

# Our Nature Garden Handbook



Handbook created by  
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# Forest School Association Principles

These principles were first articulated by the Forest School Community in 2002. They were reviewed in 2011 and sent out for a 5-month consultation to Forest School networks and practitioners in all UK nations. They were published on the Institute for Outdoor Learning Forest School SIG page in Feb 2012, and in the minutes of the GB trainers' network.

FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.

FS aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

At Forest School all participants are viewed as:

equal, unique and valuable

competent to explore & discover

entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge

entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development

entitled to experience regular success

entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people

entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at: <https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/>

# Our Forest School Approach to Learning in the Nature Garden

**outdoors**

holistic

PLAY

practical

nurture

challenge

discover

fun

EXPLORE

creative

independence

FLEXIBLE

all seasons

inclusive

appropriate risk

child centred

regular sessions

# Our Wild Wembeeles Ethos



F  
Freedom

O  
Outdoors

R  
Repetition

E  
Explore & Play

S  
Self - Esteem

T  
Taking Risks

S  
Senses

C  
Creativity

H  
Holistic

O  
Ownership

O  
Observe

L  
Learn by Doing



# As Wild Wembeeles We.....

**W**alk



**I**nteract with and respect nature












**L**ook after one another



**D**ecision make



## Personal Protective Equipment - PPE

Season	Personal Protective Equipment	Activity	Personal Protective Equipment
Spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*rainy weather - coat, hood/hat, wellies</li> <li>*waterproof jacket</li> <li>*waterproof trousers</li> <li>-protect from rain, wet cold / wet / warming up</li> </ul>	Forest School All Year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hair tied back</li> <li>Drinking water</li> <li>Wellies or old shoes</li> <li>First aid kit</li> <li>First aid gloves</li> </ul>  
Summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*cover arms</li> <li>*cover legs</li> <li>*sun hat / sun cream</li> <li>-protect from sun / heat</li> <li>warm / wet / sun / hot</li> </ul>	Gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child size gardening gloves</li> <li>Knelling mats</li> </ul>
Autumn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*rainy weather - coat, hood/hat, wellies</li> <li>*waterproof jacket</li> <li>*waterproof trousers</li> <li>-protect from rain, wet warm / cooling down / wet</li> </ul>	Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*child sized safety gloves</li> <li>*Safety goggles</li> <li>*Tool talk</li> </ul> 
Winter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*extra socks with footwear</li> <li>*warm hats / scarf / warm gloves</li> <li>*warm coat / ear muffs</li> <li>-protect from cold, rain cold / wet / freezing</li> </ul>		



# Activities

We can –

- \*build dens and shelters
- \*make mud pies in the mud kitchen
- \*watch frogs and newts
- \*create and look after habitats
- \*build walls and paint rocks
- \*find treasure
- \*weave willow and thread leaves
- \*bug hunts
- \*dig dig dig dig
- \*use tools
- \*tie knots
- \*sculpt clay pots
- \*build a boat
- \*name wild flowers
- \*bird watch
- \*hug-a-tree
- \*PLAY



# Our Wild Wembeeles Sessions

A blue tarp is pitched over a structure made of tree branches in a wooded area. In the background, there are more trees and a house with a red roof. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

- \*We will enter the area respectfully remembering to always walk
- \*We will gather in the seating area and listen to the safety talk
- \*We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a way that will not damage our natural environment
- \*We will decide and direct our own learning through our interests
- \*We can complete any activities suggested if we choose
- \*We will help to tidy up the area by returning resources safely
- \*We will leave the area with big smiles on our faces and happy hearts

# Observation and Recording

## Activities

- \*through children's ideas/interests
- \*through observations

## Media

- \*photographs using school ipad

## EYFS

- \*photographs using school ipad
- \*videos using school ipad
- \*Tapestry
- \*EYFS newsletter

## Display

- \*photos will be put on display – outside board
- \*some photos may go on our the website pages

