



# Washacre Primary Academy

## Forest School Policy & Handbook

### 2025-2026

# **Review Date 10.11.2026**

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## **Washacre Primary Academy Forest School Ethos**

In Forest School sessions, Washacre Primary Academy aim to, through play, child-led exploration and experiential learning, foster a deep connection between learners and the natural world. With long term, regular engagement with the natural world we will develop our children holistically, through risk and challenge. Our children are given the opportunity to build confidence and strong self- esteem. Forest School is welcoming and inclusive, where a child's individual needs, abilities and backgrounds are respected and celebrated.

### **Forest School Policies relevant to Washacre Primary Academy including statutory and best practice.**

Washacre Primary Academy Child protection and Safeguarding Policy [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)

Washacre Primary Academy Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy [Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)

Washacre Primary Academy Equal Opportunities Policy [Equality Policy](#)

*We have children in wheelchairs in school so the following policies are relevant to Washacre Primary Academy Forest School Handbook*

Washacre Primary Academy SEND Policy [SEND Policy](#)

Washacre Primary Academy Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy [Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy](#)

Washacre Primary Academy Fire and Evacuation Policy- No hyperlink available. Uploaded as supporting document.

Washacre Primary School Safeguarding Policy <https://www.washacre.bolton.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Safeguarding-and-CP-Policy-2023-24-Washacre.pdf>

## **Forest School Procedures**

### **Collection and Staffing for Forest School Sessions**

In Forest School there is a minimum ratio of 1:8, unless there are tools being used whereby this will increase to 1:6-this must include a Forest School Leader Level 3. Children and adults must use the classroom space to dress in their appropriate clothes so as to enter the Forest School dressed appropriately and ready to start the session. Children's wellies/outdoor footwear are kept on the mobile welly wall located outside the Rainbow Room.

### **Kit Procedures**

A full kit list includes:

Trousers

Top (long sleeve if weather permits)

Jumper

Waterproof coat

Waterproof trousers

Waterproof footwear (walking shoes or wellington boots)

Water bottle

Sun hat, hat, gloves and scarf (weather depending)

### **Medical Information**

Children's medical information to be available.

Class teacher/TA to be responsible to bringing children's inhalers to Forest School should a child have one.

Emergency contact- Forest School Leader (Elizabeth Keever) to ensure they are equipped with a working and fully charged Walkie Talkie/mobile phone in the event of an emergency.

First Aid Kit (including a burns kit) to be available every session where a fire is lit.

### **Food/water/rubbish/toileting/hygiene**

Food consumed in the Forest School will have been screened and approved beforehand to ensure there are no risks of allergic reaction.

Water bottle will be available in the Forest School on hot days.

KS1 children are to be chaperoned to the toilet by an adult if necessary although children are encouraged to use the toilet before the Forest school session. KS2 children may take themselves to the toilet.

High standards of hygiene must be adhered to at all times. A bottle of hand sanitizer will be available in the Forest School and will be used before children partake in an eating in the Forest School and at the end of session.

Sink hand washing to be completed in school, at the appropriate year group sink, after the session.

Anti-bacterial wet wipes included in the kit bag.

### Equipment

All equipment to be checked for safety before each session. The equipment in use will depend on the session and is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure all equipment is in safe working order. As part of the Forest School programme children will learn how to safely use Forest School equipment, this will be through 'Tool Talks' delivered throughout the programme. It is the responsibility of those using the tools/equipment to ensure they are all correctly stored/returned. Children are taught, within 'Tool Talk' to store the equipment safely after use, ready for the next user.

### Emergency Procedure

In the event of an emergency the Forest School Leader and any other staff will have access to a Walkie Talkie/mobile phone which will be used to contact the School Office. In the event that the emergency is of a First Aid nature and it **can not** be dealt with by the First Aider then roles will be divided. Adult 1 will administer First Aid. Adult 2 will blow a whistle, count children and keep them calm. Follow the First Aid Policy found here [Washacre Primary Academy First Aid Policy](#). In the event of a Fire, children and staff to follow fire procedure and meet on the playground in their year groups ready for counting and register. Follow Washacre Primary Academy Fire and Evacuation Policy.

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure the emergency equipment is in working order and the office know of the schedule of use for the Forest School so they know where the group are at all times.

### COSSH Procedure

There is currently no known COSSH items used in the Forest School. Nor are there any plans to use them. COSSH items however, are stored in the shed in Forest School and so Site Manager (Colin Jones) will ensure no children are to enter the shed and shed is locked at all times.

