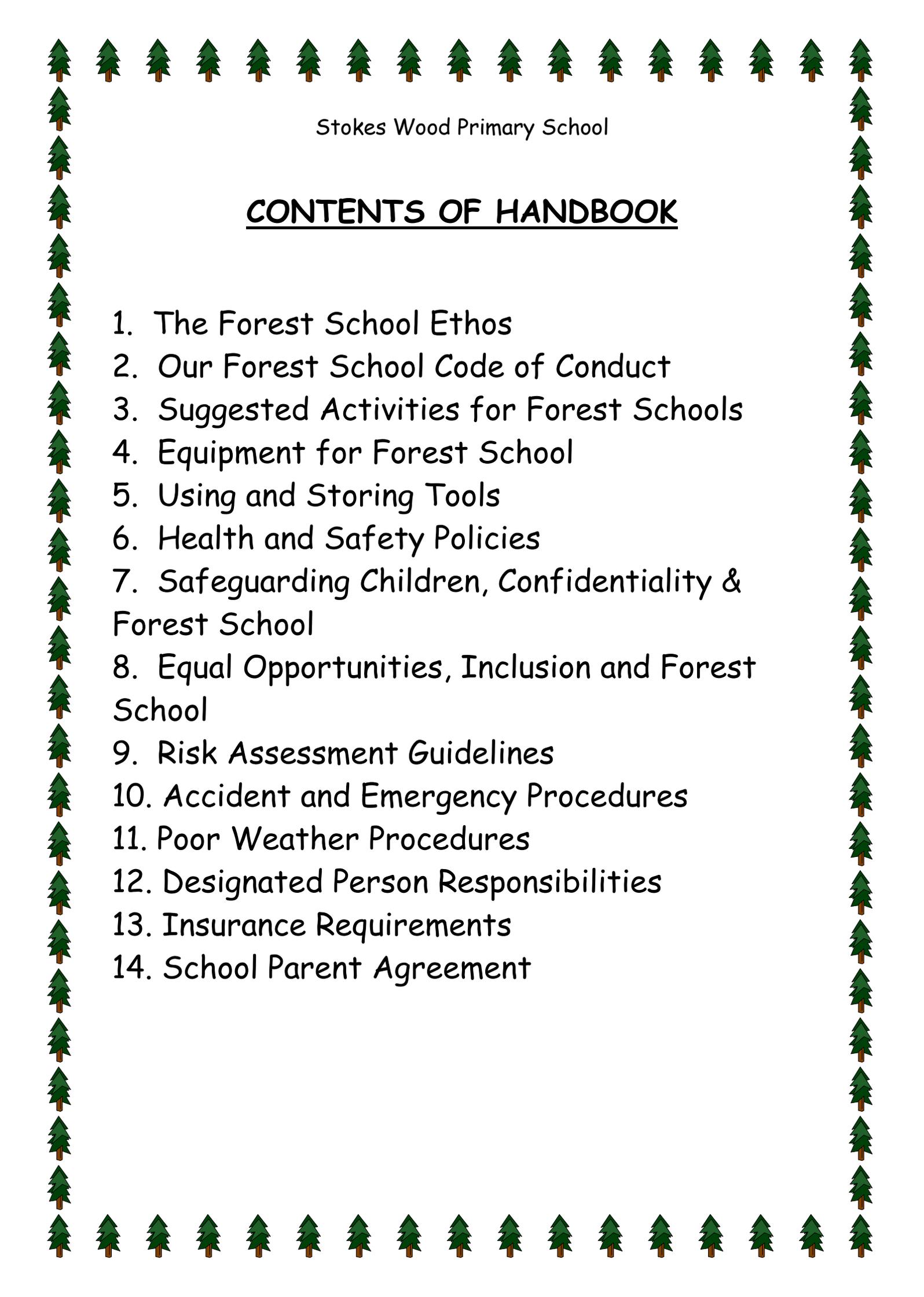


# Our Forest School handbook

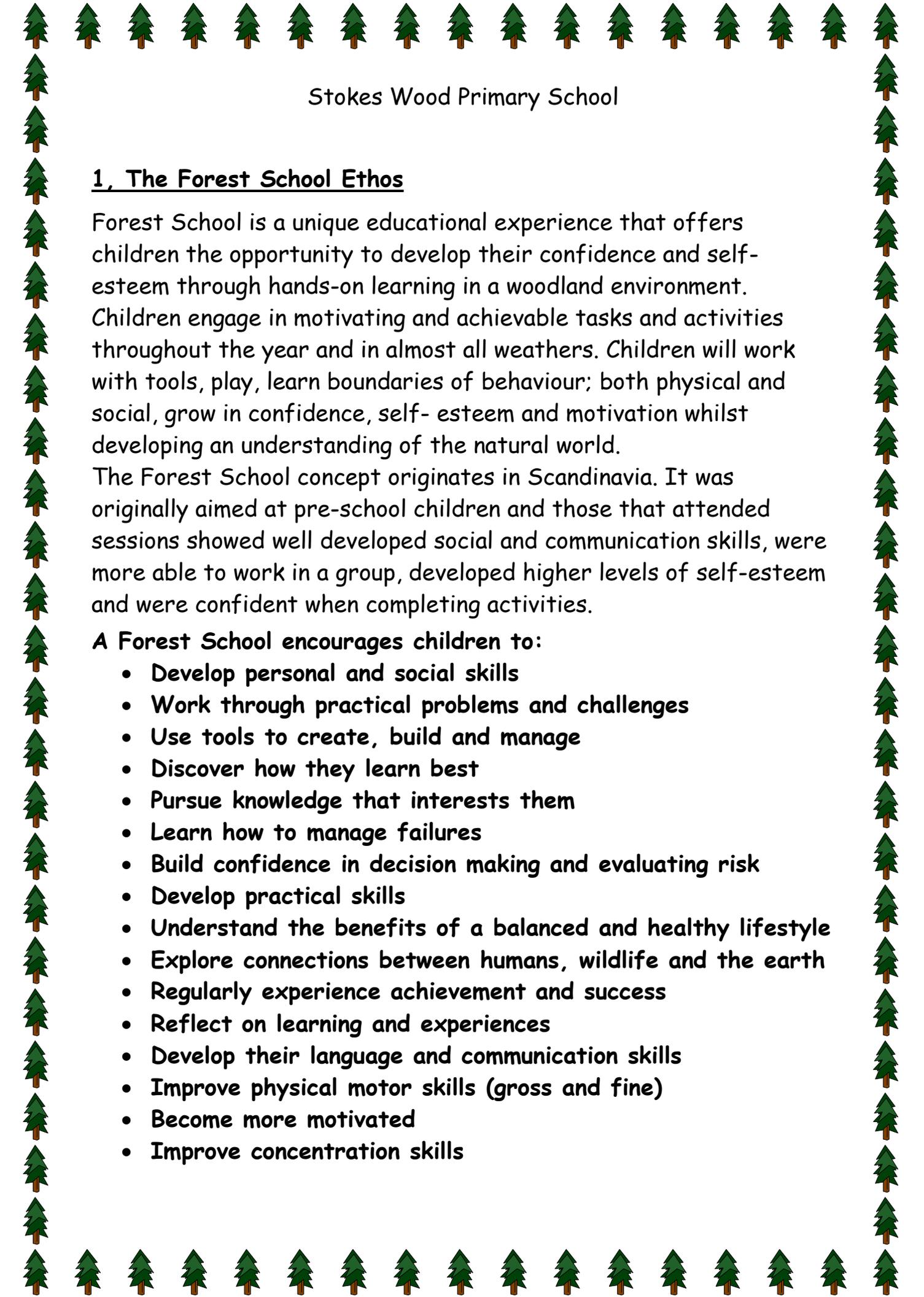




Stokes Wood Primary School

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## Stokes Wood Primary School