# Our Special Site

- \*Our Forest School Leaders will check the area before every session
- \*We understand that we share our area with lots of different wildlife
- \* We must look after the area to allow the plants and animals to thrive
- \*We will wear wellies or old shoes
- \*We will always walk around the garden
- \*We can dig deep holes in the digging area
- \*We do not put our hands on our faces or fingers in our mouth
- \*We never lick or eat berries and leaves in the garden
- \*We always take our litter with us
- \*We will always wash our hands with soap after every session

## Risk Benefit Assessment - Site

The Hazard	What might happen?	Who is at risk?	Potential level of risk	Controls	Level of risk after controls	Benefits	Further Actions
ground level - uneven ground leaves on paths slippery mud	*Fall leading to bruising and/or minor cuts	children adults	High	*Safety talk at start of each session- always walk *Point out the hazards and get children to identify and understand is a hazard	Low	*Encourages children to be self-aware *Self risk assessing *Physical activity	*Reminders throughout each session to walk
ground level - soil	*Leading to skin irritation / soil getting in eyes	children adults	Medium	*Gardening gloves are available *If children or adults have skin irritations e.g. eczema, or cuts/abrasions, or are likely to have a suppressed immune system, then disposable gloves should be worn	Low	*Physical activity *Physical wellbeing *Attachment to nature	*Gardening gloves hanging on the washing line *Children to wash hands after every session
ground level - animal faeces	*Leading to Tetanus Toxmosis	children adults	Low	*If pupils come across buried animal faeces call site supervisor to remove *Site supervisor to dispose of *Wash hands, disinfect *Disinfect any tools	Low	*Educational opportunities on animal digestive system	*Site sweep carried out before each session
ground level - fungi	*Leading to possible poisoning	children adults	Low	*Forest school leader assess in safety sweep *Teach children not to touch any fungi	Low	*Gain knowledge and understanding of fungi and inedible plants	*Remind children not to put fingers in mouth *Children to wash hands after every session
field level - plants thorns nettles	*Stings and minor cuts *Allergic reaction , rash	children adults	Low	*Teach children to identify brambles, roses and nettles so they can avoid them independently *If scratched/stung/rash child will be sent to the welfare assistant in medical room	Low	*Gain knowledge and understanding of plants *Self-aware and identify hazards	*FSL will have medical list of known reactions *Most thorns/nettles removed, some left for wildlife habitat
shrub level - berries	*Leading to ingestion of inedible food causing vomiting	children adults	Medium	*As part of safety talk - explain that we do not put anything from the area into our mouths / do not put fingers in mouth	Low	*Gain knowledge and understanding of plants *Self-aware and identify hazards	*Children to wash hands after every session
canopy level - branches falling	*Branches falling leading to injuries of bruising and cuts to head/shoulders *Strong winds may blow down old branches	children adults	High	*Forest school leader assess in safety sweep *Assess throughout sessions *No sessions to take place when the winds are 5 or above on the Beaufort scale (19-24 mph)	Low	*Encourages children to be self-aware	*Site sweep carried out before each session
bees, wasps and insects	*Stings leading maybe to allergic reactions *Tick bite leading to Lime disease	children adults	High	*Leader must be aware of which child is allergic to the stings, particularly bee stings *If stung, child will be sent to the welfare assistant in medical room *Anaphylactic shock 999	Low	*Gain knowledge and understanding of how to interact with these important creatures	*Arms and legs should be covered in all seasons

# Rope, Sticks and Bricks!

- \*We use ropes and string to make dens and craft
- \*We can use rope to connect and transport branches
- \*We can lift, roll, drag, pull and push with our hands or with rope
- \*We drag long sticks behind us
- \*We think safety when we use rope, sticks and bricks
- \*We pick up stones and place them down carefully
- \*We lift objects safely with a straight back and bent knees
- \*We use both hands to lift a brick
- \*We look carefully where we are walking
- \*We return the rope to the rope box



