



Policy Document for Sticks and Ropes

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction..... | 2 |
| Our Ethos..... | 2 |
| Structured and Unstructured Time | 2 |
| Leave No Trace | 2 |
| Certification | 2 |
| Health and Safety..... | 3 |
| How Risk is Managed | 3 |
| Session-Specific Risks and Emergency Procedures | 3 |
| Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan..... | 3 |
| First Aid..... | 3 |
| PPE | 4 |
| Suitable Clothing..... | 4 |
| Safeguarding and Child Protection..... | 5 |
| Behaviour Policy..... | 5 |
| National Curriculum and Home Education | 5 |
| Safeguarding Policy | 5 |
| Parental Consent and Attendance Register..... | 6 |
| Adult to Child Ratios | 6 |
| Taking Photos | 6 |
| Incident Forms | 6 |
| Special Needs | 7 |
| Toileting | 7 |
| Appendices | 8 |
| Parental Registration Form Questions (Link to Google Form) | 8 |
| Attendance Register (Example Template)..... | 9 |
| Emergency Procedure Checklist..... | 10 |
| Incident Report Form (Example Template) | 13 |
| Bumped Head Note (Template) | 14 |

Introduction

Our Ethos

At Sticks and Ropes, we practice project-based learning that emphasizes collaboration, communication, and a deep respect for the natural environment and its finite resources. Our goal is to create a significant positive impact on the social and emotional well-being of participants, particularly those who attend long term.

Each day with Sticks and Ropes is an outdoor experience, complemented by waterproof structures in the event of heavy rain. We conduct a weather assessment before every session and implement an appropriate wet weather plan, ensuring participants remain warm and dry. Engaging with unpredictable weather serves as a valuable learning opportunity, teaching children to manage expectations and adapt to conditions.

Structured and Unstructured Time

Our daily schedule draws heavily from the Forest School philosophy, incorporating both structured and unstructured time. We view play as a crucial component of learning and socialization. Through structured guidance, we help children achieve a sense of accomplishment greater than they would achieve on their own. Participants are encouraged to express how they wish to use their time, fostering creativity, resilience, problem-solving skills, and ownership over their learning experiences.

The natural environment allows for unstructured exploration within respectful guidelines, such as protecting ground nests during spring and summer. This time facilitates reflection and enriches children's learning experiences.

Leave No Trace

We have established an agreement with the woodland custodian regarding the placement of projects, such as semi-permanent shelters and bird boxes. We model and promote a "Leave No Trace" philosophy, ensuring we clean up after our activities, dispose of waste properly, and maintain the integrity of the environment. This practice nurtures social responsibility and awareness of our impact on the planet.

Certification

Our team holds valid certifications for leading educational sessions outdoors, including a Level 3 Forest School accreditation and a PGCE in primary education. Both team members are trained in First Aid relevant to children and partake in refresher training every three years. We conduct annual Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to ensure safety.

We operate at Newfield Spring Wood, managed by Heather Hunt, whose mission is to facilitate better access to nature for individuals needing mental, emotional, or spiritual support. Heather requires comprehensive risk assessments, third-party insurance, and a strong understanding of health and safety from anyone working with young people in the woods. Our safeguarding policies and documents are regularly updated, and we adhere to comprehensive risk assessment practices before initiating projects.

Health and Safety

How Risk is Managed

Conducting outdoor activities in public spaces necessitates a full risk assessment before each session. We identify how to mitigate risks, involving participants in discussions about safety. We view risk as a crucial element of engagement with nature, encouraging children to assess how they want to interact with their environment. While we acknowledge the importance of risk, we will not undertake unnecessary dangers and will cancel sessions in severe weather conditions.

Session-Specific Risks and Emergency Procedures

At each session's start, we discuss relevant hazards and risks. Safe handling practices and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) are provided, especially when using dangerous tools, ensuring one-on-one supervision for less experienced participants. In emergencies, our priority is group safety, with one team member managing the emergency while the other keeps the group calm. Location information will be relayed to emergency services using "what3words" if needed.

Refer to our Emergency Procedure Checklist for specific action points in emergencies.

Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan

Fire activities require prior permission from the woodland custodian. Before lighting a fire, we review safety rules regarding fire circles, including careful movement and emergency protocols. Children with asthma will have their inhalers easily accessible, and their condition will be monitored.

Specific equipment, such as fire gloves, a fire blanket, and a kit for treating burns, will be present during fire-related activities. We will recap emergency protocols regarding potential fire spillage and ensure that all remains of the fire are thoroughly cooled and disposed of responsibly.

First Aid

Both team members are fully trained first aiders, equipped with up-to-date certifications suitable for treating children and adults in outdoor settings where medical help may be delayed. We anticipate very few actual first aid situations due to our thorough risk assessments and shared safety practices. A fully stocked first aid kit will always be onsite, with contents regularly restocked as needed.

In activities involving fire, we will also have a fire blanket, a burns kit, and extra water for washing wounds. While we can address minor injuries like cuts and scrapes on-site, any serious injuries, such as head injuries or burns, will require immediate medical attention. Therefore, important medical information must be accurately filled out on consent forms, allowing us to communicate any necessary details to emergency services if required.

PPE

Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided as needed based on the specific activities for each session. Prior to any tool use, we will conduct a "tool talk" to emphasize safety and maintenance. If specific protective gear, such as gloves or other equipment, is required, we will supply it. Children are welcome to bring their own non-dangerous protective equipment if desired. Parents will be informed if activities would benefit from weather-specific gear, such as wellies or waterproof clothing.

Suitable Clothing

Parents are encouraged to monitor weather conditions and provide appropriate clothing for their children. Suggested attire for a typical 2-hour outdoor session varies by season:

- **Summer:** A light base layer with an easily removable second layer. A warm layer is beneficial since temperatures in the woods can be cooler than outside. Waterproof summer coats are recommended if rain is forecasted. A sun hat and sunscreen are advisable during high UV levels.
- **Autumn:** A base layer, a warm jumper, and/or a coat according to individual needs. A waterproof layer is essential due to changeable weather, sturdy footwear is necessary to keep feet dry, and warm hats, scarves, and gloves may be needed as temperatures drop.
- **Winter:** A warm base layer, jumper, and fleece-lined coat are recommended. Gloves, scarves, and woolly hats are essential for cold weather. Wellies or sturdy, waterproof footwear are necessary for navigating muddy terrain.
- **Spring:** A warm base layer, jumper, and coat depending on weather conditions. A waterproof layer is advisable, as spring weather can be unpredictable.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Behaviour Policy

A primary concern of our forest school is ensuring the safety and well-being—emotional, physical, and psychological—of all participants. We are committed to creating an environment where children feel heard and validated regarding their concerns. This includes addressing situations where a child may say something hurtful or bully another child.

Our forest school approach fosters self-awareness, allowing children to learn about themselves and develop social skills such as empathy. In the event of conflicts, we will strive to understand all perspectives and facilitate mediation to reach mutual understanding. Our experience in primary schools shows that this method, rather than focusing on what a child “did wrong,” enhances their ability to resolve conflicts independently while maintaining their dignity.

National Curriculum and Home Education

While we do not aim to replicate mainstream education, we strongly believe that every child attending our program has access to valuable educational opportunities. We do not emphasize the national curriculum in a formal sense; instead, we focus on integrated teaching and learning styles that promote social, emotional development, and a strong connection with nature.

For instance, we incorporate stories and tasks that highlight environmental awareness and peer support. We believe that connecting imaginative concepts to real-life experiences helps children become happy, skilled, empathetic, and community-minded individuals. Our forest school approach also encourages the development of creative skills through activities like woodland carpentry, tool use, and sustainable building projects. We draw on drama, storytelling, and imaginative play to further engage and inspire children.

Safeguarding Policy

Each child brings unique experiences and perspectives to our club. We strive to interact with children in a tolerant, patient, and fair manner. Meeting their fundamental needs for safety, value, and acceptance is essential before deeper learning and transformative experiences can occur.

One of our key goals is to inspire children with the beauty and joy of exploring natural spaces with peers, engaging in adventurous and exploratory activities. This can only happen if they feel comfortable and secure with one another and with us. We take children’s feedback seriously regarding their experiences and activities.