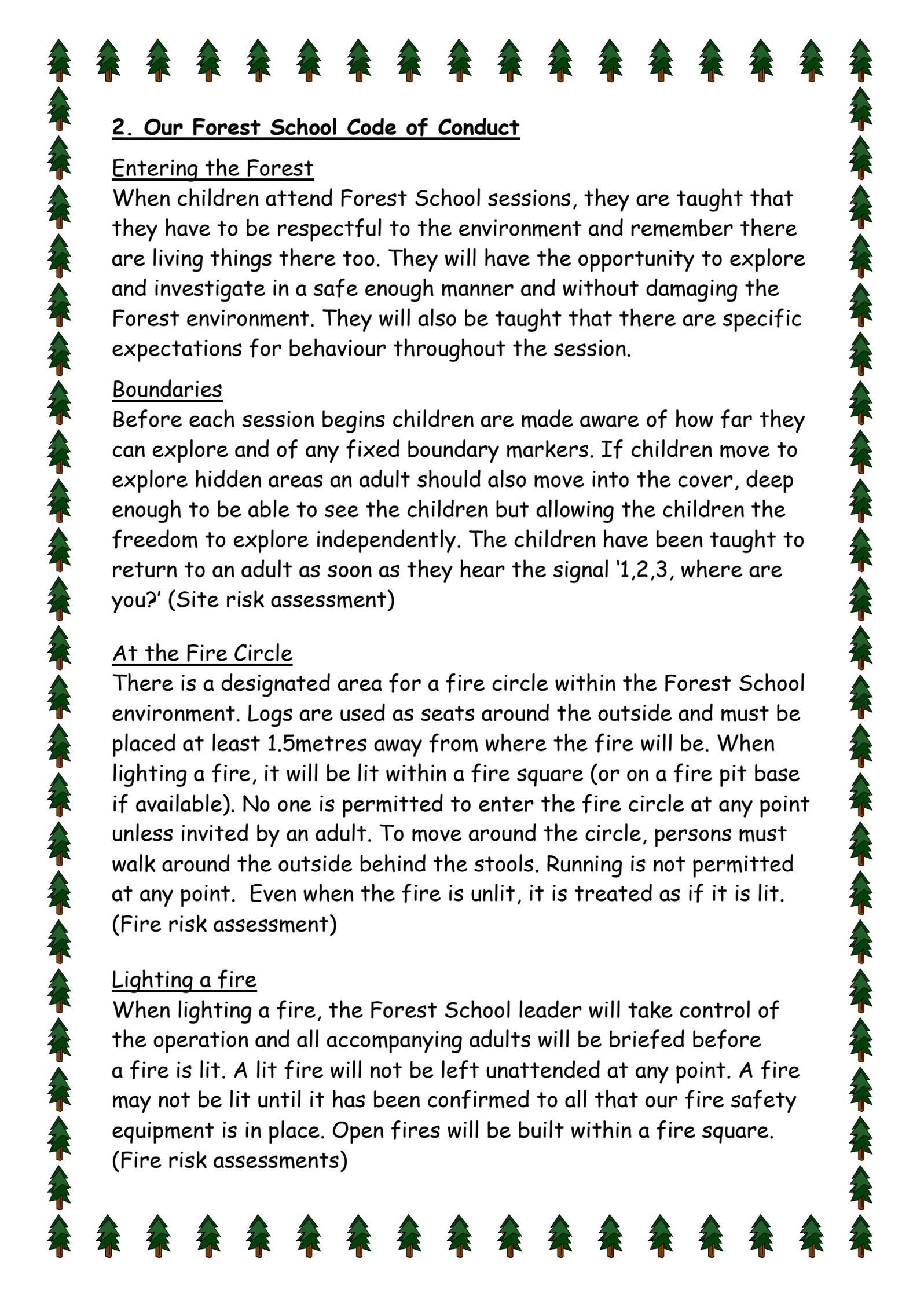
### 1, The Forest School Ethos

Forest School is a unique educational experience that offers children the opportunity to develop their confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning in a woodland environment. Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers. Children will work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world.

The Forest School concept originates in Scandinavia. It was originally aimed at pre-school children and those that attended sessions showed well developed social and communication skills, were more able to work in a group, developed higher levels of self-esteem and were confident when completing activities.

**A Forest School encourages children to:**

- **Develop personal and social skills**
- **Work through practical problems and challenges**
- **Use tools to create, build and manage**
- **Discover how they learn best**
- **Pursue knowledge that interests them**
- **Learn how to manage failures**
- **Build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk**
- **Develop practical skills**
- **Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle**
- **Explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth**
- **Regularly experience achievement and success**
- **Reflect on learning and experiences**
- **Develop their language and communication skills**
- **Improve physical motor skills (gross and fine)**
- **Become more motivated**
- **Improve concentration skills**

A decorative border of stylized green trees with brown trunks surrounds the page. The trees are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with a row of 15 trees at the top, a row of 15 trees at the bottom, and vertical columns of trees on the left and right sides. The trees are evenly spaced and consistent in size and style.

## 2. Our Forest School Code of Conduct

### Entering the Forest

When children attend Forest School sessions, they are taught that they have to be respectful to the environment and remember there are living things there too. They will have the opportunity to explore and investigate in a safe enough manner and without damaging the Forest environment. They will also be taught that there are specific expectations for behaviour throughout the session.

### Boundaries

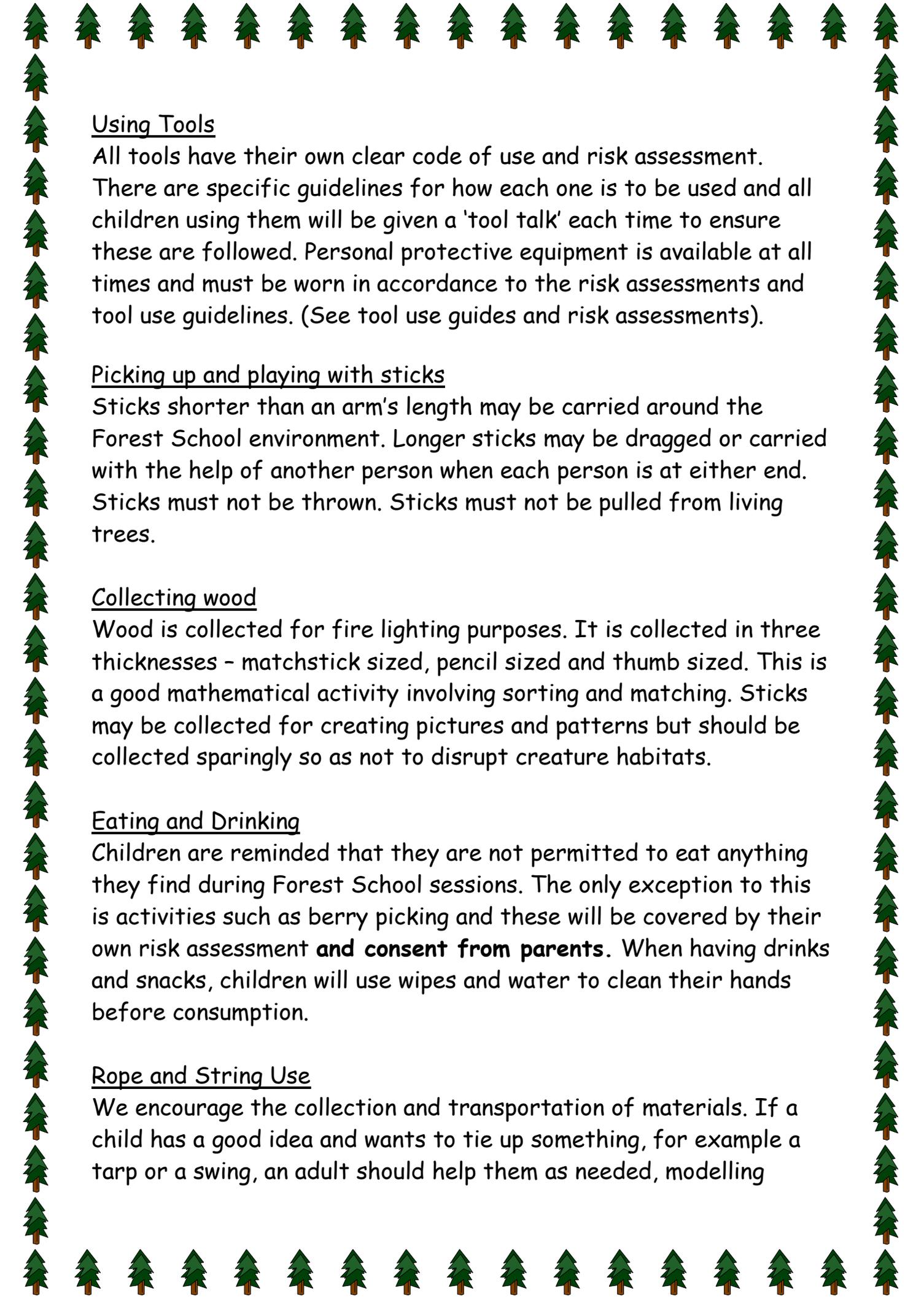
Before each session begins children are made aware of how far they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover, deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. The children have been taught to return to an adult as soon as they hear the signal '1,2,3, where are you?' (Site risk assessment)

