the fire boundary. Once seated around the campfire, staff will ensure that pupils remain seated until directed to move.

When the campfire is in use, pupils will not be permitted to access the area without permission. Activities taking place near to the fire involving pupils, e.g. cooking, are supervised at a ratio of **1:2**.

If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke will be avoided. If wind direction is variable, staff will rearrange seating where possible. Pupils will be advised on how to handle fire smoke in an appropriate way, e.g. by turning their head to one side, covering their face and closing their eyes. Asthma sufferers will be seated in positions well away from the line of smoke.

The Forest School leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.

Participants working with the fire will ensure that long hair is tied back and loose clothing is fastened and secured.

Appropriate arrangements will be made for pupils with SEND within their Personal Education Plan on how to approach and deal with campfires.

## Clothing

The headteacher will communicate to parents at least **one week** in advance of Forest School sessions the pupils' clothing requirements.

Clothing requirements are subject to change and weather dependent but will include the following:

- Long sleeved t-shirt
- Trousers
- Waterproof trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Wellington boots
- Trainers
- Sunhat
- Winter gear, e.g. fleece jacket, leggings, gloves

Pupils will bring their clothes in a named bag to minimise the risk of misplacing or losing items. In order to make Forest School accessible to all pupils, the school will ensure spare clothing in multiple sizes is available to be lent to disadvantaged pupils where necessary.

Clothing and footwear appropriate to the Forest School environment, activity and weather will be worn at all times. Pupils will not take part in Forest School activities if they do not have the appropriate clothing and the school is unable to provide its own; alternative arrangements will be put in place for the pupil.

Clothing will be worn to suit the weather; in cases of severe weather, the Forest School leader will decide if it is safe for the session to begin or continue. Parents/carers will be asked to provide sun lotion for pupils where necessary.

## Toilet and hygiene facilities

Pupils will be encouraged to use the toilet at school before the Forest School session begins. Any accidents will be managed in line with the school's Intimate Care Policy.

Pupils using the toilet will only be supervised by a member of staff where necessary and not by volunteers. Anti-bacterial wipes or hand sanitiser will be available to allow pupils to clean their hands when necessary. Clean drinking water will be supplied.

## **Behaviour**

Pupils will be informed of their behaviour expectations and that poor behaviour may result in them being unable to participate in the Forest School. The Forest School leader will establish set rules which are repeated during each session in order to promote pupils' ability to explore independently while keeping safe and behaving appropriately.

Positive behaviour, e.g. teamwork and consideration for others, will be promoted through planned activities. All staff will model good behaviour, e.g. co-operation and caring for the environment, during Forest School activities. Pupils will be made aware that positive behaviour, e.g. displaying respect for the environment, means they will be trusted to explore and lead sessions with greater independence.

Challenging behaviour is managed in line with the Behaviour Policy. Challenging behaviour will initially be dealt with by one-to-one adult support, where possible, to identify its cause. Pupils persistently displaying challenging behaviour or acting in a manner that places themselves or others at risk of harm, will not be allowed to participate in the rest of the Forest School session; they will be escorted away and supervised away from other pupils.

The headteacher will decide if it is necessary to exclude a pupil indefinitely from Forest School activities due to persistent breaches of the Behaviour Policy.

## **Inclusivity**

Forest School activities will be planned in line with the school's SEND Policy to ensure that pupils with SEND can participate as much as possible.

The headteacher will liaise with the SENCO and the parents/carers of pupils with SEND to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.

The headteacher will liaise with the school nurse and the parents/carers of pupils with medical conditions or allergies to identify and assess any additional individual needs for consideration prior to Forest School activities.

The headteacher will identify if the location poses accessibility issues to any pupils and whether any accessibility means will be required, e.g. accessibility ramps.

Pupils with SEND will be provided with supervision during Forest School activities where required; this supervision will not count towards other relevant staffing ratios.

A variety of materials will be used that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping.

Sensitivity to the religious and cultural beliefs of pupils will be displayed at all times, e.g. in regard to their clothing or foods they may not wish to eat.

All pupils will be encouraged to participate and will be made to feel that their experiences and contributions are valued in order to build their confidence and self-esteem.

## **Incidents and emergencies**

At least **one** trained first aider will be present during all Forest School activities.

The Forest School leader will create and explain to staff and pupils the procedures to be followed in the event of an incident, e.g. the area where all pupils are to gather in order to be easily supervised.

The Forest School leader will carry a fully stocked first-aid kit at all times during Forest School sessions. All incidents, injuries and illnesses will be managed in line with the First Aid Policy.

Staff will be aware of any allergies pupils may have and carry suitable medication, e.g. an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) as part of the first aid kit.

Staff will carry mobile phones to be able to contact each other.

In the event of a missing pupil, staff will gather all pupils together at an agreed point. Two adults will supervise the group while the remaining staff conduct a search of the area and call the missing pupil's name.

In the event of an injury, staff will provide immediate assistance and a trained first aider will remain with the injured person until the situation is resolved.

The Forest School leader will assess injuries and decide if further medical attention is needed; the emergency services will be contacted immediately where necessary.









Sharp branches and thorns	Children and Staff	Children to be aware of any dangers. Any cuts or injuries to be dealt with on site. Larger cuts/serious injuries to be dealt with in school. Severe injuries 999 to be called via the school office. All injuries must be logged in the accident book.									
Small tools - potato peelers, knives and saws	Children and staff	Safety talks given and repeated. Do not give children tools until all children know how to use tools safely. Ensure you are working with a small group only, no more than 5. Children must be closely supervised. ALL tools must be kept in a locked box.									
Larger tools	Children and staff	Safety talks given and repeated. Only used by an adult. Children watching from an appropriate distance. ALL tools must be kept in a locked box.									

Fire lighting and campfire	Children and staff	<p>Before children can be around a lit fire, they must practise all safety and fire circle rules. Safety talks given prior to lighting each fire with reminder of fire circle rules. Children asked to repeat rules to ensure they have understood them.</p> <p>Fire circle laid out with clear boundaries, children to only enter the fire circle when invited by an adult. Water is always available before fire is lit.</p> <p>Gauntlets used when dealing with fire.</p> <p>Children to sit on logs/seats whilst fire is lit. Only FS leaders to light fires with children.</p> <p>No fires to be lit on windy days.</p>									
Cooking food	Children and Staff	<p>Any food cooked will be under close supervision with adult cooking the food and adults must ensure it is cooled before the children eat it.</p>									

# The 10 Commandments of Forest School

1. Listen to instructions.
2. Make safe choices
3. Be kind and include our friends - Love your neighbour!
4. Help each other - Love your neighbour!
5. Wear the right clothing.
6. Be aware of the weather.
7. Look after God's trees and the forest school site.
8. Be respectful of God's wildlife.
9. Stay safe around the fire and in the fire circle.
10. Challenge ourselves and have fun in God's creation.



'Love Your Neighbour'



