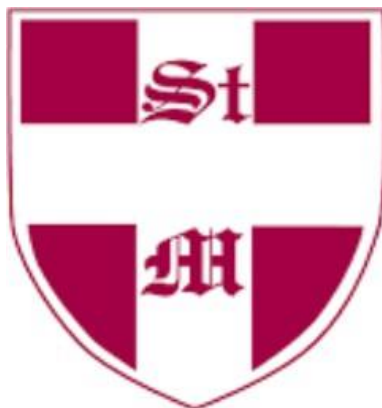


St. Michael Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Forest School Health And Safety Policy



"I came so that you may have life, life in all its fullness" John 10:10

St Michael Catholic Primary School and Nursery is a Catholic family of faith following the teachings of Christ. We strive to create an environment where all members of our school community respect the values of: Church, Independence, Resilience, Caring, Learning and Enjoyment for all. Belief in these values will nurture all as individuals and instil in them the confidence to meet their full potential, providing them with the best grounding for their future place in an ever-changing world.

Policy Date	September 2026
Signed by Head Teacher	Mrs N Collins
Review Date	September 2027

Policy Statement

Forest School is an integral part of the outdoor learning provision at St Michael Catholic Primary and Nursery School. It offers pupils opportunities to develop confidence, resilience, independence, problem-solving skills, teamwork and respect for the natural world.

The safety and wellbeing of all participants is paramount. This policy outlines the procedures and expectations necessary to ensure Forest School activities are carried out safely whilst providing pupils with meaningful opportunities to take appropriate risks, explore, learn and thrive.

Contents

- The Site
 - Ground Rules
 - Risk Assessments
 - Tool Use
 - Shelter Building
 - Fire Safety
 - Essential Equipment and Resources
 - Communication with Parents
 - Inclusion
 - Environmental Responsibility
 - Legislation
 - Insurance
 - Emergency Procedures
 - Monitoring and Review
 - Responsibilities of the Forest School Leader
-

1. The Site

The Forest School site should provide a safe and stimulating environment for learning.

The following considerations apply:

Boundaries

The Forest School area must have clearly defined boundaries. Children must be shown the boundaries at the beginning of each session and understand where they are permitted to explore.

Water Hazards

Where possible, open water should not be accessible within the Forest School area. Any water hazards must be identified and managed through risk assessment.

Trees, Dead Wood and Low Branches

The site must be checked regularly for:

- Dead branches
- Fallen trees
- Damaged vegetation
- Hanging limbs

Additional checks should take place following periods of strong winds, storms, snow or severe weather.

Poisonous Plants and Fungi

Children should be taught never to eat anything they find within the woodland area unless specifically instructed by a trained adult.

Pupils should be reminded not to pick plants, berries or fungi.

Insects

Areas should be checked for signs of wasps, bees, ants and other insect nests.

Where nests are identified, areas should be isolated and activities adapted accordingly.

Tick Awareness

Children should be reminded to report any bites or concerns to adults.

Parents should be encouraged to check children for ticks following Forest School sessions.

Seasonal Changes

The site will naturally change throughout the year.

Leaders should be aware of changing conditions including:

- Mud
- Ice
- Snow
- Increased vegetation growth
- Fallen leaves
- Wet ground

Risk assessments should be updated to reflect seasonal conditions.

Environmental Sustainability

The site should be used sustainably.

Different areas should be utilised where appropriate to prevent damage and allow the environment to recover naturally.

Natural Shelter

Natural features such as trees and bushes should be retained where possible to provide shelter from the elements.

Stumbling Hazards

Site inspections should identify:

- Litter
- Exposed roots
- Holes

- Uneven surfaces

Children should be taught how to move safely within a natural environment.

2. Ground Rules

Forest School is a child-centred learning environment. However, clear expectations are necessary to ensure safety.

Children should understand:

Boundaries

- Where they are allowed to go.
- The limits of the Forest School site.

Fire Safety

- Fire rules apply at all times.
- Fire areas must be respected whether a fire is lit or not.

General Safety

Children should:

- Be aware of themselves and others.
- Use tools only as instructed.
- Return tools to the designated storage area after use.
- Look above, below and around for hazards.
- Think about the consequences of their actions.
- Avoid horseplay.
- Stop immediately when instructed by an adult.
- Respect trees, plants and wildlife.
- Never eat anything found in the woodland.
- Wash hands before eating.

Additional guidance may include:

- Dragging rather than carrying large sticks.
 - Asking permission before leaving the group.
 - Seeking adult support when using tools.
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3. Risk Assessments

The Forest School environment requires both site-specific and activity-specific risk assessments.

These risk assessments must:

- Identify potential hazards.
- Assess levels of risk.
- Identify control measures.
- Be reviewed regularly.

A safety sweep of the area must be undertaken before each session.

Particular attention should be given to:

- Weather conditions
- Fallen branches
- Site condition
- Litter
- Activity-specific risks

Risk assessments should be adapted to meet the needs of different groups, activities and environmental conditions.

4. Tool Use

Tools provide valuable opportunities for skill development when used safely.

Tool safety must be taught explicitly and reinforced regularly.

Tool Area

A designated tool area should be clearly identified to prevent unnecessary movement around those using tools.

Expectations

Children should:

- Follow instructions carefully.
- Use tools only when authorised.
- Maintain a safe working space.
- Store tools safely after use.

Tool use should always be supervised by trained adults.

Tool Maintenance

All tools must:

- Be stored securely.
- Be cleaned after use.
- Be kept sharp and fit for purpose.
- Be checked regularly for damage.

Blunt tools can present additional risks and should be maintained appropriately.

5. Shelter Building

Shelter building provides opportunities for teamwork, creativity and problem-solving.

When building shelters:

- Suitable materials should be used.
- Structures must be stable.
- Rope and cord should be secured safely.

- Hazardous trip points should be avoided.
- Shelters should be checked regularly for safety.

Children should be taught simple knot tying and safe construction techniques.

6. Fire Safety

Fire activities will only take place when led and supervised by suitably trained adults and supported by appropriate risk assessments.

The fire area must be clearly identified.

Children will be taught:

- How to behave safely around a fire.
- Fire circle routines.
- How to move around the fire area.
- What to do in an emergency.

A supply of water and appropriate fire safety equipment must always be available.

Fires must be extinguished by an adult and checked thoroughly before leaving the site.

7. Essential Equipment and Resources

The following resources should be available:

- Parental consent information
- Emergency contacts
- Mobile phone
- First aid kit
- Emergency shelter
- Seating area
- Fire safety equipment

- Water supply
- Clean tools
- Spare waterproof clothing
- Spare wellington boots
- Spare hats, gloves and socks
- Waste bags
- Handwashing supplies

First Aid

At least one appropriately trained first aider with outdoor first aid training should be present or immediately available during Forest School sessions.

8. Communication with Parents

Parents and carers should receive information regarding:

- Forest School aims and activities
- Appropriate clothing
- Footwear requirements
- Medical information
- Consent arrangements
- Photographs and media permissions

Parents should be informed of the importance of:

- Appropriate outdoor clothing
 - Weather-dependent equipment
 - Tick checks following sessions
 - Safe management of minor bites and scratches
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9. Inclusion

Forest School activities are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all pupils.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to support pupils with:

- SEND
- Medical needs
- Physical disabilities
- Emotional needs
- Additional vulnerabilities

Activities will be adapted where necessary whilst maintaining meaningful opportunities for participation, challenge and success.

10. Environmental Responsibility

Forest School promotes stewardship of God's creation.

Children are encouraged to:

- Respect living things.
- Care for natural environments.
- Minimise waste.
- Protect wildlife.
- Develop an understanding of sustainability.
- Appreciate the beauty and value of the natural world.

These principles support our Catholic commitment to caring for creation.

11. Legislation

This policy operates in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

- Children Act 1989
 - Children Act 2004
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children
 - Forest School Association guidance
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12. Insurance

All Forest School activities must be appropriately covered by the school's insurance arrangements.

13. Emergency Procedures

Emergency procedures will be clearly communicated to all adults involved.

Staff should:

- Carry emergency contact information.
- Have access to a mobile phone.
- Follow first aid procedures.
- Contact emergency services where necessary.
- Inform school leadership promptly.

For serious incidents, school safeguarding and emergency procedures should be followed immediately.

14. Monitoring and Review

The Forest School Leader and Senior Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy through:

- Regular site inspections
- Review of risk assessments
- Evaluation of incidents and near misses
- Staff feedback
- Pupil voice
- Equipment checks
- Annual policy review

Monitoring ensures that Forest School provision remains safe, high quality and effective.

15. Responsibilities of the Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader is responsible for ensuring that:

- Appropriate staffing levels are in place.
- The site has been inspected before each session.
- Risk assessments are completed and reviewed.
- Equipment is safe and fit for purpose.
- Staff understand safety procedures.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed.
- Emergency arrangements are in place.
- Resources are maintained appropriately.
- Sessions are planned and delivered safely.

The designated Forest School Lead at St Michael Catholic Primary and Nursery School is:

Ms Justyna Jung

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if changes to legislation, guidance, risk assessments or school practice require it.

Forest School at St Michael Catholic Primary and Nursery School provides children with valuable opportunities to learn, explore and grow within a safe, supportive and inspiring outdoor environment.