### Managing risk in the Forest School

Risk is an integral part of the Forest School experience. It is through risk and risk taking that learners push boundaries and extend their learning. Whilst there is no benefit in 'wrapping children up in cotton wool' there must be an element of controlling and managing risk so as to ensure the learners have a rewarding and safe experience.

Vigorous risk assessment will ensure that all risk is mitigated, where possible, whilst keeping the essential elements of the risk to allow learners to become confident and capable risk takers in the future.

When planning and completing a risk assessment one must consider the following:

1. The Hazard or risk you have identified.
2. The Significance of the Risk – how dangerous is it?
3. Any actions that can be taken to control or limit the risk.
4. Most importantly, is whether the benefits from the risk outweigh the potential harm.

Washacre Primary Academy’s Forest School Risk Assessment (to be completed at the beginning of each Forest School long term plan and amended accordingly)



Low Risk	Something which may result in minor damage or slight harm (i.e. scratch or bruise)
Medium Risk	Something which may result in significant loss/damage or major injury (broken bone or other injury, which may result in the other person being taken to hospital for treatment)
High Risk	Something which may result in extensive damage, multiple major injuries or death

Class		
Class size	Children:	adults:
Activity		
Leader		

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Outweigh the Risks?	Responsibility

Risk assessments pertaining to Washacre Primary Academy to be completed for each block of Forest School sessions.

## Generic Woodland Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Animal feces/ mud/ dirt/ etc	Infections in cuts etc	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide wet wipes and water for cleaning hands.</li> <li>- Ensure participants clean hands before eating and at end of session.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment.	Group Leader to ensure hand cleaning provision made.
Insects, wasps, plants and fungi	Possible allergic reaction, poisoning, choking	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find out about known allergic reactions within group</li> <li>- Warn children about wasps</li> <li>- Discuss poisonous plants and fungi</li> <li>- warn children not to eat anything or put fingers in mouth</li> <li>- Everyone to wash hands before lunch</li> <li>- Carry antiseptic wipes</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to respect the environment and about managing own risks in the woodland.	Group leader to know about children's allergies before entering the woodland.
Medical Conditions	Asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find out about known conditions before session</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to achieve despite medical conditions.	Group leader to take responsibility for medical conditions of children and to bring equipment eg inhalers.
Lost Children	Getting lost, panic attack, potential abduction	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group stays together at all times.</li> <li>- Adult at front and back of group when moving through woodland.</li> <li>- Predefined area for children during woodland activity.</li> <li>- Count children regularly</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment.	Group leader to do safety talk at start of session Adults to count and check children throughout visit
Weather (hot, cold, wet)	Sunstroke, sunburn, hypothermia, cold	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure children are wearing appropriate clothes.</li> <li>- Ensure children have sun-cream.</li> <li>- Ensure children are warm enough – encourage physical activity.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment.	Group leader to ensure children are appropriately dressed Adults to keep an eye on children's condition.

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Forest operations	Fall from stacked timber; trips and slips; collision with forest machinery	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety talk to be given at start of activity.</li> <li>- Don't climb on stacked timber</li> <li>- Warning signs to be read and followed when operations occurring</li> <li>- Ensure adequate adult Supervision</li> <li>- Inform Forest Owner about visit in advance</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment.	Group leader to inform Forest Owner in advance of visit and to do safety talk Adults to read and follow safety / warning signs

## Weather Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Sun Exposure	Sunburn/Sun Stroke	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate Safety Talk</li> <li>- Check Weather forecast.</li> <li>- Ensure Children Appropriately Dressed</li> <li>- Sun-cream available for children</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to manage risks in adverse weather conditions.	Forest School Leader
Cold Weather	Cold/Hypothermia	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate Safety Talk</li> <li>- Check Weather forecast.</li> <li>- Ensure Children Appropriately Dressed.</li> <li>- Have space blankets available if needed.</li> <li>- End activity if too cold</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to manage risks in adverse weather conditions.	Forest School Leader
Icy/ Snowy Conditions	-increased likely hood of slips and trip - Dangers during transport	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate Safety Talk</li> <li>- Check Weather forecast.</li> <li>- Ensure Children Appropriately Dressed.</li> <li>- If appropriate grit paths and areas.</li> <li>- End activity or cancel activity if too dangerous</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to manage risks in adverse weather conditions.	Forest School Leader
Windy Conditions	- Risk of falling branches or trees	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cancel activities if excessive wind.</li> <li>- Appropriate safety talk.</li> <li>- Safety check trees for lose and dead branches regularly.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to manage risks in adverse weather conditions.	Forest School Leader
Rainy Weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Area become hazardous for slips.</li> <li>- Participants become cold/ hyperthermia.</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate Safety Talk</li> <li>- Check Weather forecast.</li> <li>- Ensure Children Appropriately Dressed.</li> <li>- Have space blankets available if needed.</li> <li>- End activity if too cold or area becomes dangerous.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to being in a woodland environment. Children learn to manage risks in adverse weather conditions.	Forest School Leader

