

***St. Joseph's Catholic
Primary School and
Nursery***



***Forest School Handbook and
Policy***

May 2026

What three words:

INNOVATE / SECURES / SCULPTURE



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Vision statement:

Our aim is to use the natural outdoor woodland area to offer the children and practitioners a shared understanding of the ethos of a Forest School experience. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries, be self-motivated, courageous, considerate, cooperative and to initiate learning for themselves.

Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover all six areas of the primary curriculum (expressive arts; health and wellbeing; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; maths and numeracy; and science and technology) and The Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning. It also includes emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed, for all children.

Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round, where a respect for nature is fostered. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place where children will have the opportunity to use their personal learning style to complete tasks.

Communication:

Communication will be sent through a termly report to governors, it will also be shared via the school website www.st-josephs.hereford.sch.uk

As a school we also communicate with parents and guardians through our social media pages on face book and Instagram, as well as the weekly newsletter which is sent out to everyone.

As a school we also use a virtual learning platform – 'Evidence Me', to keep parents and guardians informed of leaning what has been happening.

History of Forest School

Our forest school area was part of the school playing field which has now been sectioned off by a willow structure fence to have a safe and secure boundary. This area was completed in 2019 to provide children with a purposeful, forest school setting.

Rules of forest school:

1. Look after your Forest School
2. Do not pick anything growing
3. Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth
4. Stay within the boundary rope, we don't go over it we don't go under it



The countryside code:

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

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

Procedures of forest school routine:

1. Change children into forest school clothes
2. Change shoes into wellies or suitable footwear
3. Toilet children
4. Sing the forest school song as we travel to forest school
5. Sit around base camp and do mindful breathing
6. Explain the challenge for the session
7. Children to go and complete challenge
8. Reflect back at base camp
9. Make way back to classroom
10. Taking of wellies
11. Changing back into school uniform

Legislation

Health and safety at work act 1974

- To protect employees and non-employees from the risk of injury or ill health against the health and safety risks arising from work activities by ensuring employees health and safety and welfare at work.
- Providing training for staff to ensure health and safety procedures and that they are understood and adhered to providing provisions for staff at work providing a safe working environment that is maintained
- Ensuring that people using, supervising and managing the use of equipment are provided with adequate and clear health and safety information.

Children act 1989

- Equality– school equality policy
- DBS checks
- Ratio

Equality act 2010

- Ensuring all facilities and activities are as accessible as they can be as reference to school equality policy
- DSL Which includes
- Mrs H Francis
- Mrs A Murray
- Mrs E Lerego

Liability insurance

- Protects the school employees and governors against their legal liability for accidental bodily injury, illness or disease to third parties or accidental loss or damage to third parties property arising out of the schools usual activities. In addition to day to day normal activities, the cover extends to include away from school activities, visits to firms and community studies and forest school activities providing they are officially organised and supervised by school.



Certificate of Employers' Liability Insurance (a)

(Where required by regulation 5 of the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (the Regulations) as amended by the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, a copy of this certificate must be displayed at all places where you employ persons covered by the policy or an electronic copy of the certificate must be retained and be reasonably accessible to each employee to whom it relates).

Policy number	KSC-242098-7813
1. Name of policyholder	ST JOSEPHS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL
2. Date of commencement of insurance policy	1st October 2025
3. Date of expiry of insurance policy	30th September 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, the Isle of Man, the Island of Jersey, the Island of Guernsey and the Island of Alderney **(b)**.
2. (a) The minimum amount of cover provided by this policy is no less than £5 million **(c)**.

Signed on behalf of Zurich Insurance Company Ltd (Authorised Insurer).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drazen'.

Drazen Jaksic
Chief Executive Officer of Zurich Insurance Company Ltd, UK Branch

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(6) 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.

Zurich Municipal is a trading name of Zurich Insurance Company Ltd. A public limited company incorporated in Switzerland. Registered in the Canton of Zurich, No. CHE-105.833.114, registered offices at Mythenquai 2, 8002 Zurich. UK Branch registered in England and Wales no BR000105. UK Branch Head Office: The Zurich Centre, 3000 Parkway, Whiteley, Fareham, Hampshire PO15 7JZ. Zurich Insurance Company Ltd is authorised and regulated in Switzerland by the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority and limited regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Details about the extent of our regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority are available from us on request. Our firm reference number is 959113.

