

St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary and Nursery School



Forest School Health and Safety Handbook

Date: September 2025

Handbook produced by: Miss V Rees

To be reviewed: Termly

Declaration of Review

I have read and understood this Health and Safety Handbook:

<u>Date of review</u>	<u>Signed by</u>	<u>Comments</u>

Vision Statement

The aim of our Forest School is to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Our mission for St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School is to be a school with 'High expectations for all, in the Light of Christ'. All pupils will be given every opportunity to achieve their potential and encouraged to learn about and develop their hidden talents in order to reach high levels of achievement. All members of our school community will be fully equipped to meet all pupils' needs through appropriate professional development.

Forest School will help to achieve this by giving all pupils the opportunity to build on their different areas of development and challenge themselves in different ways.

Communication with all stakeholders

The school management team will all have copies of the Forest School Handbook as well as the termly and weekly Forest School plans so they are kept up-to-date with activities taking place.

Parents will be notified when their child will be going to Forest School and will be kept informed of activities taking place via Class Dojo and our school Facebook page.

The school office will be updated of any changes when Forest School is taking place through the Walkie Talkie or by mobile phone.

Neighbours will be notified of Forest School taking place at the beginning of each academic year to ensure they are aware that fires might be lit.

History of Forest School Area being used

The Forest School area being used has been a disused piece of land on the school site. It used to be used by the Nursery, many years ago, as their outside learning environment but this stopped when the nursery moved location in 2018. It was then decided in 2023 that this area would be suitable for the use of a Forest School and

so the area has been cleared and risk assessed in order to be used as our Forest School site.

Rules of Forest School

All staff and children attending Forest School must abide by the rules:

- Look after your Forest School
- Do not pick anything growing
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth
- Stay within the boundary gate
- Do not go across the Basecamp
- Hold small sticks by your side
- Put your thumb on the top of big stick and drag them on the floor
- For very big stick/logs, ask a friend to help
- No climbing the big oak tree, the wall or the fencing

'No Lick, No Pick, Stop at Boundary, Look after our Forest!'

The Countryside Code:

There are five sections of The Countryside Code dedicated to helping us learn how to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside:

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Session Procedures and Forest School Routines

- A safety sweep will be carried out by the Forest School Leader whilst the children are getting ready for Forest School inside the classroom.
- The children will walk down to the Forest School site in single file, following the Forest School Leader.
- Outside the gate to the Forest School site we will make a circle, do 'sticky elbow' activity to count how many we have attending this Forest School session.
- As we enter the Forest School site, we will sit around Basecamp.
- Reminder of the Forest School Rules
- Explain activity
- Children to complete activity
- Come back to Basecamp for snack
- Complete a mindfulness activity
- Ensure Forest School site is tidy
- Reflection time
- Children will stand around Basecamp and lead off in a line back to class with adults
- Forest School Leader will be at the back of line to do final check and evaluation of session

Legislation to be considered

As a Forest School Leader, I have a duty of care and therefore certain pieces of legislation and policies that need to be considered to keep our children safe:

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The objectives are to raise the standards of safety and health for all persons at work and to ensure the safety of all equipment used in the workplace and protect the client group whose safety and health may be put at risk by the activities of the persons at work.

Everyone at Forest School is under our duty of care and all staff are briefed and have to sign the Health and Safety Handbook and appropriate risk assessment are completed.

Children Act 1989

This Act brings together most private and public law about children, including ratios for offsite activities, equal opportunities, communication with parents and police checks for staff and volunteers.

As our Forest School is on the school site, ratios will still be the same as if in the classroom. Parents will all be notified of the children attending Forest School and will be kept updated of their activities via Class Dojo and the School Facebook page. All children will be given equal opportunities to be able to attend Forest School.

Liability Insurance

It is a statutory requirement to have liability insurance and to inform the insurance company of activities including the use of tools and fire lighting.

Please see a copy of our Insurance certificate and statement from the insurance company, informing us that our insurance includes these activities under **'Insurance Requirements'**.

Please see links to related School Policies in **'Appendices'**.

Essential Equipment List

- Register with emergency numbers/contact numbers
- Medical forms and medication
- Mobile phone
- Walkie Talkie
- Newspaper
- Fire lighter
- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- Green First Aid kit bag
- Sun cream
- Scissors
- Water bottle with water for drinking and washing
- Thermal wrap sheet
- Carry bag for dirty/wet clothing

Clothing List

Every child and member of staff must wear long sleeves, long trousers and enclosed shoes.