If we have safeguarding concerns, we will follow proper procedures. This may involve discussing a child's behaviour with their parents or, if appropriate, contacting a safeguarding professional directly at the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership Hub. In serious cases where a child discloses potential abuse (emotional, physical, sexual, or neglect), we will refer the matter to the police immediately. We will document any disclosures made by the child for future reference by the relevant authorities.

Contact Information:

Sheffield Safeguarding Hub: 0114 273 4855

Parental Consent and Attendance Register

The club operates on a drop-off basis. It is crucial that parents complete and return a consent form before their child's first session. This allows us to note any medical conditions, special needs (including disabilities that may affect access), or allergies. We also require two emergency contacts (including one parent) should we need to contact emergency services.

We adhere to GDPR regulations regarding the privacy of information about children and parents. Here's a summary of how we handle this information:

1. All information regarding you and your child will be kept confidentially in a secure folder, with access limited to authorized personnel only.
2. Contact details will be used solely for distributing updates regarding Sticks and Ropes and practical arrangements.
3. If you wish to discontinue attendance, your child's information will be securely disposed of upon request, or after six months of inactivity without further communication.
4. We honour requests to view, change, or delete any personal information we hold about your child, as long as we have the necessary information to conduct safe sessions.

Adult to Child Ratios

We will operate with a maximum group size of 12 children, ensuring an adult-to-child ratio of 1:6. This ratio allows us to effectively manage safety and emergencies, always ensuring adequate supervision. If additional adults assist with specific activities, they will be carefully screened and must share a genuine interest in working with children within the Forest School ethos. We ensure that all additional adults undergo background checks, obtaining at least one positive employment reference or a valid DBS check prior to participation.

We maintain accurate attendance registers that record important medical conditions, allergies, and emergency contact details for all children. Regular head counts will be conducted, and parents or guardians will be promptly informed of any emergencies involving their child.

Taking Photos

The parental consent form will include a section asking for permission to photograph children during activities for promotional purposes, such as the club's website. Parents may indicate if they do not wish for their child's image to be captured or shared online.

Incident Forms

An incident form will be completed following any accidents or near misses. If we suspect a child has sustained a concussion or is behaving unusually post-accident, we will contact parents to collect their child. We will document the details of the incident, including any visible injuries, and require a parent or carer's signature to acknowledge their notification of the accident.

Special Needs

We have extensive experience working one-on-one with children with special needs. We are committed to accommodating any individual who may have specific requirements upon joining the club. We encourage parents to meet with us prior to the session to discuss arrangements and ensure the program is a good fit for their child. If a child needs constant one-on-one supervision, we may need to assess the possibility of hiring additional support staff.

Toileting

A compost toilet is available onsite, along with essential supplies such as toilet paper. While some children may need time to adjust to this alternative, it serves as a valuable learning opportunity about environmentally friendly waste management.

Appendices

Parental Registration Form Questions ([Link to Google Form](#))

1. Name of child
2. Child's Date of Birth
3. What passions, hobbies or interests does your child have?
4. Please tell us what experience your child has had with the outdoors, outdoor learning environments and outdoor knowledge/skills.
5. Name, phone number and email of parent/guardian (call first)
6. Name, phone number and email of parent/guardian (call second)
7. Home Address(es)
8. If applicable - Please give details of any accessibility requirements your child has and support, they will need from staff.
9. If applicable - Please give details of any medical conditions your child has and support, they will need from staff.
10. If applicable - Please give details of any allergies to foods, plants or animals your child has.
11. Please select what photography permissions you consent for us to have. These help us keep a record of activities/achievements and support the promotion of the group. Tick all that apply.
 - Photos to be taken of your child during Sticks & Ropes sessions
 - Photos WITH faces to be shared within the private Sticks & Ropes group chat
 - Photos WITH faces to be shared on the public Facebook page and used for promotional purposes
 - Photos WITHOUT faces to be shared within the private Sticks & Ropes group chat
 - Photos WITHOUT faces to be shared on the public Facebook page and used for promotional purposes
 - Please do not take any photos of my child
 - Please do not share any photos of my child
12. Risky play, and risk taking in general, is a normal, healthy part of children's development and facilitated outdoor learning is one of the best ways for children to push the edges of their comfort zone in a safe space, on their own terms. We have comprehensive health and safety processes in place and trained leaders to strike the right balance between the dangers and benefits of risk. Do you consent to this approach to learning and acknowledge the risks of outdoor learning?
Yes / No
13. Will your child be able to understand and follow any rules we have in place that are intended to keep them and everyone else safe? Particularly during risky activities (e.g. working with sharp tools, climbing trees, exploring the wood or when lighting and cooking on a fire)
Yes / No
14. How are you happy to be contacted?
 - Phone call
 - Text message
 - Whatsapp
 - Email
15. Would you be happy to be contacted about the possibility of lift sharing, if for example another parent lives close by?
Yes / No