MCHATA01 (04/25)

Equipment:

Register with emergency numbers/contact numbers

Medical forms

Mobile phone

Newspaper

Matches

Wet wipes

Protective gloves

Sun cream

Plasters

Bandages

Scissors

Water bottle with water for drinking/washing

Sleeping bag/survival bag

Thermal wrap sheet

Map of woodland area

Pamphlet on hypothermia and first aid

Container for inhalers

Carry bag for dirty/wet clothing

Clothing List:

Woolly hat/sun hat

Gloves

Jacket/waterproof coat

Fleece/sweatshir

Long trousers

Spare socks

Stout shoes/wellies/boots

An emergency change of clothes and a carrier bag for dirty/wet clothing

Ideas for Forest school kit:

Emergency rucksack with essential equipment

Trugs x 4/5

Treasure baskets x 10

Bug pots x 10

Buckets x 10

Spades (small) x 10

Soft toys x 10

RSPB birds

Cake cups, Double sided sticky card, Dulux paint strips, Charcoal

Large house paint brushes, Egg boxes, Water, ID charts, Flora and fauna resource

Magnifiers, Binoculars

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 get changed into suitable clothing and shoes

We will walk through the playground and field until we reach the forest school site.

We will take into consideration all children who need additional help with or without EHCP risk assessment the impact of going to forest school and it is currently safe to do so.

Medical information form:

Childs Full name	
Date of birth	
Contact Name and relationship to child	
Home Address	
Phone Numbers	Home: Work: Mobile
Doctor	Address Phone

Has your child had any of the following?

Illness	Comment	Medication needed Please specify
Asthma/ Bronchitis		
Sight/hearing difficulties		
Heart Condition		
Diabetes		
Epilepsy		
Allergies E.g. Pollen, Nuts, Materials		
Have you ever been stung by a wasp or bee? If yes describe the reaction.		
Date of last tetanus injection.		

Signed:

Dated:

Risk assessment and benefits analysis:

Hazard	Risk and benefit	Frequency 1-5	Who is at risk	Severity	Management

Signed: AB

Print name: Amy Bennett

Date:1.05.26

In Addition General Rules for Tool Use:

All tools must have an individual risk assessment .

Ensure safe storage in a locked cupboard at school/nursery with nominated Forest School Leader access and responsibility.

Ensure safe storage and responsibility by Forest School Leader at the Forest School site.

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 the Forest School Leader.

When using tools you have a designated tool area where you and the children sit when using the tool.

Fire

You must have a specific risk assessment for Fire and Fire management in your Forest school site

Cooking, with reference to Food Hygiene

Den Making– considerations, management use of materials, monitoring

Dynamic risk assessment:

Accident or minor injury:

- A first aid kit will always be on site at forest school
- Minor incidents will be dealt by the forest school leader or qualified member of staff
- If additional treatment is required the child will be taken back to the main building by the member of staff who is the runner for the day
- Major accidents we will ring 999 using information found on laminate card these include what three words, address.

Evacuation of the site:

- Forest school leader will shout 123 base camps where all students will return safely
- We will walk to the designated meeting point on the playground and await further instruction.

Missing child:

- If a child goes missing when at forest school another adult will lead the class back into the main school while the forest school leader will continue looking.
- The member of staff who has returned back to school will inform DSL to help and assist.

Lockdown:

- We will make our way to the school hall which is located by forest school and wait their until further instruction.

Weather:

- If the weather changes whilst out at forest school the forest school leader will shout 123 base camp and we will walk back into the main building.

St Josephs R C Primary school

The Avenue

Ross on wye

Hr9 5 AW

01989 564655

What three words: INNOVATE / SECURES / SCULPTURE

Safety sweep:

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 & stored in the H&S folder.

Date:	Time:	Weather:
Name of forest school leader:		

Checklist:	Yes/No	Comments:
Fallen branches		
Low branches		
Protruding thorns		
Brambles/nettles		
Slippery areas		
Broken glass/needles		
Vandalism/ Intruders		
Weather effects		
Standing water		
Boundary line / fence		
Base camp		
Tool area roped off		
Emergency rucksack		
Equipment ready		
Spare clothes		

Other hazards identified:
Action taken:
Signature:

Designated person responsible:

Providing children with an opportunity to learn through forest school, by letting the explore and connect with nature. We have a tyre swing for children to explore as well as a tree which will be maintained and managed with a member of staff to help support the children. Letting the children play in the mud kitchen and Wendy house creating imaginative play and letting them develop their senses and creativity through play.