### At the Fire Circle

There is a designated area for a fire circle within the Forest School environment. Logs are used as seats around the outside and must be placed at least 1.5metres away from where the fire will be. When lighting a fire, it will be lit within a fire square (or on a fire pit base if available). No one is permitted to enter the fire circle at any point unless invited by an adult. To move around the circle, persons must walk around the outside behind the stools. Running is not permitted at any point. Even when the fire is unlit, it is treated as if it is lit. (Fire risk assessment)

### Lighting a fire

When lighting a fire, the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before a fire is lit. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square. (Fire risk assessments)



### Using Tools

All tools have their own clear code of use and risk assessment. There are specific guidelines for how each one is to be used and all children using them will be given a 'tool talk' each time to ensure these are followed. Personal protective equipment is available at all times and must be worn in accordance to the risk assessments and tool use guidelines. (See tool use guides and risk assessments).

### Picking up and playing with sticks

Sticks shorter than an arm's length may be carried around the Forest School environment. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.

### Collecting wood

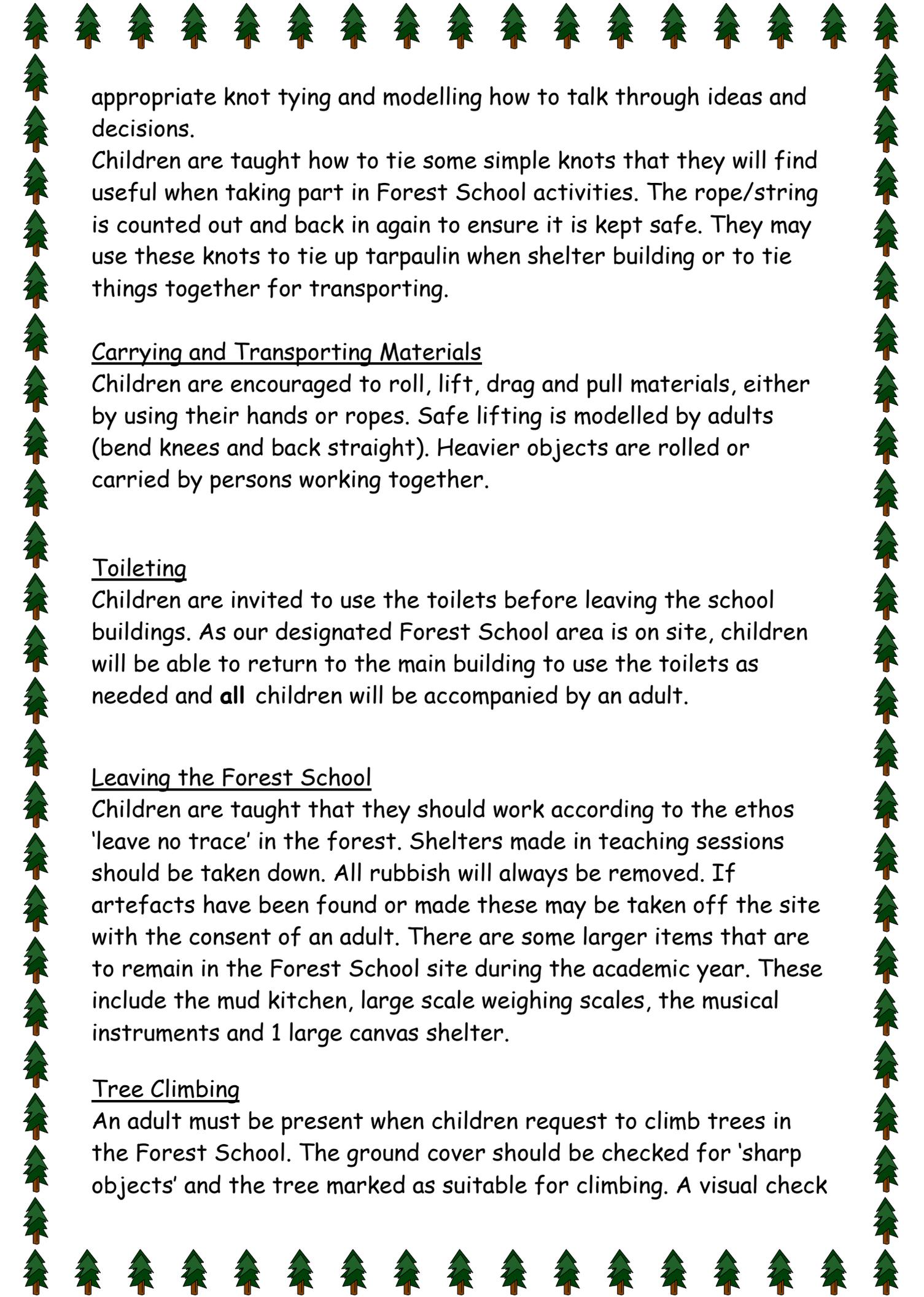
Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in three thicknesses - matchstick sized, pencil sized and thumb sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

### Eating and Drinking

Children are reminded that they are not permitted to eat anything they find during Forest School sessions. The only exception to this is activities such as berry picking and these will be covered by their own risk assessment **and consent from parents**. When having drinks and snacks, children will use wipes and water to clean their hands before consumption.

### Rope and String Use

We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling



appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

Children are taught how to tie some simple knots that they will find useful when taking part in Forest School activities. The rope/string is counted out and back in again to ensure it is kept safe. They may use these knots to tie up tarpaulin when shelter building or to tie things together for transporting.

### Carrying and Transporting Materials

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by using their hands or ropes. Safe lifting is modelled by adults (bend knees and back straight). Heavier objects are rolled or carried by persons working together.

### Toileting

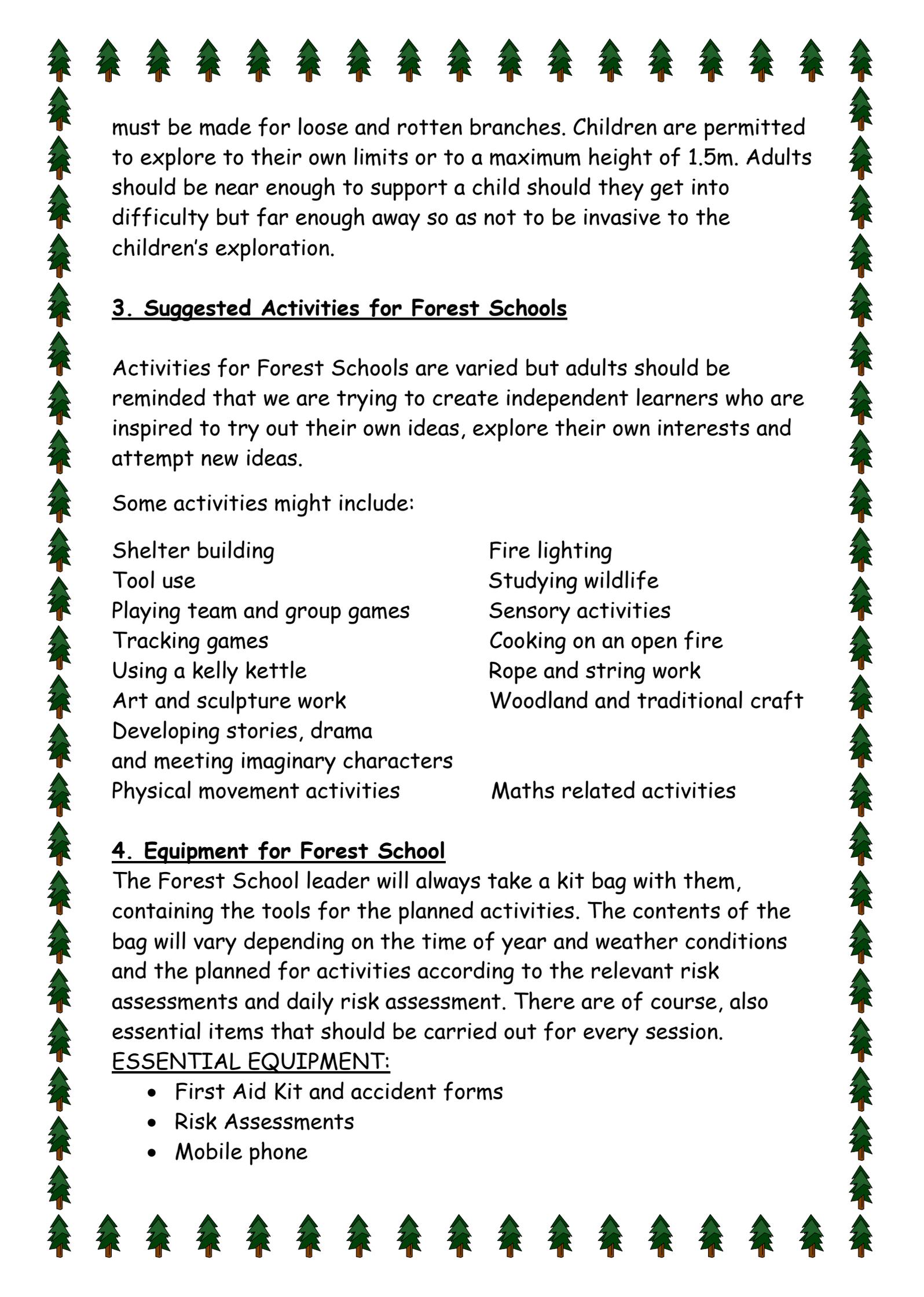
Children are invited to use the toilets before leaving the school buildings. As our designated Forest School area is on site, children will be able to return to the main building to use the toilets as needed and **all** children will be accompanied by an adult.

