



“Springfield is a caring, supportive and innovative school where everyone is recognised and appreciated as an individual. The golden thread running through our vision is the mental health and wellbeing of our school community. By creating a safe, supportive and relational environment for all, we enable our children to be ambitious and to reach their full potential, so that they can take their place in their community and in the wider world.”

Spring Forest Play Policy



This policy outlines good practice for facilitating risky play, roles/ responsibilities of the Forest School leader and supporting adults and the making choices in a Forest School setting.

Risk Benefit - What is it?

This is a risk management tool to help consider and maintain a positive approach when facilitating risky play. ‘Risky Play’ are activities which may involve children playing and learning whilst there may be some risk associated with that activity, for example climbing trees, playing in streams/ puddles, playing with natural materials, decision making etc.

Many activities within a Forest School environment involve some kind of risk. Equally they have a benefit to individuals and should be promoted. Helping individuals learn new skills and develop self-esteem, relationship building, creative expression, interpersonal, intrapersonal skills and self-confidence.

The purpose of a risk to benefit review is to make sure that the benefits outweigh the risks by actively making activities safe enough through prior planning, communication and Health & Safety practices/ risk assessments.

Forest School Leaders and Staff

Supporting adults are required to facilitate and approach risky play with the confidence that children can manage risks for themselves. Carrying out dynamic risk assessment with the help of the children before starting an activity will help cancel out some risk involved as will correct supervision as set out in all forest school risk assessments of tools and site.

Obviously, it is our 'duty of care' to intervene and 'stop' learners who are not managing risky activities well. At which point, being careful not to just address and discipline a child, instead opening a two-way discussion to help the child reflect on what was happening and how they can manage an activity safely.

Supporting adults must find a balance between giving children freedom to make mistakes in a safe way, whilst avoiding harm from occurring. It is our objective to help empower children to manage risks for themselves. By modelling safe practices of how to manage risk dynamically, we are promoting reflective and thoughtful attitudes towards working and playing safely. Allowing opportunities for reflection, we aim to support children with considering the impact of their own actions on themselves and on others.

Making Choices

A child-lead teaching approach that meets the needs and interests of children helps to accelerate learning and a connection with the natural environment in a holistic way. Play and choice are a key part of the learning process, these should be recognised and valued by all supporting adults. A child-lead approach and commitment to play and choice will provide an incentive for all learning choices and individuals. Through careful observations and the needs and interests of individuals, Forest School sessions can and should be child led, 'in the moment', as much as reasonably practical. These 'moments' should be acted upon to allow the natural development of individuals' curiosities and insights.