## Risk Benefit Assessment – Rope, Sticks and Bricks

The Hazard	What might happen?	Who is at risk?	Potential level of risk	Controls	Level of risk after controls	Benefits	Further Actions
Rope/string tied between two objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Walking into slack rope at neck height could lead to suffocation</li> <li>*Getting caught on a part of the body</li> <li>*Tripping over leading to cuts, bruises, bumps, scratches</li> </ul>	children adults	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Main rule is don't run – always walk</li> <li>*Children instructed on how to identify hazards and risks of rope/string</li> <li>*Adult supervision with instruction about safety of taught and slack rope</li> <li>*Children instructed on how to tie correct knots in small groups</li> <li>*Simple, low rope play only</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Physical activity</li> <li>*Physical wellbeing</li> <li>*Social skills</li> <li>*Managing and judging own risks leading to resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children verbally reminded to think and look for hazards around them</li> <li>*Leader to ensure rope is taken down at the end of/after session</li> </ul>
String/rope getting tied around fingers/limbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children may injure themselves leading to fingers/limbs being restricted of movement</li> <li>*Child may injure another leading to fingers/limbs being restricted of movement</li> </ul>	children adults	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children instructed on how to identify hazards and risks of rope/string</li> <li>*Children instructed on how to tie correct knots in small groups</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Learn about materials – strength, flexibility</li> <li>*Managing and judging own risks leading to resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children verbally reminded to think and look for hazards around them</li> <li>*Leader to ensure rope/string is packed away at the end of/after session</li> </ul>
Carrying sticks and branches Carrying materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children may injure themselves leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps</li> <li>*Children may injure others leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps and cuts</li> </ul>	children adults	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children reminded of how to transport sticks</li> <li>*Instruct children to drag sticks along the ground or pointing to the ground</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Balance, co-ordination</li> <li>*Physical wellbeing</li> <li>*Self-aware</li> <li>*Managing and judging own risks leading to resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Leader to ensure large branches are returned to safe position at the end of/after session</li> </ul>
Building dens or other activities with materials on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Risk of injury from falling/bumping into/tripping during activity leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps and cuts</li> </ul>	children adults	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children reminded of how to transport sticks and other materials</li> <li>*Instruct children to walk slowly and look where their feet are stepping</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Physical activity</li> <li>*Physical wellbeing</li> <li>*social skills</li> <li>*Managing and judging own risks leading to resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Leader to ensure large branches are returned to safe position at the end of/after session</li> </ul>
Carrying and lifting bricks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children may injure themselves leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps</li> <li>*Children may injure others leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps and cuts</li> </ul>	children adults	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Children reminded of how to lift bricks – two hands</li> <li>*Adult models how to lift bricks</li> <li>*Instruct children to walk slowly and look where their feet are stepping</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Balance, co-ordination</li> <li>*Physical wellbeing</li> <li>*Self-aware</li> <li>*Managing and judging own risks leading to resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Leader to ensure bricks are in safe positions at the end of/after session</li> </ul>

- \*We remember that tools have rules
- \*Our Forest School Leaders will give us a safety talk every session
- \*We help to count the tools out and in
- \*We never wave a tool in the air, we point it to the ground
- \*We put the gardening tools in the little shed
- \*Our Forest School Leaders keep some tools in the locked shed
- \*We only use palm drills and peelers with the Forest School Leaders next to us
- \*We use the respect kneeling position with palm drills
- \*Our Forest School Leaders guide and support us when we use tools
- \*We help to keep the tools clean