Attendance Register (Example Template)

Total number :

Date : / /

| Child's name | Time dropped off | Time picked up | Allergies / Dietary requirements | Photos | Emergency contact 1 | Emergency contact 2 | Any medication / SEND |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | (Y/N) | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

Emergency Procedure Checklist

| Primary First Aider Responsibilities | |
|--|--|
| Address Injuries: Manage both minor and major injuries on site. | |
| Maintain Calm: Keep the casualty as calm and safe as possible while providing treatment. | |
| Group Safety: Ensure the overall safety of the group. | |
| Communicate: Relay important information to emergency services as needed. | |

| Responsible Adult Responsibilities | |
|--|--|
| Group Management: Keep the group calm and safe if the Primary First Aider is occupied. | |
| Assist Treatment: Help the Primary First Aider in treating a casualty. | |
| Contact Emergency Services: Call for emergency services or find someone who can. | |

Major Incident Procedures

| Lost Children | |
|--|--|
| Stay Calm: Keep the group calm; practitioners should remain with them. | |
| Assess Response: Check if the lost child can respond to calls, such as, "One, two, three, where are you?" | |
| Search Strategy: Can a responsible adult search for the missing child? Is it safe for the group to retrace their steps? | |
| Emergency Services: While searching, call emergency services to report the missing child. Have details ready, including what the child was wearing and where they were last seen (refer to the attached map with grid references or use the What3Words app). | |

Quick Reference for Most Common First Aid

| Burns | |
|---|--|
| Environment: Safely extinguish any fire. | |
| Calm Group: Keep the rest of the group calm and use PPE. | |
| Treat Casualty: Treat the burn with water or burn salve. | |
| Emergency Services: Call for assistance and provide location details (What3Words). | |
| Monitor: Watch the casualty closely and prepare to treat for shock by having them lie down on a ground mat, elevating their legs, and covering them with a blanket. | |
| Recovery Position: If the casualty loses consciousness, place them in the recovery position. | |
| Reassure: Offer comfort and emotional support (e.g., a soft toy). | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Hypothermia | |
| Monitor Casualty: Keep a close watch on the casualty and prepare to treat for shock by laying them down on a ground mat, elevating their legs, and covering them with a blanket to retain warmth. | |
| Recovery Position: If the casualty loses consciousness, always place them in the recovery position for safety. | |
| Emergency Services: Call for assistance and provide location details using What3Words. | |
| Reassure: Offer comfort and emotional support, such as giving them a soft toy. | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Cuts (Minor/Major) | |
| Environment: Ensure the group is safe from further harm and remove any dangerous objects. | |
| Assess Needs: Determine if emergency services are required. | |
| Treat Casualty: Wear PPE, clean the injury, and apply a sterile bandage with pressure as needed. | |
| Emergency Services: If necessary, call for help and provide location details using What3Words. | |
| Monitor Casualty: Watch for signs of shock, lay the casualty down on a ground mat, elevate their legs, and cover them with a blanket. | |
| Recovery Position: If the casualty loses consciousness, place them in the recovery position. | |
| Reassure: Provide comfort and emotional support (e.g., a soft toy). | |