## Collecting Natural Material Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Lifting Materials	Material may fall causing injury. Material maybe too heavy causing injury.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety check area to ensure materials are in safe position.</li> <li>- Talk to group about how to select materials in a safe position.</li> <li>- Discuss with group how to lift heavier materials safely.</li> </ul>	Low	Natural materials are essential for free play and planned activities. Benefit out ways the risk.	Forest School Lead Practitioner.
Stings from insects and plants	Clients may choose stinging plants or materials with stinging insects on. Client may be stung.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove stinging plants from areas.</li> <li>- Discuss plants in area with clients.</li> <li>- Provide gloves for use during the collection.</li> <li>- Avoid areas known for stinging insects,</li> </ul>	Low	Natural materials are essential for free play and planned activities. Benefit out ways the risk.	Forest School Lead Practitioner.
Insects, wasps, plants and fungi	Possible allergic reaction, poisoning, choking	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find out about known allergic reactions within group</li> <li>- Warn children about wasps</li> <li>- Discuss poisonous plants and fungi</li> <li>- warn children not to eat anything or put fingers in mouth</li> <li>- Everyone to wash hands before lunch</li> <li>- Carry antiseptic wipes</li> </ul>	Low	Natural materials are essential for free play and planned activities. Benefit out ways the risk.	Group leader to know about children's allergies before entering the woodland.
Animal feces/ mud/ dirt/ etc	Infections in cuts etc	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide wet wipes and water for cleaning hands.</li> <li>- Ensure participants clean hands before eating and at end of session.</li> </ul>	Low	Natural materials are essential for free play and planned activities. Benefit out ways the risk.	Group Leader to ensure hand cleaning provision made.
Rubbish/ Litter	Cuts/Scratches	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leader to collect litter from area beforehand.</li> <li>- Ensure first kit at hand if child cuts themselves</li> </ul>	Low	Natural materials are essential for free play and planned activities. Benefit out ways the risk.	Forest School Lead Practitioner.
Lifting and Swinging Sticks	Bangs/ bumps, scratches and bruises	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety briefing for all clients on how to carry materials.</li> <li>- Leader to intervene if clients using/carrying materials inappropriately.</li> </ul>	Medium	Natural materials are essential for free play and planned activities. Benefit out ways the risk.	Forest School Lead Practitioner.

## Individual tools risk assessment

It is understood that it is most unlikely all the tools listed will be in use at the same time. The risk assessments below will cover each individual tool should it be used. These are general tools used in Forest School. There is no guarantee Washacre Primary Academy will have all of these resources available (depending on funding). Similarly, there may be opportunity to procure resources and so the risk assessment will be amended accordingly.

### Billhook Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Accidental injury on unattended tool.	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a designated space.</li> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a locked box.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Incorrect use of tool	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform person using Billhook of tool talk</li> <li>- First aiders and first aid kit close by.</li> <li>- One to one supervision for new/younger/vulnerable clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safety of site.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Keep blade cover on when not in use and store in locked tool box.</li> </ul>	Medium	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Trip or fall with tool	Cuts	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safe working area prepared with limited trip risks.</li> <li>- Ensure tool transported with cover on.</li> <li>- Ensure tool talk learnt including how to move safely with tool.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients

### Bowsaw Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Accidental injury on unattended tool.	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a designated space.</li> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a locked box.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Incorrect use of tool	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform person using bow saw of tool talk</li> <li>- No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on non-sawing hand.</li> <li>- First aiders and first aid kit close by.</li> <li>- One to one supervision for new/younger/vulnerable clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safety of site.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Keep blade cover on when not in use and store in tool bag.</li> </ul>	Medium	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Trip or fall with tool	Cuts	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safe working area prepared with limited trip risks.</li> <li>- Ensure tool transported with cover on.</li> <li>- Ensure tool talk learnt including how to move safely with tool.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Falling Branches when cutting	Bumps, bruises, cuts from falling branches.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure high branches are correctly supported.</li> <li>- Ensure other clients are clear of the working area.</li> <li>- Ensure those using the saw know the correct procedure.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients

### Loppers Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Accidental injury on unattended tool.	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a designated space.</li> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a locked box.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Incorrect use of tool	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform person using Loppers of tool talk</li> <li>- No glove needed on hand using tool, glove on non-sawing hand.</li> <li>- First aiders and first aid kit close by.</li> <li>- One to one supervision for new/younger/vulnerable clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safety of site.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Keep blade cover on when not in use and store in tool bag.</li> </ul>	Medium	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Trip or fall with tool	Cuts	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safe working area prepared with limited trip risks.</li> <li>- Ensure tool transported with cover on.</li> <li>- Ensure tool talk learnt including how to move safely with tool.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Falling Branches when cutting	Bumps, bruises, cuts from falling branches.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure high branches are correctly supported.</li> <li>- Ensure other clients are clear of the working area.</li> <li>- Ensure those using the loppers know the correct procedure.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients

## Sheath Knife Risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Accidental injury on unattended tool.	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a designated space.</li> <li>- Ensure tools are stored in a locked box.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Incorrect use of tool	Cuts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform person using Sheath Knife of tool talk</li> <li>- First aiders and first aid kit close by.</li> <li>- One to one supervision for new/younger/vulnerable clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safety of site.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Keep blade cover on when not in use and store in locked tool box.</li> </ul>	Medium	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Trip or fall with tool	Cuts	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure safe working area prepared with limited trip risks.</li> <li>- Ensure tool transported with cover on.</li> <li>- Ensure tool talk learnt including how to move safely with tool.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using tool. Develop own risk management for client.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients

## Blind Fold risk Assessment

The Hazard	What Might Happen?	Potential Level of Risk	Controls	Level of Risk After Controls	Does the Benefit Out way the Risks?	Responsibility
Walking into trees/branches.	Bumps, bruises and cuts from walking into trees.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brief clients about walking slowly, one foot at a time.</li> <li>- Ensure clients are lead between areas when wearing blindfolds.</li> <li>- Have a code word for everyone one to stop and one for everyone to take off blindfolds.</li> <li>- Remove sharp branches at a height where they might cause harm.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using blindfolds in activities.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Tripping on floor covering	Bumps, bruises, cuts and grazes from tripping on ground cover.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As above.</li> <li>- Ensure ground is checked for potential trip hazards.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using blindfolds in activities.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients
Panic Attacks	Some clients may find it difficult to wear blindfold and panic	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reassure client and encourage them to give activity a go.</li> <li>- If activity is causing distress, then modify activity for client.</li> </ul>	Low	Yes – Significant benefits to using blindfolds in activities.	Forest Practitioners Briefed Clients

## Campfire Risk Assessment

See separate document

### **Role of the Forest School Leader**

The Forest School leader is responsible for guiding the children to develop a sense of environmental stewardship, that lasts far beyond the Forest School sessions. By modelling a deep respect for nature, learners are encouraged to be mindful of sustainable practices and the wonders the natural world has to offer.

A Forest School leader is reflective and encourages learners to be so. A reflective practice fosters an awareness of their personal learning journey, growth and connection to the world around them.

A Forest School leader is non-judgemental. Forest School is a place of personal growth not a praise and reward system. The Forest school leader shares the learning experience with the children and offers gratitude, attention, questioning and communication.

A Forest School leader is knowledgeable- allowing the learners to access deeper, enriching experiences in the moment. Flexibility is one of the main qualities of a Forest School leader.

### **Forest School Communication Strategy for all stakeholders**

Good communication is paramount to the success of the Forest School. All stakeholders will be aware of plans and developments of the Forest School scheme within school (to be updated yearly) and will be updated of any amendments on an ad-hoc basis.

Stakeholders include:

Landowners- As the school and its grounds is owned by The Quill Trust all intentions and site management considerations and changes will be submitted to The Quill Trust for approval before taking place.

Staff members- all staff are made aware, beforehand, of session intentions. Staff (or volunteers) supporting in the Forest School will be issued with a Forest School Handbook to advise them of the relevant information needed to ensure a successful Forest School programme.

Parents- Parents will be informed of their child's Forest School sessions via the school newsletter, Seesaw, Facebook and School Ping. Parents will have access to the Forest School Handbook.