# Terrific Tools

## Risk Benefit Assessment - Tools

The Hazard	What might happen?	Who is at risk?	Potential level of risk	Controls	Level of risk after controls	Benefits	Further Actions
Potato peeler	*Cuts and wounds to skin on limbs	children adults	Medium	*Only use with Forest School Leader. KS1 - 3:1 ratio KS2 6:1 ratio EYFS 1:1 ratio *Tool talk and safety talk before and during session *Potato peeler used in the designated area only *Glove on hand not holding the tool *Child sent to medical room immediately if there is an injury	Low	*Creative experiences using natural materials *Hand/eye co-ordination *Tool confidence *fine motor skills	*First aid kit in designated area *Peelers counted out and in *Peelers stored in a box with lid, locked away in a shed
Palm drill	*Cuts and wounds to skin on limbs	children adults	Medium	*Only use with Forest School Leader. KS1 - 3:1 ratio KS2 6:1 ratio EYFS 1:1 ratio *Tool talk and safety talk before and during session *Palm drill used in the designated area only *Child sent to medical room immediately if there is an injury	Low	*Creative experiences using natural materials *Hand/eye co-ordination *Tool confidence *fine motor skills	*First aid kit in designated area *Palm drills counted out and in *Palm drills stored in a box with lid, locked away in a shed
Spade and trowel	*Children may injure themselves leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps *Children may injure others leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps and cuts	children adults	Medium	*'Spade and trowel pointing to the ground - never in the air' *Tool talk and safety talk before and during session *Child sent to medical room immediately if there is an injury	Low	*Physical activity *Learning to work together *Attachment to nature *Feelings of emotional and physical wellbeing	*Children verbally reminded to think and look for hazards around them *Leader to ensure spades and trowels are packed away at the end of/after session
Rake and hoe	*Children may injure themselves leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps *Children may injure others leading to injuries of scratches, bruises, bumps and cuts	children adults	Medium	*'Rake and hoe pointing to the ground - never in the air' *Tool talk and safety talk before and during session *Child sent to medical room immediately if there is an injury	Low	*Physical activity *Learning to work together *Attachment to nature *Feelings of emotional and physical wellbeing	*Children verbally reminded to think and look for hazards around them *Leader to ensure rakes and hoes are packed away at the end of/after session