### Leaving the Forest School

Children are taught that they should work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' in the forest. Shelters made in teaching sessions should be taken down. All rubbish will always be removed. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult. There are some larger items that are to remain in the Forest School site during the academic year. These include the mud kitchen, large scale weighing scales, the musical instruments and 1 large canvas shelter.

### Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when children request to climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check



must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to support a child should they get into difficulty but far enough away so as not to be invasive to the children's exploration.

### 3. Suggested Activities for Forest Schools

Activities for Forest Schools are varied but adults should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

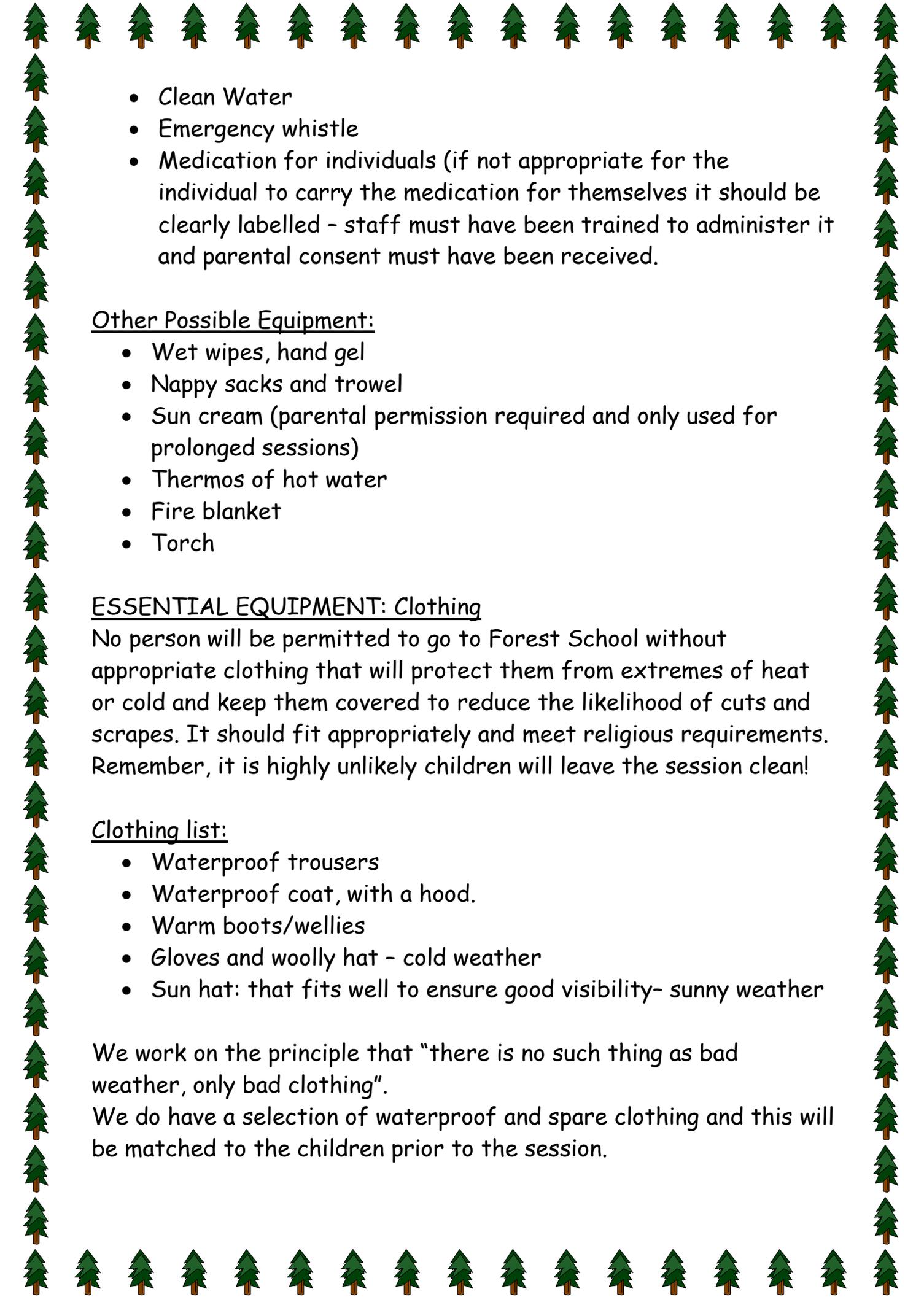
- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Shelter building  | Fire lighting                  |
| Tool use  | Studying wildlife              |
| Playing team and group games                                  | Sensory activities             |
| Tracking games  | Cooking on an open fire        |
| Using a kelly kettle  | Rope and string work           |
| Art and sculpture work  | Woodland and traditional craft |
| Developing stories, drama<br>and meeting imaginary characters |                                |
| Physical movement activities                                  | Maths related activities       |

### 4. Equipment for Forest School

The Forest School leader will always take a kit bag with them, containing the tools for the planned activities. The contents of the bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment. There are of course, also essential items that should be carried out for every session.

#### ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

- First Aid Kit and accident forms
- Risk Assessments
- Mobile phone

- 
- Clean Water
  - Emergency whistle
  - Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled - staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received.