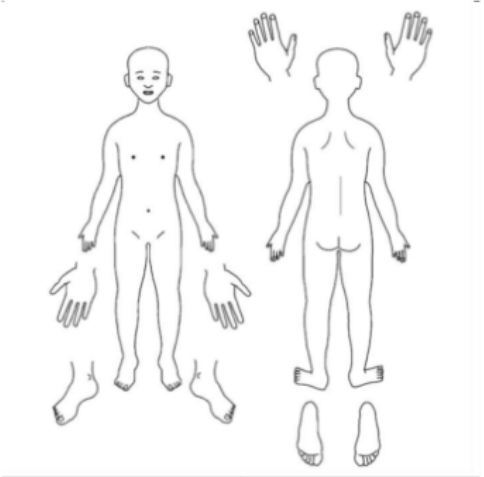
| | |
|--|--|
| Suspected Neck Injury | |
| Assess Condition: Check if the casualty is conscious, unconscious, or breathing. | |
| Ensure Airway: Keep the airway clear using a chin lift technique. | |
| Stabilize Head: Approach from behind or in front, keeping the head stable and preventing movement. | |
| Check for Other Injuries: Look for signs of bleeding or additional injuries. | |
| Treat Casualty: Maintain head stability and apply a chin lift to keep the airway clear. | |
| Emergency Services: Call for help and provide location details using What3Words. | |
| Environmental Safety: Assess whether the casualty needs to be moved, and delegate to others to gather necessary equipment like blankets for warmth. | |
| Monitor Condition: If the casualty is at risk of losing consciousness, place them in the recovery position and keep them warm (lay them down on a ground mat and cover them with a blanket). | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Unconscious Casualty | |
| Environment: Remove any source of danger to ensure safety. | |
| Assess Condition: Check for response and breathing. | |
| Treat Casualty: Wear PPE, keep the head stable, and apply a chin lift to maintain a clear airway. Call for immediate help for an adult after performing initial CPR for a child. | |
| Emergency Protocol: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure airways are clear (apply chin lift to check). b. If breathing, place in the recovery position. c. If not breathing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. For a child: Give 5 breaths followed by 30 chest compressions, then 2 breaths, repeating until help arrives. ii. For an adult: Call for help first, utilize an AED if available, then give 2 breaths followed by 30 chest compressions. | |
| Emergency Services: Call for assistance and share location details using What3Words. | |
| Environmental Needs: Determine if the casualty should be moved; delegate to others to retrieve equipment (e.g., blankets) and assist with the move. | |
| Monitor Condition: Keep the casualty in the recovery position and warm (lay them down on a ground mat and cover with a blanket). | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Choking | |
| Assess Condition: Determine if the casualty needs help and check if they can signal if they can't speak. | |
| Assist If Conscious: If the casualty is conscious, perform back slaps (5) and Heimlich manoeuvres (5), checking for improvement after each attempt. | |
| Emergency Services: If the blockage cannot be cleared, call emergency services and provide location details using What3Words. | |

Incident Report Form (Example Template)

Incident report form

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Child's name : | Bumped head note required : Yes / No |
| Date of accident : | Parent carer signature : |
| Description of injury : | Body map :  |
| Name of first aider : | Signature of first aider : |
| Time first aid given : | Time parent/carers contacted : |

Bumped Head Note (Template)

Bumped Head Note

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This note serves to inform you that your child has bumped their head and may require monitoring once they are back in your care. I have observed their condition while they were in my care and will notify you if I noticed any signs of being dazed, confused, or any behaviour that seemed unusual, which could indicate a possible concussion.

For guidance on managing head bumps, please refer to the NHS website. Recommendations include ensuring your child rests, avoiding rough play for a few days, and monitoring their condition for a 24-hour period after the incident. If you need to speak with someone from the NHS non-emergency helpline, please dial 111.

Child's Name:

Time of Incident:

Signature of First Aider:

Date:

Bumped Head Note

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This note serves to inform you that your child has bumped their head and may require monitoring once they are back in your care. I have observed their condition while they were in my care and will notify you if I noticed any signs of being dazed, confused, or any behaviour that seemed unusual, which could indicate a possible concussion.

For guidance on managing head bumps, please refer to the NHS website. Recommendations include ensuring your child rests, avoiding rough play for a few days, and monitoring their condition for a 24-hour period after the incident. If you need to speak with someone from the NHS non-emergency helpline, please dial 111.

Child's Name:

Time of Incident:

Signature of First Aider:

Date: