



## **Forest School Policy**

### **VIS Mission**

**VIS aims to provide our students with a first-class, well-rounded education while being immersed in a beautiful and safe mountain environment. Critical thinking, creativity and open-mindedness to the cultures and beliefs of others inspire learning at our school. With a strong emphasis on sports and the arts, we believe in developing the personality of each student and helping them to become principled global citizens.**

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# 1. Policies and Procedure

VIS will follow all its usual policies and procedures according to our School Handbook.

Our first priority is to keep your child safe. The risk assessment we use is to determine whether the possible risk of a

child injuring themselves outweighs the positive things they could gain from this - risks versus benefits.

For example: Using a bow saw offers the lifelong benefits of

- higher self-esteem,
- risk management,
- safety awareness,
- physical skills,
- independence,
- communication and teamwork.

The combination of all these things far outway the negative, such as hurting themselves with the saw or cutting themselves.

There will always be risks but if we can teach the children these skills when they are young, they will be much better equipped for the future.

## 2. Forest School Code of Conduct.

### **Entering the Woodland**

When we go into the forest we know that we have to leave the forest as we found it leaving no rubbish, we only use what is necessary, if we move logs and rocks we put them back. We make sure not to hurt or damage our environment. Children understand that they are sharing the Forest with plants, trees and animals and it must be respected and left as we found it.

### **Boundaries**

Each Forest session will start with a reminder about how far the children are allowed to explore. The boundaries will be marked by red ribbons tied to some trees, for the older groups extensions to these red boundaries will be made with neon yellow ribbons. When the group arrives we will talk about the boundaries with the children then walk around them, again for the older groups the children are able to set their own boundaries, within view of the teachers. When a teacher calls 'sticky feet' or uses an ocarina call the children must come back to the group immediately.

### **Using Tools**

All tools have their own sheet of rules for correct use and conduct. Included on this sheet will be how to use the tool properly and safely and what the tool can be used for. Accompanied by demonstration by an adult. All tools will be used on a one to one ratio and supervised by an adult, in a designated roped off tool area. Please see the attached "Tool Talks" which we give before the use of any tool.

### **Picking up and Playing with sticks**

children can pick up and carry sticks the same length or smaller than their arm. Longer branches or logs can be dragged or carried between 3 children or more with adult supervision. Sticks should not be taken from growing trees, ideally they should be picked up off the ground. Children are not allowed to throw sticks. Teachers will explain and remind children of this on arrival at Forest School. Sticks may be used to create Forest Art.

### **Picking up and Playing with stones**

Stones are allowed to be picked up and moved carefully. Stones can not be thrown, teachers will explain and remind children of this on arrival at Forest School. Stones can be dropped but the area must be clear, and children need to check what is underneath before they are going to place it. Stones may be used to create Forest Art and Sculptures.

### **Carrying and Transporting Materials**

Children are encouraged to pull, drag, lift and carry materials by themselves or with the help of others. Teachers will remind children and demonstrate the correct way to safely lift something by bending out knees, keeping our backs straight and looking and knowing where they are going to drop it or take it to. Heavier things can be rolled or carried by a number of children all working together. Children can also go and ask an adult for help. We will also teach the children how to use a timber hitch knot, to transport heavier logs and branches.

### **Toileting**

Children use the toilets at school before we leave. In the forest there are two designated areas for children to go to the toilet. Children must always tell a teacher when they need to go to the toilet. Younger children will be accompanied by an adult. We have a specific shovel to be used for the toilet for either an adult or a child will dig a suitable hole for a "bowel motion" and mark the spot with a stick, sticking out from the ground upwards. There will be toilet paper in a bag and disinfectant gel for hands when children have finished. After toileting the child/staff must wash their hands with water or use antibacterial gel.

### **Leaving the Site**

All materials that have been brought on to the site must be taken back to school, including all rubbish after every session. Shelters can be left up, All equipment needs to be counted and checked when taken out of the bag, and again when packing up including tools. There is a checklist in each forest school bag Needs to be a comprehensive checklist in the red box too.... Some items and materials are left in a red metal box, locked and attached at the forest school site.

We will do a sweep of the site on arrival and a sweep just before we leave to check nothing has been forgotten. Our motto is: "leave the forest how we found it".

### **Tree Climbing**

One child to one adult ratio for climbing trees. The tree should be checked by an adult and be deemed as safe for climbing. The ground layer will be checked for any sharp objects, if there are rocks and branches or logs, they will be removed if possible. A visual check must be done by an adult to check for loose or rotten branches. Adults are there for support and safety. Children can climb to a maximum height of 1.5 metres or to as high as they are comfortable with.

### **Digging**

Children can carefully dig holes to find insects, or to use dirt for mud pies and other activities. Children are discouraged from digging deep holes in the ground. They should recover the ground after they have dug there to protect the habitat of insects and other living creatures.

### **Collecting wood**

Sticks can be collected for creating picture frames, magic wands, swords, for a maths activity such as measuring length, making shapes and writing names and making patterns. Sticks should be collected moderately so the natural habitat of the forest does not get damaged and animal habitats stay intact. Most sticks should stay in the forest unless used for a creative art activity. Sticks should be collected from the ground and not detached from trees and bushes.

### **Eating and Drinking**

The policy is: nothing found in the forest is to be eaten. This includes: Mushrooms, berries and plants. Children

are reminded of this at school and when we arrive on site. When children are having drinks and snacks hands must be washed with clean water that is on site. We also have disinfectant gel to use before lunch. Children are reminded to avoid putting their fingers in the mouths, noses and eyes.

**Rope and String Use**

Children are allowed to use ropes and strings for creativity, to build swings, shelters, to practise tying knots, to pull and move materials from one place to another. Children are not allowed to use the ropes on each other.

### 3.Forest Site Policy

The Forest School Leader will visually check site upon arrival. Forests are popular with dog walkers so there will possibly be dog faeces in the woods. If a child or adult steps in faeces the adults will wipe the excess using a stick, leaves etc. If any faeces comes into contact with children's hands it will be immediately washed away using antibacterial products. Forest School Leader will keep a check on the conditions and the site. If the Forest School Leader deems the site unsafe for any reason the following action will be taken:

- Forest School Leaders to gather the group ensuring head counts.
- Forest School Leaders to gather equipment if safely accessible.
- Forest School Leaders to exit the children via the safest route.
- In the event of a fire the Emergency services will be alerted.
- Forest School Leaders will contact the school and if safe, return.
- The Forest School Group will stay together.