#### Other Possible Equipment:

- Wet wipes, hand gel
- Nappy sacks and trowel
- Sun cream (parental permission required and only used for prolonged sessions)
- Thermos of hot water
- Fire blanket
- Torch

#### ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: Clothing

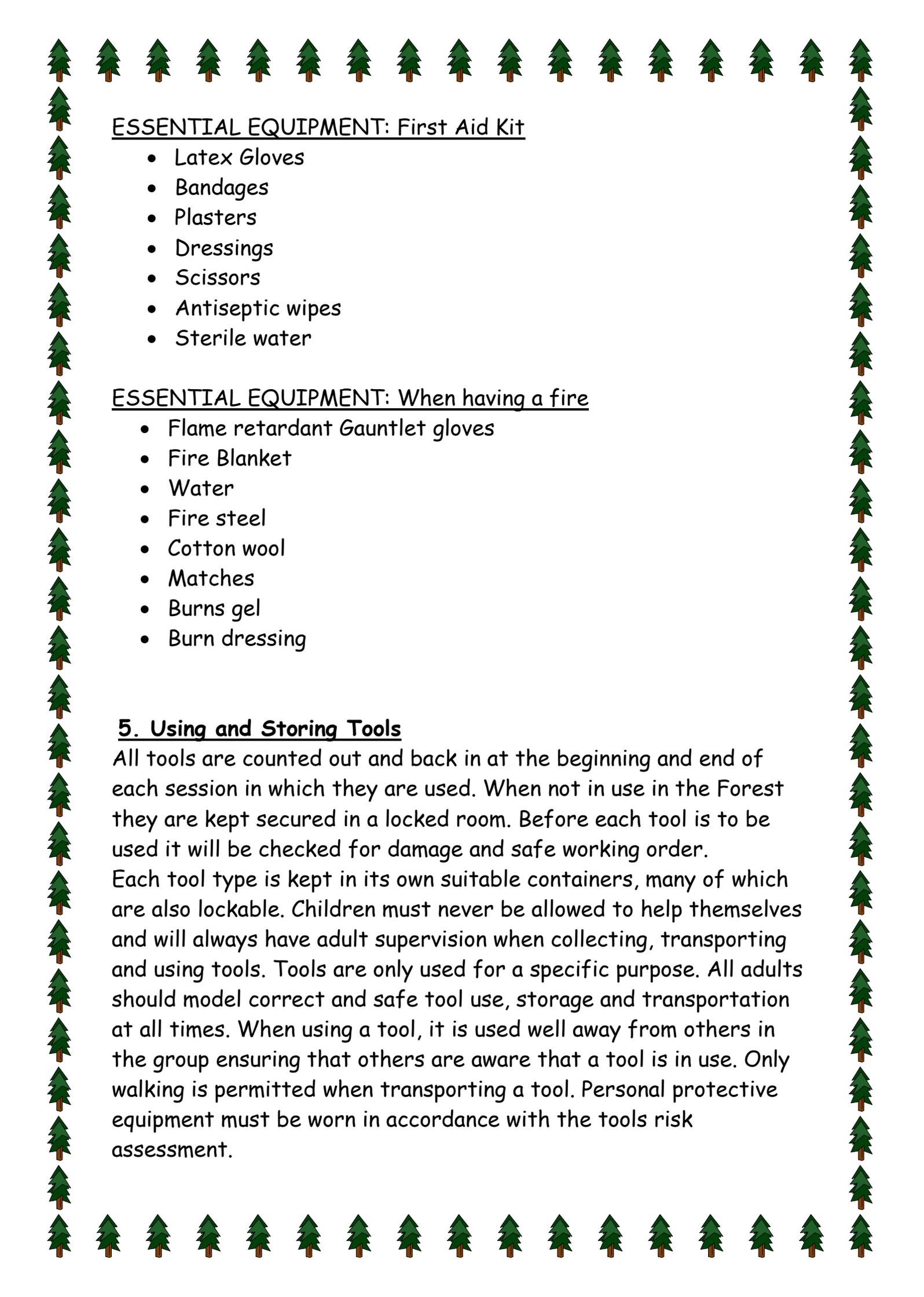
No person will be permitted to go to Forest School without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold and keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes. It should fit appropriately and meet religious requirements. Remember, it is highly unlikely children will leave the session clean!

#### Clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood.
- Warm boots/wellies
- Gloves and woolly hat - cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility- sunny weather

We work on the principle that "there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing".

We do have a selection of waterproof and spare clothing and this will be matched to the children prior to the session.



## ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: First Aid Kit

- Latex Gloves
- Bandages
- Plasters
- Dressings
- Scissors
- Antiseptic wipes
- Sterile water

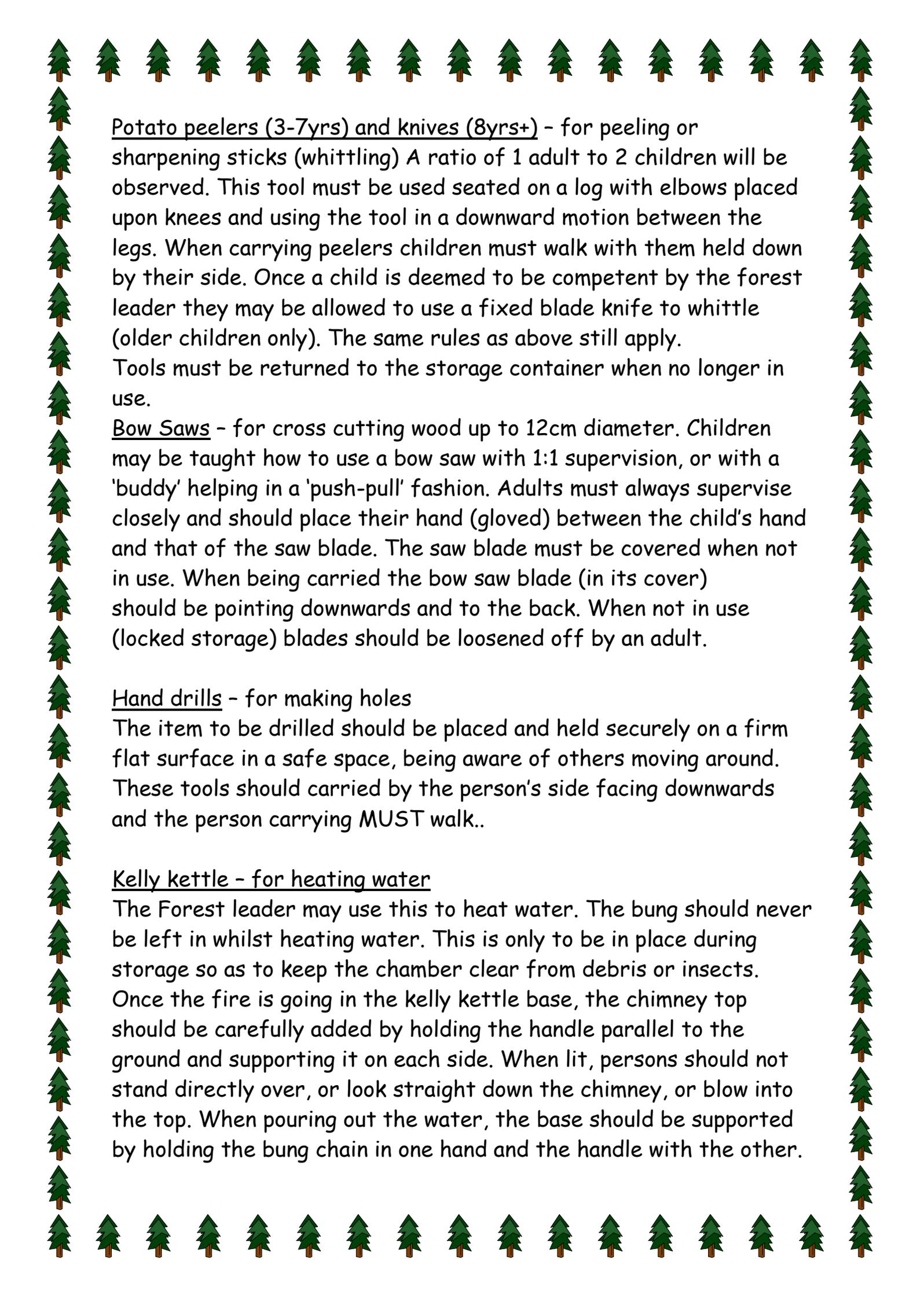
## ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: When having a fire

- Flame retardant Gauntlet gloves
- Fire Blanket
- Water
- Fire steel
- Cotton wool
- Matches
- Burns gel
- Burn dressing

### 5. Using and Storing Tools

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured in a locked room. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and safe working order.

Each tool type is kept in its own suitable containers, many of which are also lockable. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools. Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, it is used well away from others in the group ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool. Personal protective equipment must be worn in accordance with the tools risk assessment.



Potato peelers (3-7yrs) and knives (8yrs+) - for peeling or sharpening sticks (whittling) A ratio of 1 adult to 2 children will be observed. This tool must be used seated on a log with elbows placed upon knees and using the tool in a downward motion between the legs. When carrying peelers children must walk with them held down by their side. Once a child is deemed to be competent by the forest leader they may be allowed to use a fixed blade knife to whittle (older children only). The same rules as above still apply. Tools must be returned to the storage container when no longer in use.