The assistant will manage different areas of forest school such as the tyre swing, climbing trees and the boundaries to forest school making sure no children leave without asking permission or without an adult for younger years.

Toilet considerations:

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the classroom. Any children needing the toilet during the session will use the school toilets. KS2 children are able to go unattended; KS1 and nursery must be accompanied by an adult.

Ecological impact and 3 year plan:

Footfall and impact to flora	Use pathways already established when walking to forest school, identify vulnerable areas and avoid them if possible.
Football on the field	Moving the goal post around the field so certain areas have time for re growth. Letting children play on the nursery playground when possible so the field isn't impacted.
Noise impact on wildlife	Teaching children to be respectful and if we see any wildlife reminding children to be calm and quiet.
Habitats	Teaching children to not touch habitats what we find, also providing bird boxes, hedgehog homes.
Over use of areas	Move to different areas, so the ground doesn't become impacted and gives time for regrowth.

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

Build new willow structure and climbers	Tidy up hedge row and replace fence if needed	Create a wildlife pond
Planting wild flowers	Check equipment	New base camp
Create bug hotel	Create a new mud kitchen	Enrol more staff to become forest school leaders
Make a photographic year book	Woodland trust for new trees	Create a den making area
Raise money for new equipment	Look at water proof clothing for children and replace if needed.	Re plant flowers
Provide more bird boxes for bird spotting	Lay new grass where needed	Build a shelter for children and staff

Appendices of relevant school policies:

All school policies can be found on the school website www.st-josephs.hereford.sch.uk

Staff and visitors can find all the school policies in the staff room, and the school office.

HYPOTHERMIA

36 - 38 C Normal Body Temperature

Mild Shivering DO something about it!

Hypothermia Cold pale skin Add more clothes or a blanket,

35 c hat & scarf

33 c Muscle stiffness Put in a sleeping bag or two

Severe shivering Use survival bag

Insulate from ground

Irritability Keep clothes on

Withdrawing from Drink warm sweet liquids (not hot)

the group

Mood changes

Clumsiness Do not put close to fire

Confused

Seek medical help

Severe Shivering STOPS NO liquids

Hypothermia Slow weak pulse Monitor pulse & breathing

28 c Slow shallow breath Raise feet slightly

Unconscious Perform CPR until help arrives

Breathing stops

Cardiac arrest

Coma

DEATH

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that can be spread to humans by infected ticks. It's usually easier to treat if it's diagnosed early.

Symptoms of Lyme disease

A circular or oval shape rash around a tick bite can be an early symptom of Lyme disease in some people.

The rash can appear up to 3 months after being bitten by an infected tick, but usually appears within 1 to 4 weeks. It can last for several weeks.

The rash can have a darker or lighter area in the centre and might gradually spread. It's not usually hot or itchy.

The rash may be flat, or slightly raised, and look pink, red, or purple when it appears on white skin. It can be harder to see the rash on brown and black skin and it may look like a bruise.

Some people also get flu-like symptoms a few days or weeks after they were bitten by an infected tick, such as:

- a high temperature, or feeling hot and shivery
- headache
- muscle and joint pain
- tiredness and loss of energy



Bill Hook

Hazard	Harm	at risk	existing measures / new measures	who will do it? when?
Improper use of bill hook	wounds	person using bill hook and those close by.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Inform person using bill hook of how to handle safely. *No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on other hand. *First aiders and first aid kit close by. *Tools counted in and out each session. * One to one supervision. * Use in designated area for tools. * Remind others in area to stay clear of tools * Keep in cover when not in use and store in tool bag in locked shed. 	Forest School Lead - during session.

Bow Saw

Hazard	Harm	at risk	existing measures / new measures	who will do it? when?
improper use of bow saw falling branches	wounds	person using bow saw and those near by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Inform person using bow saw of how to handle safely. *No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on other hand. *First aiders and first aid kit close by. *Tools counted in and out each session. * One to one supervision. * Ensure safety of site if using outside of designated tool use area. * If sawing branches from a tree ensure no one or property will be hurt or damaged when it falls. * Keep blade cover on when not in use and store in tool bag. 	Forest School Lead - during session.