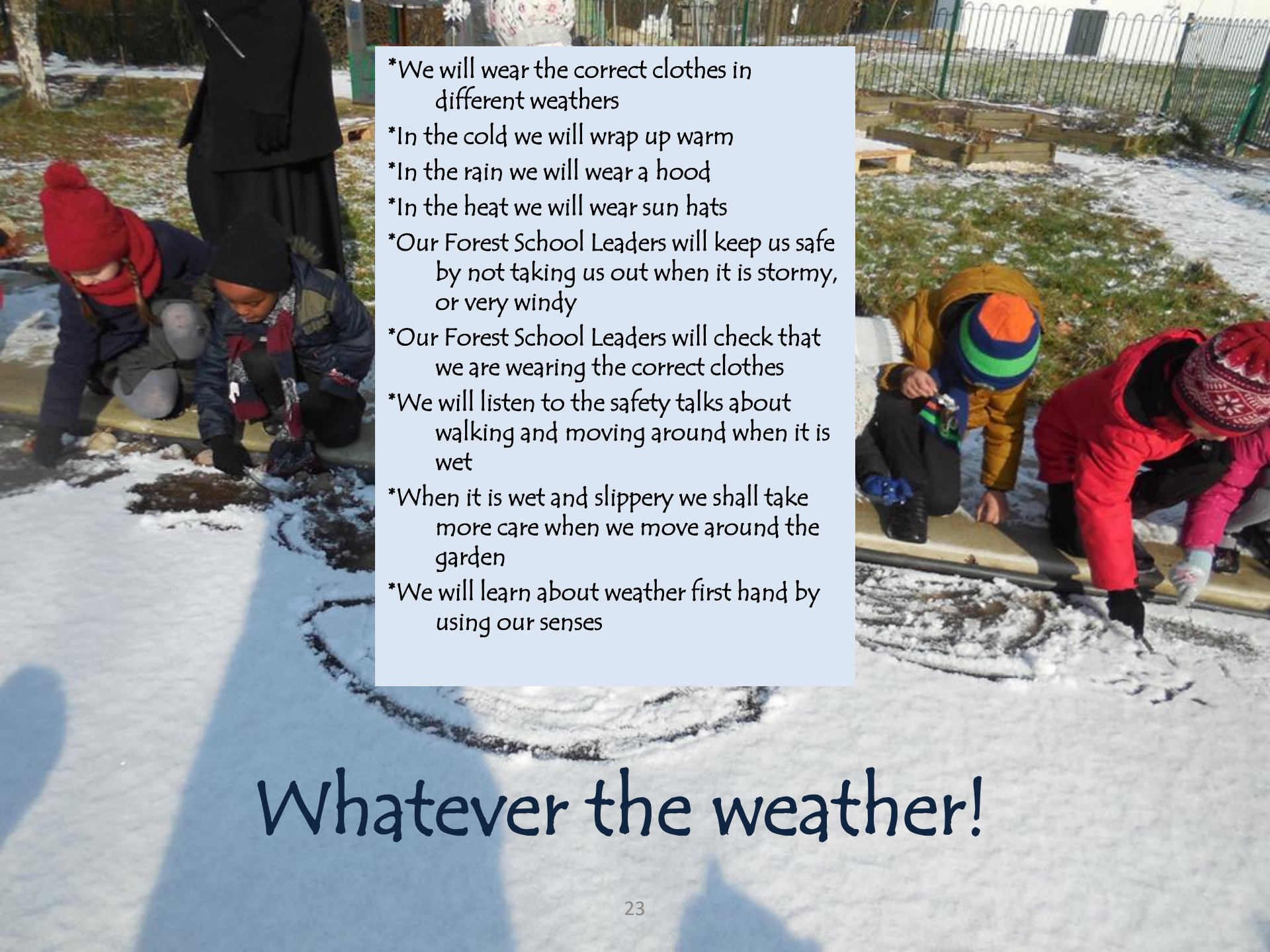


# Our Pond

- \*We always walk and step slowly next to the pond
- \*We will crouch, kneel, sit or lie down on the path
- \*Our Forest School Leaders will always give us a safety talk every session
- \*We never push past our friends on the path
- \*We never throw stones in the water
- \*We only touch the water when we are told
- \*We never put our fingers in our mouth
- \*When we pond dip, our cuts must have a plaster on them
- \*We are calm
- \*When we see a frog we have to keep our voices and noises soft
- \*We always wash our hands with soap after touching the water