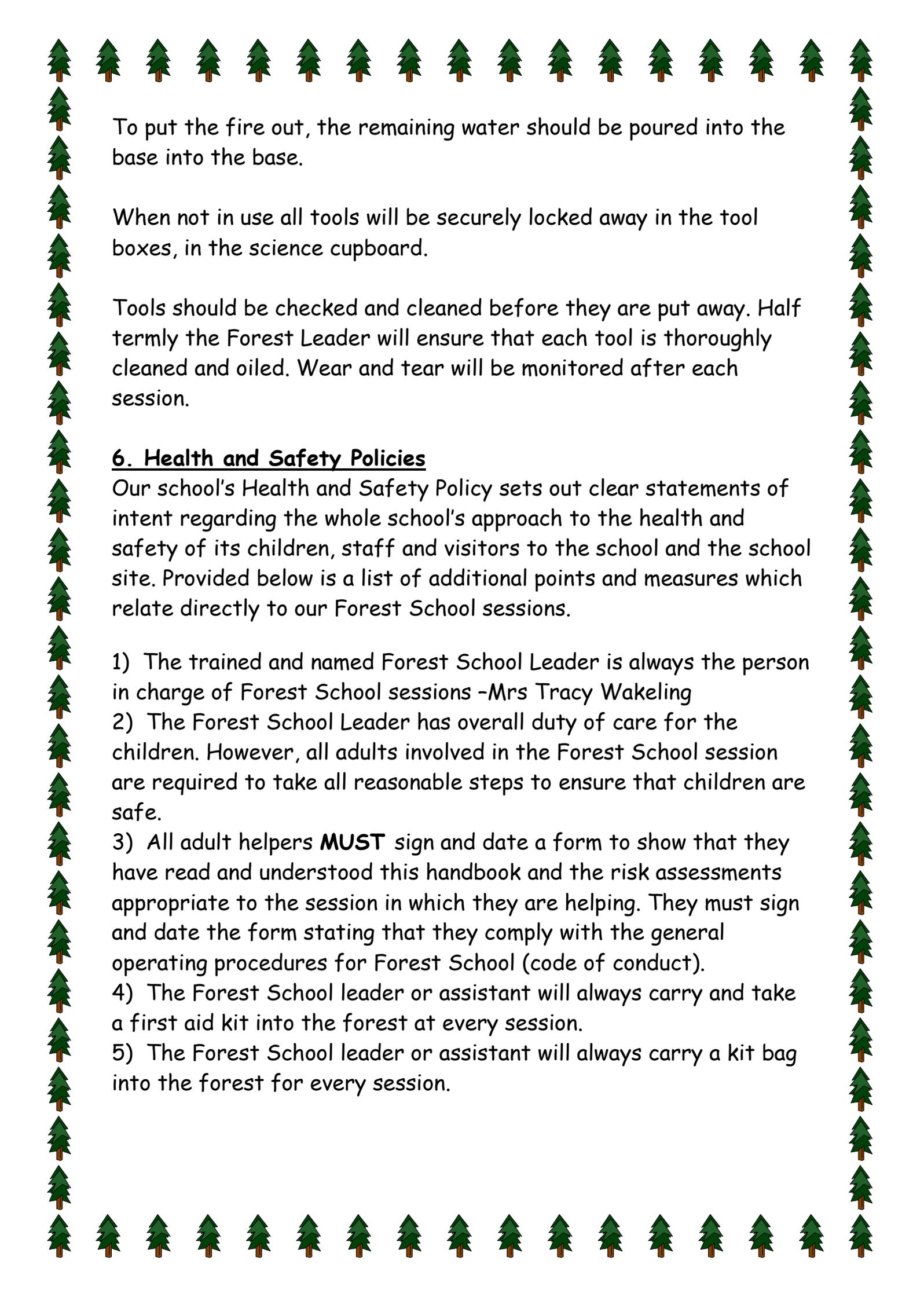
Bow Saws - for cross cutting wood up to 12cm diameter. Children may be taught how to use a bow saw with 1:1 supervision, or with a 'buddy' helping in a 'push-pull' fashion. Adults must always supervise closely and should place their hand (gloved) between the child's hand and that of the saw blade. The saw blade must be covered when not in use. When being carried the bow saw blade (in its cover) should be pointing downwards and to the back. When not in use (locked storage) blades should be loosened off by an adult.

Hand drills - for making holes

The item to be drilled should be placed and held securely on a firm flat surface in a safe space, being aware of others moving around. These tools should be carried by the person's side facing downwards and the person carrying **MUST** walk..

Kelly kettle - for heating water

The Forest leader may use this to heat water. The bung should never be left in whilst heating water. This is only to be in place during storage so as to keep the chamber clear from debris or insects. Once the fire is going in the kelly kettle base, the chimney top should be carefully added by holding the handle parallel to the ground and supporting it on each side. When lit, persons should not stand directly over, or look straight down the chimney, or blow into the top. When pouring out the water, the base should be supported by holding the bung chain in one hand and the handle with the other.

A decorative border of small green trees with brown trunks runs along the top, bottom, and sides of the page. The trees are arranged in a regular grid pattern.

To put the fire out, the remaining water should be poured into the base into the base.

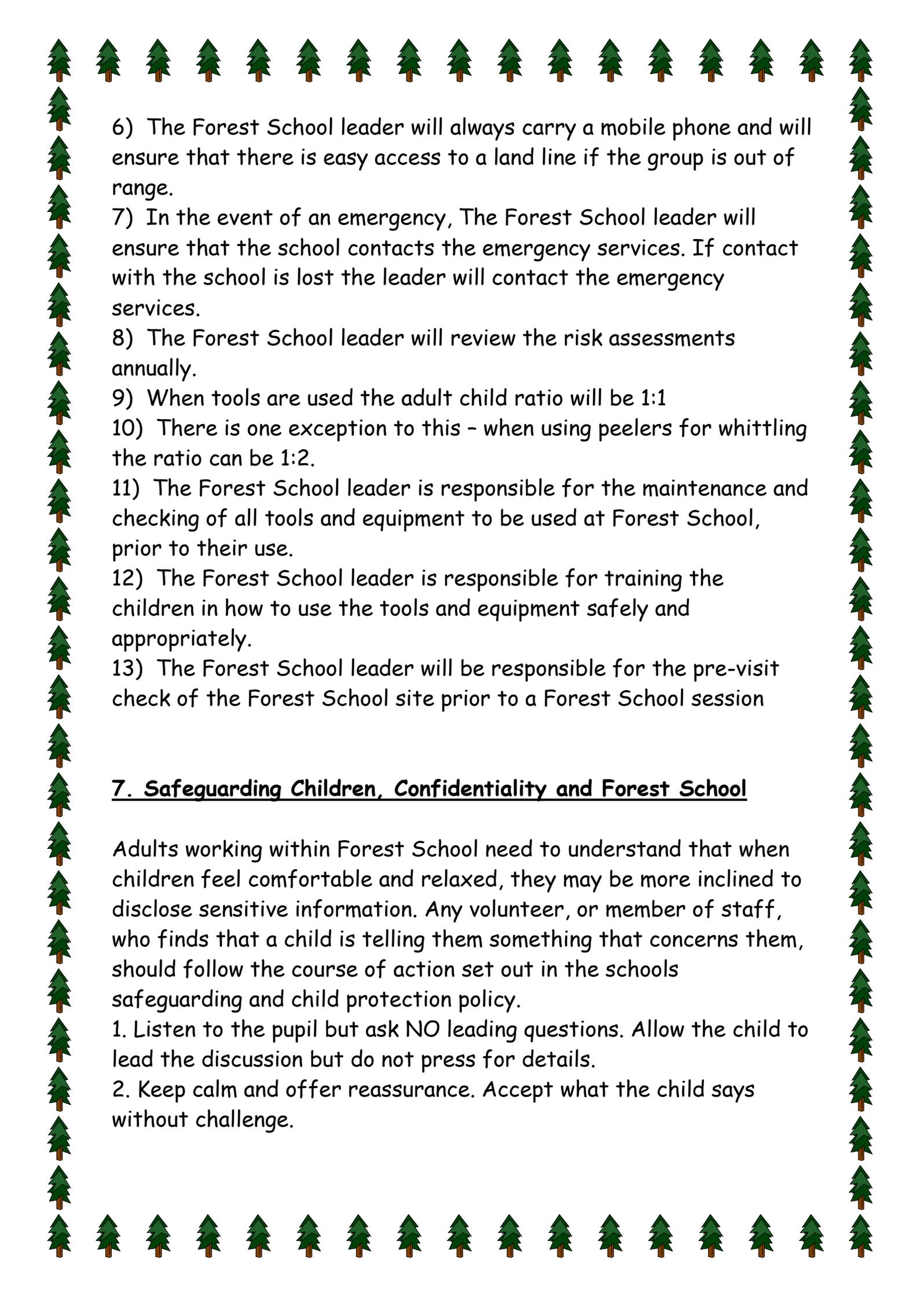
When not in use all tools will be securely locked away in the tool boxes, in the science cupboard.