Knives

Hazard	Harm	at risk	existing measures / new measures	who will do it? when?
improper use of knives	wounds	person using knife and those near by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Inform person using knives of how to handle safely-move blade away from body *No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on other hand. *First aiders and first aid kit close by. *Tools counted in and out each session. * One to one supervision. * Use in designated area for tools. * Remind others in area to stay clear of tools * Keep in cover when not in use and store in tool bag in locked shed. 	Forest School Lead - during session.

Potato peeler:

Hazard	Harm	at risk	existing measures / new measures	who will do it? when?
improper use of potato peeler	wounds	person using potato peeler and those near by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Inform person using potato peeler of correct use-move away from the body. *No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on other hand. *First aiders and first aid kit close by. *Tools counted in and out each session. * 1:1 ratio for Nursery children; 3-1 ratio supervision for early years children, 5-1 older children. * Use in designated area for tools * Remind others in vicinity to stay clear of tools. 	Forest School Lead - during session.

St. Joseph's Risk Assessment for an Open Fire

Hazard	Harm	at Risk	existing measures/ new measures	who will do it when?
Fire & heat	burning to skin & clothes	all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Supervision of the fire, one person to be sat beside fire at all times while alight or hot embers remain, to ensure children do not have unsupervised access. * Children will be given rules and safety advice and dangers of fire prior to visiting the fire during Forest School circle time. * First aiders and first aid box will be available. * Fire proof gloves within easy reach. 	Forest School Lead to organise staff.

Hazard	Harm	at Risk	existing measures/ new measures	who will do it when?
Fire out of control	as above and damage to area.	all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * As above * Fire will be in a soil pit surrounded by stones to prevent the fire escaping the area. * Fire area will be away from buildings. * The fire will not be under overhanging trees which may catch alight. * A good supply of water will be available to put out flames and dampen heat. * A fire blanket will be available to wrap around person who may be alight. 	Forest School Lead to check site, all staff responsible for fire control.
Falls into fire	burning to skin & clothes	all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Children have a safety brief before entering the fire pit area. • No walking between the seats and fire allowed. • When cooking etc. everyone at fire should be on one knee to remain stable. • Maximum of 4 people at fire (inc. adults). 	Forest School Lead - to give safety brief, all staff check rules are followed.
Smoke	inhalation , irritation	all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position of the fire will be away from buildings. • The wind direction will be constantly assessed and children advised to move safely out of smoke direction. • Dry suitable wood used to prevent excess smoke. • Use clear goggles if needed. 	Forest School Lead - wood supply & site - all staff advise children
Heat from hot embers.	burning to skin & clothes	all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the fire activity is finished the embers will be dampened and cooled with water, placed on in a spiral motion and spread out with a spade. 	Forest School Lead

		Level of risk	People at risk	Existing measures / new measures	Who will do it / when?
nettles and brambles	stinging	Low	all	make children aware, clear pathways and main play areas. Children to wear long trousers and long sleeves.	Forest School Lead - check at the beginning of each half term.
berried flora	poisoning	Medium	children	inform all children not to pick or eat berries. Wash hands before eating.	Forest School Lead - at beginning of log circle reminding of rules. Establish rules at the start.
tree roots and stumps	tripping	Low	all	inform all to take care in woods, clear walkways of bramble and ivy roots.	Forest School Lead - on visit
tree branches	branches falling.	Medium	all	pre-visit & continuous risk check, remove hanging dead wood. Remind children of risks. In extremely windy weather conditions, Forest School activities will take place indoors.	Forest School Lead - pre session At start of session.
sticks	Hitting/poking	Low	children	inform children of rules, carry safely, no hitting.	Forest School Lead - during rule setting. All ensure rule followed
faeces	contamination	Low	all	pre-visit & continuous risk check, remove and discard safely.	Forest School Lead - pre session
debris / rubbish	glass, drug use, metals.	Low	all	pre-visit & continuous risk check, ask children not to pick up rubbish, inform an adult if they find something, adult to remove safely.	Forest School Lead -prior to & on visit.
fire	burns, out of control.	High	all	<i>*separate risk assessment for activity is available in policy</i> trained staff present at all times, safety procedures followed.	Forest School Lead -prior to & on visit.
perimeter wall & gates	escape of children	Low	children	ensure all gates are closed.	Forest School Lead on visit
Mushrooms and fungi	poisoning	Low	all	inform all children and adults to look only, no touching.	all - Forest School Lead reminder during circle time.