Dependant on season:

- Woolly hat/sun hat
- Gloves
- Jacket/Waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Spare socks
- Stout shoes/wellies/boots
- An emergency change of clothes and a carrier bag for dirty/wet clothes

Forest School Kit

- Emergency rucksack with essential equipment
- Trugs x4
- Bug pots x10
- Buckets x6
- Soft toys set
- Flora and Fauna identification cards
- Magnifiers x4
- Binoculars x2
- Spades x4
- Small gloves x6
- Tarpaulin x3 with poles and pegs
- Mud kitchen pots and pans
- Double sided sticky card
- Sorting trays
- Water buckets

Sun Policy

- Ensure the children have plenty of fresh drinking water on site,
- Children are wearing caps or hats
- They have sun cream on
- There is plenty of shade or if not erect a tarpaulin to create shade
- Time outside is kept to a minimum

Travel Policy

The children will leave the classroom and will walk across the Reception playground to the Forest School Site. If the children were to leave the premises then the school's standard risk assessment will be put in place.

Medical Information form

All school medical forms and medication will be taken out in Forest School Rucksack.

Risk Assessment and Risk Benefits Analysis

Please see separate Risk Assessment and Risk Benefits Analysis including risk assessments for general site, tools, fire, cooking and den building.

General Rules for Tools Use:

- All tools must have an individual risk assessment (see separately).
- Safe storage in a locked shed at site with Forest School Leader access and responsibility.
- Never walk around with tools.
- Always make sure they are clean and sharp before using them.
- When using tools with children it should only be with Forest School Leader.
- When using tools, you must be seated in the designated tool area.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

If there is a change in situation, the risk assessment will be modified accordingly and school walkie talkie's will be used to communicate this change to the school office who would then inform the Senior Management Team. Any changes in situation will then be recorded in the Health and Safety folder. If there is an injury to the Forest School Leader, another member of staff will use the walkie talkie to contact the office for assistance and then safely lead the children back to class.

Procedures for:

Minor Accident – an adult will treat accident using first aid bag.

Major Accident – an adult to contact school office using walkie talkie and the Forest School Leader to ring 999 and use Emergency Laminated Card. The rest of the children will be taken back to the classrooms with the other adult.

Evacuation of site – children and adults will all exit via the Year 3 and 4 playground in a quiet and organised manor.

Fire in Forest School – all children and staff will go to fire safety points on Year 3 and 4 playground Forest School Leader will walkie talkie to school office.

Fire onsite – all children and staff will go to fire safety points on Year and 4 playground as normal.

Missing child – all children will and staff to safely go back to the classrooms, Forest School Leader to ring and inform the school office, another adult to walk around site to locate missing child.

Lockdown – all children and staff will enter back into the school building via nearest door using fobs which all staff members will have.

Emergency Laminated Card will be attached to emergency rucksack:

Emergency Details

Setting: St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School

Phone Number: 01843 585555

Address: Dane Park Road, Ramsgate, CT11 7LS

What 3 Words:

In the event of an emergency – contact school office, call 999 and give information above.

Safety Sweep Evidence

Before each Forest School session there will be a safety sweep of the Forest School site to look for and assess immediate risks. All safety sweeps will be recorded and filed by the Forest School Leader.

Safety sweeps will be recorded and stored in the Health and Safety folder:

Date:	Time:	Weather:
Forest School Leader:		
Checklist:	Yes/No:	Comments:
Fallen branches		
Low branches		
Protruding thorns		
Brambles/nettles		
Slippery areas		
Animal droppings		
Trip hazards		
Rubbish		
Broken glass/needles		
Vandalism/intruders		
Weather effects		
Standing water		
Boundary fence safe		
Basecamp safe		
Tools safe		
Emergency rucksack		
Equipment ready		
Spare clothes		
Other hazards identified:		
Action Taken:		
Signature:		

Designated Person Responsibility

The role of the Forest School Leader is to plan, run and evaluate every Forest School session and is the first point of call for any First Aid.


Each Assistant at the Forest School sessions will also be First Aid trained and will have a designated responsibility for each Forest School session.

Toileting Considerations

Children will be able to use the school toilets as normal as it would be the same as if the children were at play time and so do not need adult supervision unless a large group needs to go to the toilet. This will, therefore, not have an impact on ratios.

Insurance Requirements

Please see below a copy of the school's insurance certificate which states we have full cover:



CERTIFICATE OF EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY INSURANCE (a)
(Where required by regulation 5 of the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (the Regulations), one or more copies of this certificate must be displayed at each place of business at which the policy holder employs persons covered by the policy)

1. Name of policy holder Policy No Y143005QBE0126A
The Governing Body for Time-Being of St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School, Ramsgate

2. Date of commencement of insurance policy 01 January 2026

3. Date of expiry of insurance policy 31 December 2026

We hereby certify that subject to paragraph 2:

1. the policy to which this certificate relates satisfies the requirements of the relevant law applicable in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, Island of Jersey, Island of Guernsey, Island of Alderney, or any offshore installations in territorial waters around Great Britain and its Continental Shelf (b); and,

2. (a) the minimum amount of cover provided by this policy is no less than £5 million (c); or
(b) ~~the cover provided under this policy relates to claims in excess of (£) but not exceeding (£).~~

3. the policy covers the holding company and all its subsidiaries

Signed on behalf of QBE UK Limited (Authorised Insurer)

J. Harris

Notes

(a) Where the employer is a company to which regulation 3(2) of the Regulations applies, the certificate shall state in a prominent place, either that the policy covers the holding company and all its subsidiaries, or that the policy covers the holding company and all its subsidiaries except any specifically excluded by name, or that the policy covers the holding company and only the named subsidiaries.

(b) Specify applicable law as provided for in regulation 4(d) of the Regulations.

(c) See regulation 3(1) of the Regulations and delete whichever of paragraphs 2(a) or 2(b) does not apply. Where 2(b) is applicable, specify the amount of cover provided by the relevant policy.

Important
Display will be satisfied if the certificate is made available in electronic form and each relevant employee to whom it relates has reasonable access to it in that form.
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Registration Number 200942

This statement from our Insurance Provider:

'We can advise that the school's Public Liability policy, arranged by KCC, provides legal liability cover in the event of injury, loss or damage to third parties (including school pupils) or their property resulting from a negligent act, error or omission on the part of the school and its staff whilst undertaking school business activities. For any school arranged undertakings/activities, general insurance policy terms require (1) these comply with all regulations imposed by any competent authority, e.g. Health & Safety, and (2) that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent or minimise accident, injury, loss or damage.

With regards to the proposed forest school activities, no doubt you will be/will have undertaken a full risk assessment before formalising any arrangements. The school must also ensure any staff member(s) leading the forest school activities holds appropriate qualifications/has been suitably trained to lead those activities in order to satisfy the general insurance policy terms.

Note the above advice relates to the school delivering the forest school activities. If a third party provider were to be used and/or any other bodies/organisations become involved/assist the school with such activities we would

expect them to hold appropriate Public Liability cover for their and others' protection. KCC recommends this cover should be for a minimum indemnity of £5m each and every claim. Should a future activity of this nature be offsite/off school grounds, it would be prudent to ensure that the landowner has appropriate insurance cover in place to cover their liability in the event of injury, loss or damage as a result of their negligence.'

Ecological Impact and 3 Year Plan

The Forest School sessions can have an ecological impact on the flora and fauna and can cause wear and tear to the site, as well as footfall disturbing the surrounding wildlife.

The use of fire on site will be limited to the fire pit area and the use of a Kelly kettle where the fire is completely enclosed within a metal base so this will not impact significantly on the site.

There are no fauna sets or nests living on site. The likely impacts of the project will not impact significantly on any natural habitats.

Information collated for the environmental impact assessment gives a clear indication of some management activities which could enhance the garden and contribute to its long-term sustainability.

Impacts of programme and mitigation measures:

Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Trampling impact to ground flora	Use pathways already established in woodland, especially during spring. Identify any vulnerable areas and avoid them.
Disturbance/habitat destruction of flora and fauna	Make participants aware of the environment they are in and how to treat it in terms of handling plants and animals and using natural resources. No ground level habitats.
Overuse of fire area/shelter area	If ground is becoming trampled/compacted move these to other areas. If any further Forest School sessions take place rotate the fire circle and shelter locations.
Use of natural materials for activities	Only what is required will be taken where there is abundance of that resource

Possible Positive Impacts:

Further establishing footpaths and improved access – The footpaths have become trampled in places making the woodland harder to use. The Forest School leader will ensure that alternative access paths are identified and ensure there are no unacceptable health and safety risks.

Litter picking – Removing litter from areas will take away a threat to wildlife as well as making the school more aesthetically attractive.

Improved habitats – Forest School sessions might involve positive habitat effects. This could be extended through forest schools activities.

3 Year Sustainability Plan

<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Photographic log	Photographic log	Photographic log
Clear areas	Check areas	Establish extended site
Establish a base camp	Bring in more natural resources	Bring in more natural resources
Planting – wild flowers, willow	Management of areas	Management of areas
Bring in natural resources	Development of animal habitats	Development of animal habitats
Tools/resources needed	More planting	Check/clear areas
Mindfulness/quiet area	Start extending area	Move areas

Covid Protocols

Up to date Government guidelines will be followed.

Please note where hand sanitiser is recommended, children must wash their hands in running water first.

Appendices

Links to School Policies on our School website:

Behaviour: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-behaviour-policy/>

Equality: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-equality-objectives-1/>

Health and Safety: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-health-safety-policy/>

Safeguarding: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/school-security-procedure-for-dealing-with-abusive/> <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-child-protection-policy-including-online-safet/>

Bullying: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-anti-bullying-policy/>

First Aid: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-first-aid-policy/>

GDPR: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-gdpr-policy/>

Lockdown: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-lockdown-policy/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing-policy/>

Administration of medicines: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-administration-of-medicines-policy/>

Critical incidents: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-critical-incident-policy/>

DBS: <https://www.stethelbertsschool.co.uk/ste-employment-of-ex-offenders-policy/>