Tools should be checked and cleaned before they are put away. Half termly the Forest Leader will ensure that each tool is thoroughly cleaned and oiled. Wear and tear will be monitored after each session.

## 6. Health and Safety Policies

Our school's Health and Safety Policy sets out clear statements of intent regarding the whole school's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the school and the school site. Provided below is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our Forest School sessions.

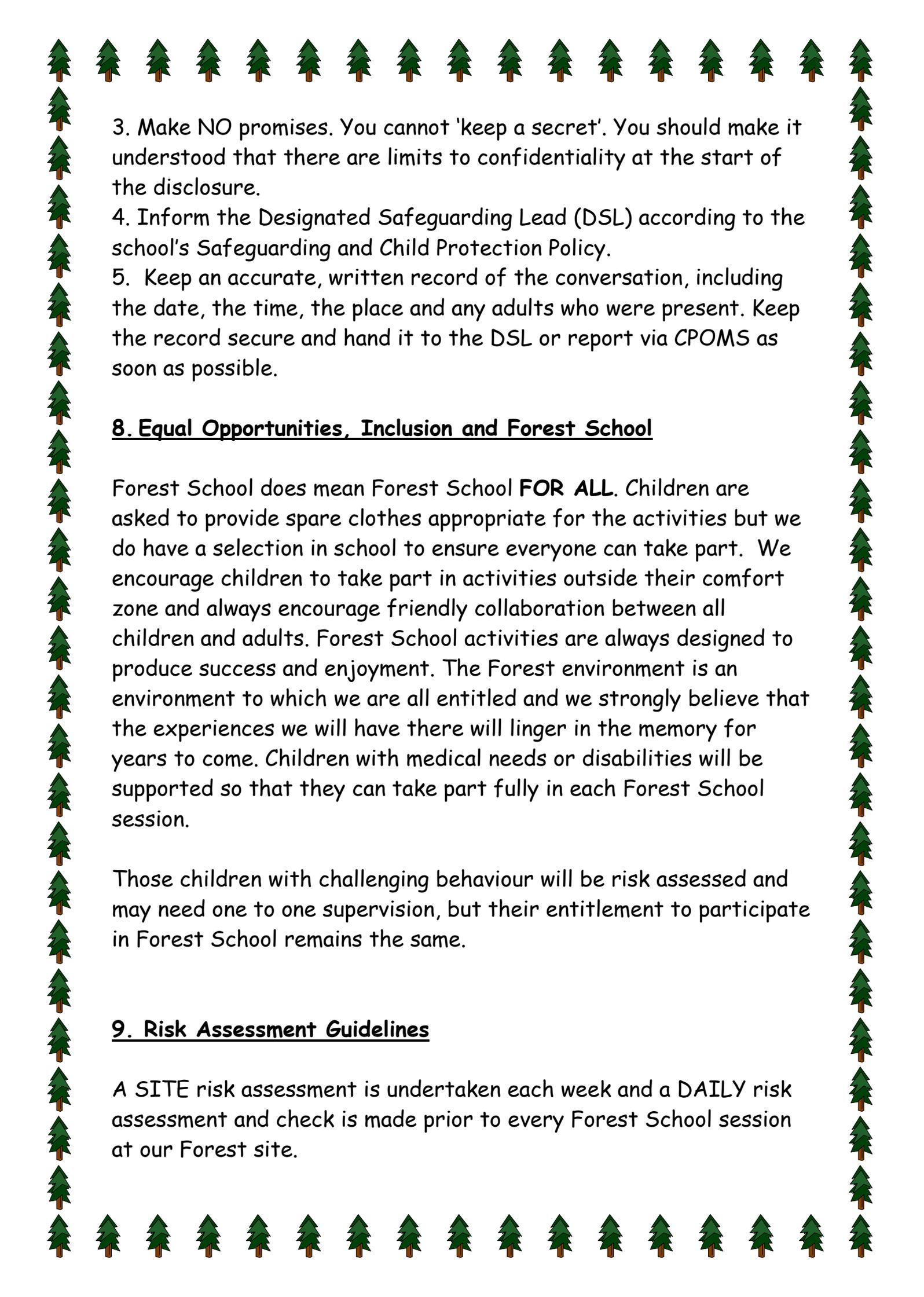
- 1) The trained and named Forest School Leader is always the person in charge of Forest School sessions -Mrs Tracy Wakeling
- 2) The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children. However, all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.
- 3) All adult helpers **MUST** sign and date a form to show that they have read and understood this handbook and the risk assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping. They must sign and date the form stating that they comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School (code of conduct).
- 4) The Forest School leader or assistant will always carry and take a first aid kit into the forest at every session.
- 5) The Forest School leader or assistant will always carry a kit bag into the forest for every session.

- 
- 6) The Forest School leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range.
  - 7) In the event of an emergency, The Forest School leader will ensure that the school contacts the emergency services. If contact with the school is lost the leader will contact the emergency services.
  - 8) The Forest School leader will review the risk assessments annually.
  - 9) When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1
  - 10) There is one exception to this - when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.
  - 11) The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest School, prior to their use.
  - 12) The Forest School leader is responsible for training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
  - 13) The Forest School leader will be responsible for the pre-visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session

## 7. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School

Adults working within Forest School need to understand that when children feel comfortable and relaxed, they may be more inclined to disclose sensitive information. Any volunteer, or member of staff, who finds that a child is telling them something that concerns them, should follow the course of action set out in the schools safeguarding and child protection policy.

1. Listen to the pupil but ask NO leading questions. Allow the child to lead the discussion but do not press for details.
2. Keep calm and offer reassurance. Accept what the child says without challenge.

- 
3. Make NO promises. You cannot 'keep a secret'. You should make it understood that there are limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure.
  4. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) according to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
  5. Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation, including the date, the time, the place and any adults who were present. Keep the record secure and hand it to the DSL or report via CPOMS as soon as possible.