## Risk Benefit Assessment - Pond

The Hazard	What might happen?	Who is at risk?	Potential level of risk	Controls	Level of risk after controls	Benefits	Further Actions
Pond - maximum depth of water is 30cms	*Falling in with head first leading to drowning and death	*children/ adults during school day *Adults trespassing out of school hours	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* 'Danger Deep Water' sign on the garden gate</li> <li>*Metal 'School Pond' sign next to pond</li> <li>*'Restricted Area' sign with rules on the garden gate</li> <li>*A supervising adult to stand at the pond with children at all times</li> <li>* Staff ratio Years 1 – 6 need 2 adults per class</li> <li>* Nursery and Reception need 3 adults per class of 30 / 2 adults per 15</li> <li>* All 1 to 1 adults to remain with their child at all times.</li> <li>*Safety talk*the class group are briefed regarding behaviour/conduct required</li> <li>*the class group are briefed not to throw stones / no pushing</li> <li>* the class group are briefed to kneel down beside the pond in order to keep their balance</li> <li>*the class group are warned to walk slowly/carefully and to beware of slipping on wet path</li> <li>*Remind children to stand still and not shout or scream if they see a frog</li> <li>*Additional first aider called from medical room</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Emotional wellbeing of watching tadpoles and frogs</li> <li>*Physical activity and wellbeing</li> <li>*Educational benefits:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-observing pond life</li> <li>-life cycle of pond animals</li> <li>pond dipping</li> <li>-water safety</li> <li>-habitats</li> </ul> </li> <li>*Self-aware</li> <li>*Managing and judging own risks leading to resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Pond checked weekly</li> <li>*Signs checked for damage</li> <li>*Emergency action plan</li> <li>*Forest school leader to regularly read pond guidance information</li> </ul>
Pond - maximum depth of water is 30cms	*Falling in feet first leading to getting wet and bruising/ bumps from pebbles	children adults	Medium	*AS ABOVE	Low	*AS ABOVE	*AS ABOVE
Pond Water- possibly contaminated with Weil's disease - leptospirosis	Activity - pond dipping/cleaning pond of leaves	children adults	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Warn children that the water may contain dangerous bacteria</li> <li>*They should ensure that they do not ingest any water</li> <li>*They should not put their hands near their mouth or nose until they have washed their hands</li> <li>*Cuts and open wounds must be covered with a waterproof plaster</li> <li>*Clean water and paper towels available</li> <li>*Reminded to wash hands in classroom with</li> </ul>	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*AS ABOVE</li> <li>*Learning about germs/diseases and why it is important to keep good hygiene</li> </ul>	*AS ABOVE



- \*We will wear the correct clothes in different weathers
- \*In the cold we will wrap up warm
- \*In the rain we will wear a hood
- \*In the heat we will wear sun hats
- \*Our Forest School Leaders will keep us safe by not taking us out when it is stormy, or very windy
- \*Our Forest School Leaders will check that we are wearing the correct clothes
- \*We will listen to the safety talks about walking and moving around when it is wet
- \*When it is wet and slippery we shall take more care when we move around the garden
- \*We will learn about weather first hand by using our senses

# Whatever the weather!



# Safety Sweep Form



Environmental hazards will be reviewed and assessed prior to every Forest School/Nature Garden session. The form will be signed off by a Level 3 Forest School Leader. All safety sweeps will be recorded and filed by a Forest School Leader.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Forest School Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Checklist	Yes/No	Comments
Fallen/loose branches		
Deadwood in trees		
Low/broken branches		
Protruding thorns		
Brambles/Nettles		
Slippery paths		
Rubbish blown in		
Holes/ditches		
Hidden logs in grass		
Weather effects		
Boundary line/fence		
Vandalism/intruders		
Excrement - fox/removed		
Base camp		
Tool area secure		
Emergency rucksack		
Equipment ready		

Other hazards identified: \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: \_\_\_\_\_

## Ecological impact of Forest School Activities

Activity	Ground Layer	Field Layer	Shrub Layer	Canopy Layer	Habitats
Mini Beast Hunts	loosened soil and grass	trampling of plants	braking of leaves/branches		may cause disturbance
Den Building	erosion of soil trampled grass	trampling of plants	braking of leaves/branches	may pull on branches	may cause disturbance
Walking/ Playing	erosion of soil trampled grass	trampling of plants	braking of leaves/branches		may cause disturbance
Pond Dipping					may damage plants- disturb
Mud Kitchen	erosion of soil trampled grass	trample/ picking plants	braking of leaves/branches		may cause disturbance
Digging	loosened soil				may cause disturbance
Woodland Art & Craft			removal of some branches		
Fire Wok	ash left on soil				



# Wembley Primary School



This is what is in our Forest School/Nature Garden area now:

- \*Silver birch, beech, hawthorn trees
- \*Rowan, and wild cherry trees
- \*Pond for frogs and newts
- \*Messy mud kitchen
- \*Bird Hide
- \*Little shed
- \*Raised Pots for growing food



This is what we are going to do in the future:

- \*Create more habitats for insects and frogs
- \*Build bird boxes and bat boxes
- \*Design more signs for information and motivation
- \*Create more log seating

