

Health & Safety Policy



We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Rationale:

Forest school sessions offer learning opportunities for children and young people. Part of their purpose is to encourage participants to face new challenges and to learn to take reasonable risks. In order to do that safely, the adults involved must know their role and ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out regularly and thoroughly. Risks can rarely be eliminated entirely, but they can be reduced to a minimum without unduly limiting opportunities for children to explore and learn.

Objectives.

- To identify the roles of those involved in Muddy Bugs Forest School, with respect to Health & Safety.
- To identify safety procedures so that they can be carried out effectively and without difficulty.
- To identify suitable and sufficient risk assessment processes to ensure that risks are adequately controlled.
- To develop effective communication systems throughout Muddy Bugs Forest School.
- To ensure that all those involved in Muddy Bugs Forest School are aware of all relevant Health & Safety documents.
- To develop effective inspection/monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with Local Authority Health & Safety requirements.

Health and Safety Organisation.

Statement of Aims.

Muddy Bugs Forest School sessions offer learning opportunities for children up to 5 years old. Part of their purpose is to encourage participants to face new challenges and learn to take reasonable risks. In order to do that safely, the adults involved must know their role and ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out regularly and thoroughly. The following guidance for adults and children must be clearly understood by all concerned.

The Legal Framework.

(Health & Safety At Work Act 1974 and Regulations 1992)

Employers must:-

1. Assess the risk of activities.
2. Introduce measures to control those risks.
3. Tell the leaders and volunteers concerned about the measures they have introduced.

Volunteers must:-

1. Take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety.
2. Co-operate with the Muddy Bugs Forest School leaders over health and safety matters.
3. Carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions.
4. Inform the Muddy Bugs Forest School leaders of any serious risks.

Responsibilities:

- **Forest School Leader**

Muddy Bugs Forest School staff have the overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the session.

The staff should:-

- Follow the health and safety guidelines and policies.
- Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment.
- Clearly define each leaders'/volunteer's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned.
- Be familiar with the site.
- Be aware of child protection issues.
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision is available.
- Undertake the planning and preparation for the visit, including briefing group members.
- Review activities and advise each other where adjustments may be necessary.
- Ensure that parents are aware of what the visit involves via the booking form.
- Observe the guidance for forest school leaders and other adults.

➤ **Additional Adults/Volunteers**

Other adults should be clear in their roles and responsibilities.

They must:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group.
- Not be left in sole charge of children. Follow the instructions of the forest school leader and teacher adults and help with the control and discipline.
- Speak to the leader/adults if concerned about the health and safety of children at any time during the visit.
- Observe the guidance for teachers and adults.

➤ **Children**

Muddy Bugs staff must make it clear to children that they must:

- Follow the instructions of the leader and any other adults.
- Look out for anything which might be a threat and tell an adult about it.

Attendance at Forest School by children and young people whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger (to themselves or to the group) will be reviewed, and strategies put in place to allow them to participate wherever possible.

➤ **Parents**

Muddy Bugs Forest School Leaders should:

- Tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the session.
- Invite parents to support Forest School sessions as a volunteer if they wish.

Parents will need to:

- Provide emergency contact numbers on the information sheet at time of booking.
- Sign a consent form.
- Give Muddy Bugs staff information about the child's emotional, psychological and physical health.

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Supervision

Baby and Toddler sessions

During Forest School sessions, children will be fully supervised by their parents/guardian. Two Muddy Bugs Forest School leaders will be present and there may be additional volunteers too. Volunteers who wish to help at the sessions will be taken through the Muddy Bugs Forest School Induction Pack and participate in a health and safety briefing session. Although Muddy Bugs Forest School adults are not left alone with children and young people, it is essential that adults who regularly help as volunteers are police checked. Usually, a group will be no larger than fifteen children and an appropriate ratio of adults to children will be observed as parents/guardians are staying for the duration of the sessions.

The Shelter

Where possible a shelter will be constructed within a Forest School site. This will be both sturdy and waterproof and will be regularly checked for stability and safety.

Firesite

There are designated areas for firesites at Herons Wey, Muddy Bugs Forest School's site. Seating will be arranged for the children to sit on at a safe distance from any fires lit. The children and young people will be encouraged to always walk around the outside of the designated area, and they will not approach any fires unless specifically supervised to do so. Water will always be available to safely extinguish fires and the fire site will be designed to reduce the risk of any spread of fire.

Toilets/Hand washing

There are two toilets at Muddy Bugs Forest School sites (in Alders cabin). Children and adults can use the toilets. However, sessions only last a maximum of 90 minutes and in practice most complete the session without the need to go. There are no baby changing facilities available, and parents are asked to take all nappies and wipes away with them. There is running water available within the toilet block, but for each Forest School session there will be a container of water on site. Hand wash, towels and antiseptic wipes will also be available.

First Aid Both Level 3 qualified Muddy Bugs staff have the relevant first aid training and a First Aid Kit, along with relevant emergency equipment, which will always be readily accessible. There will also be a mobile phone on site and in the event of a serious accident the emergency procedures will be followed.

Vegetation

The areas of woodlands used are checked for toxic plants and participants will be instructed not to pick or eat any plants. Areas of nettles, brambles and other potentially harmful plants will be cut regularly to open up areas for access, but some areas will be left uncut to support dependant wildlife.

Using Tools/Lighting Fires

Participants will only be involved in using sharp tools/fire when the Forest School Leader deems that they are confident and competent at working in the woods. When tools such as penknives and small saws are used the younger participants will always be appropriately supervised. Fires will only be lit in the designated areas and again the participants will be appropriately supervised.

Proper instructions will have been given to the adult and child, and safety issues discussed prior to the use of any tools. Where appropriate, participants will use safety and protective gear such as gloves etc.

Risk Assessment

A full and comprehensive site risk assessment will be done by the Muddy Bugs Forest School leaders and, if possible, in conjunction with a member of staff from Herons Wey. This risk assessment will be reviewed regularly. A visual check will be undertaken immediately prior to every session. Individual generic risk assessments will be used for the use of tools and some activities/actions. Individual activities will be risk assessed previously by the Muddy Bugs Forest School leaders. Ongoing risk assessments will take place at various times during a visit – this normally consists of judgements and decisions made as the need arises, which will then be recorded after the visit.

Risks can be minimised, but they cannot be eliminated altogether, and health and safety concerns need to be balanced against the potential benefits of any activity. Children, young people and adults will suffer the occasional bumps, cuts and bruises which are a part of everyday life. The application of common sense will ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be, whilst enjoying all the physical and intellectual challenges of Forest School!

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