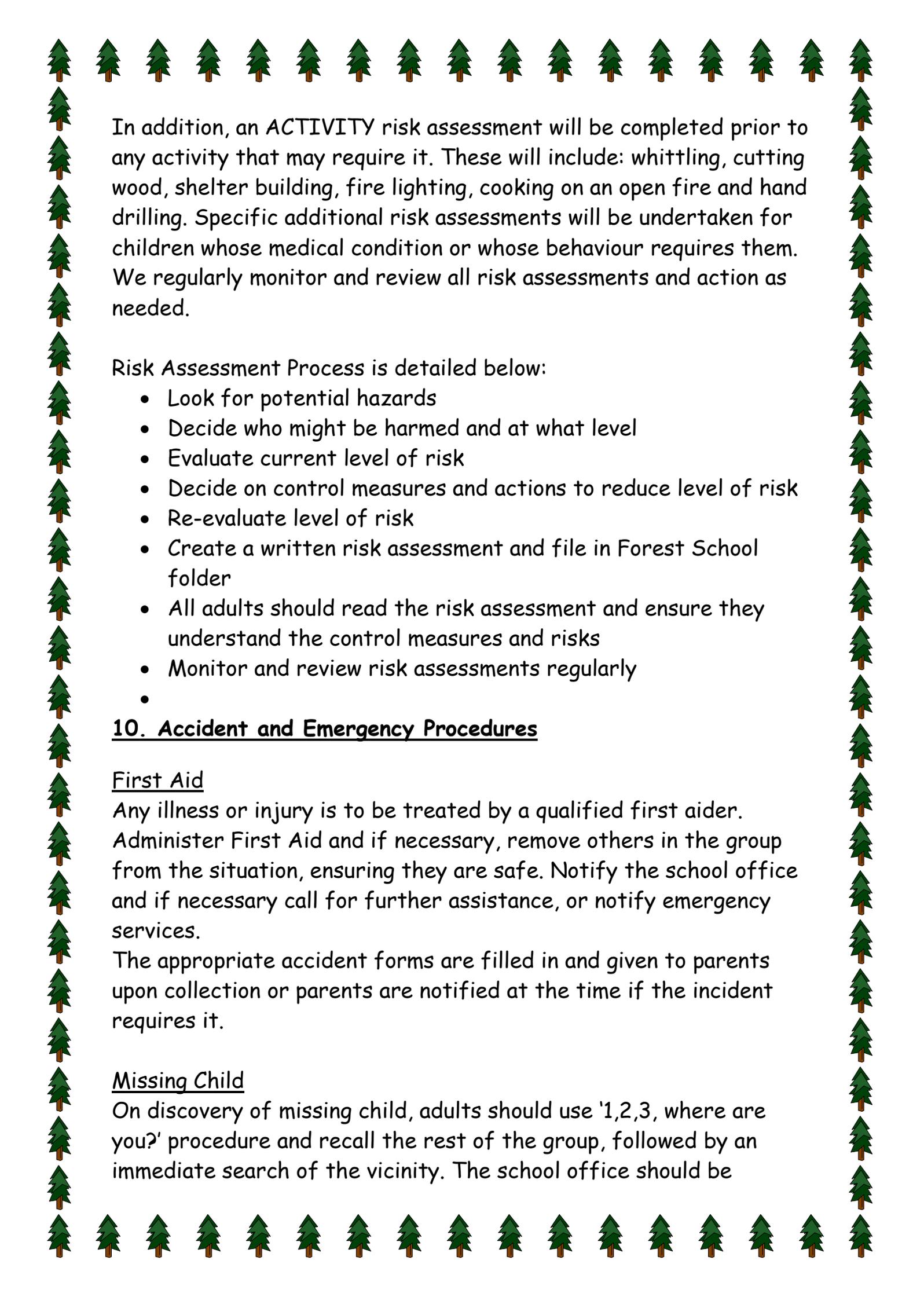
## 8. Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

Forest School does mean Forest School **FOR ALL**. Children are asked to provide spare clothes appropriate for the activities but we do have a selection in school to ensure everyone can take part. We encourage children to take part in activities outside their comfort zone and always encourage friendly collaboration between all children and adults. Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment. The Forest environment is an environment to which we are all entitled and we strongly believe that the experiences we will have there will linger in the memory for years to come. Children with medical needs or disabilities will be supported so that they can take part fully in each Forest School session.

Those children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need one to one supervision, but their entitlement to participate in Forest School remains the same.

## 9. Risk Assessment Guidelines

A SITE risk assessment is undertaken each week and a DAILY risk assessment and check is made prior to every Forest School session at our Forest site.



In addition, an *ACTIVITY* risk assessment will be completed prior to any activity that may require it. These will include: whittling, cutting wood, shelter building, fire lighting, cooking on an open fire and hand drilling. Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them. We regularly monitor and review all risk assessments and action as needed.

Risk Assessment Process is detailed below:

- Look for potential hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and at what level
- Evaluate current level of risk
- Decide on control measures and actions to reduce level of risk
- Re-evaluate level of risk
- Create a written risk assessment and file in Forest School folder
- All adults should read the risk assessment and ensure they understand the control measures and risks
- Monitor and review risk assessments regularly
- 

## 10. Accident and Emergency Procedures

### First Aid

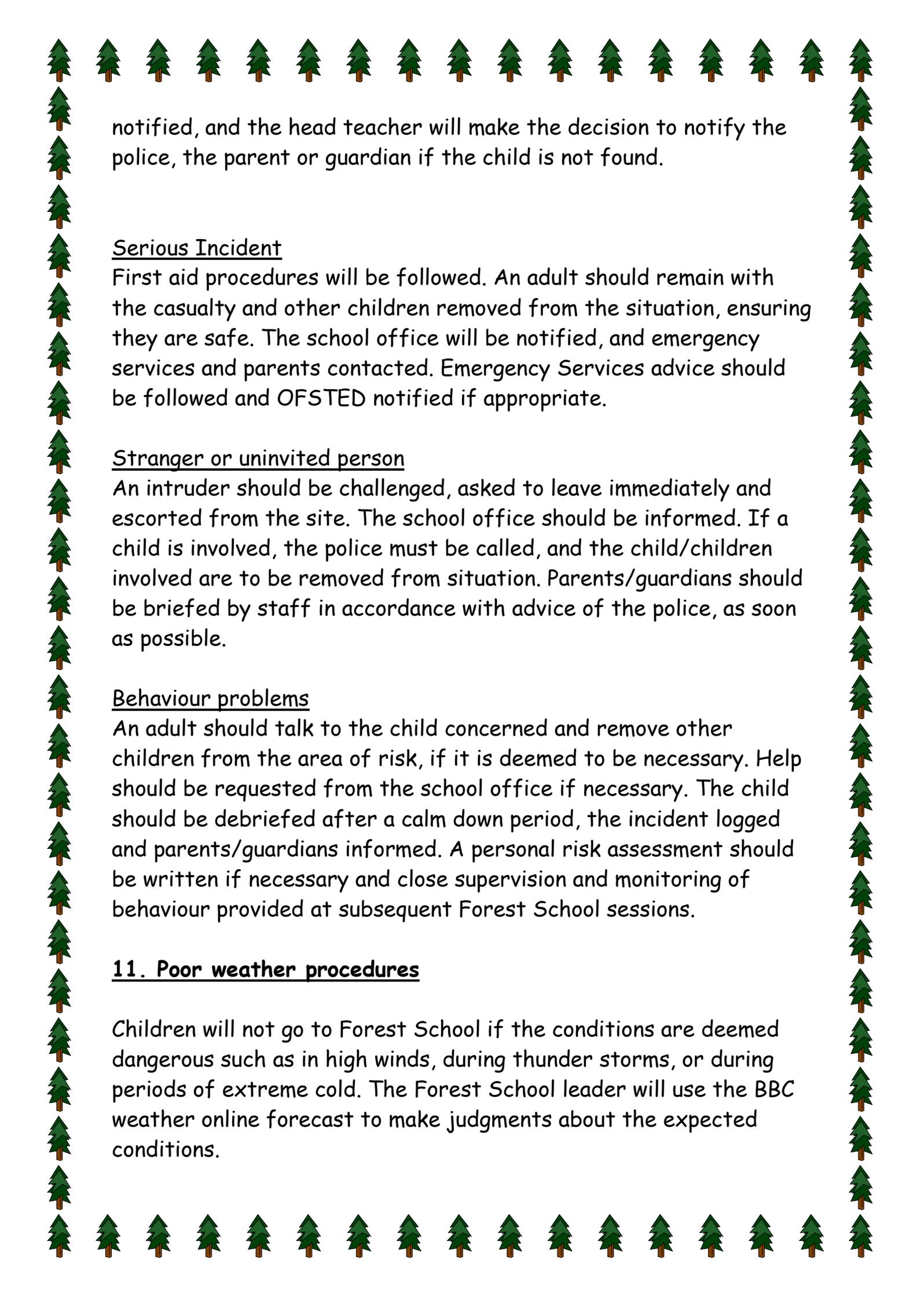
Any illness or injury is to be treated by a qualified first aider.

Administer First Aid and if necessary, remove others in the group from the situation, ensuring they are safe. Notify the school office and if necessary call for further assistance, or notify emergency services.

The appropriate accident forms are filled in and given to parents upon collection or parents are notified at the time if the incident requires it.

### Missing Child

On discovery of missing child, adults should use '1,2,3, where are you?' procedure and recall the rest of the group, followed by an immediate search of the vicinity. The school office should be



notified, and the head teacher will make the decision to notify the police, the parent or guardian if the child is not found.

### Serious Incident

First aid procedures will be followed. An adult should remain with the casualty and other children removed from the situation, ensuring they are safe. The school office will be notified, and emergency services and parents contacted. Emergency Services advice should be followed and OFSTED notified if appropriate.

### Stranger or uninvited person

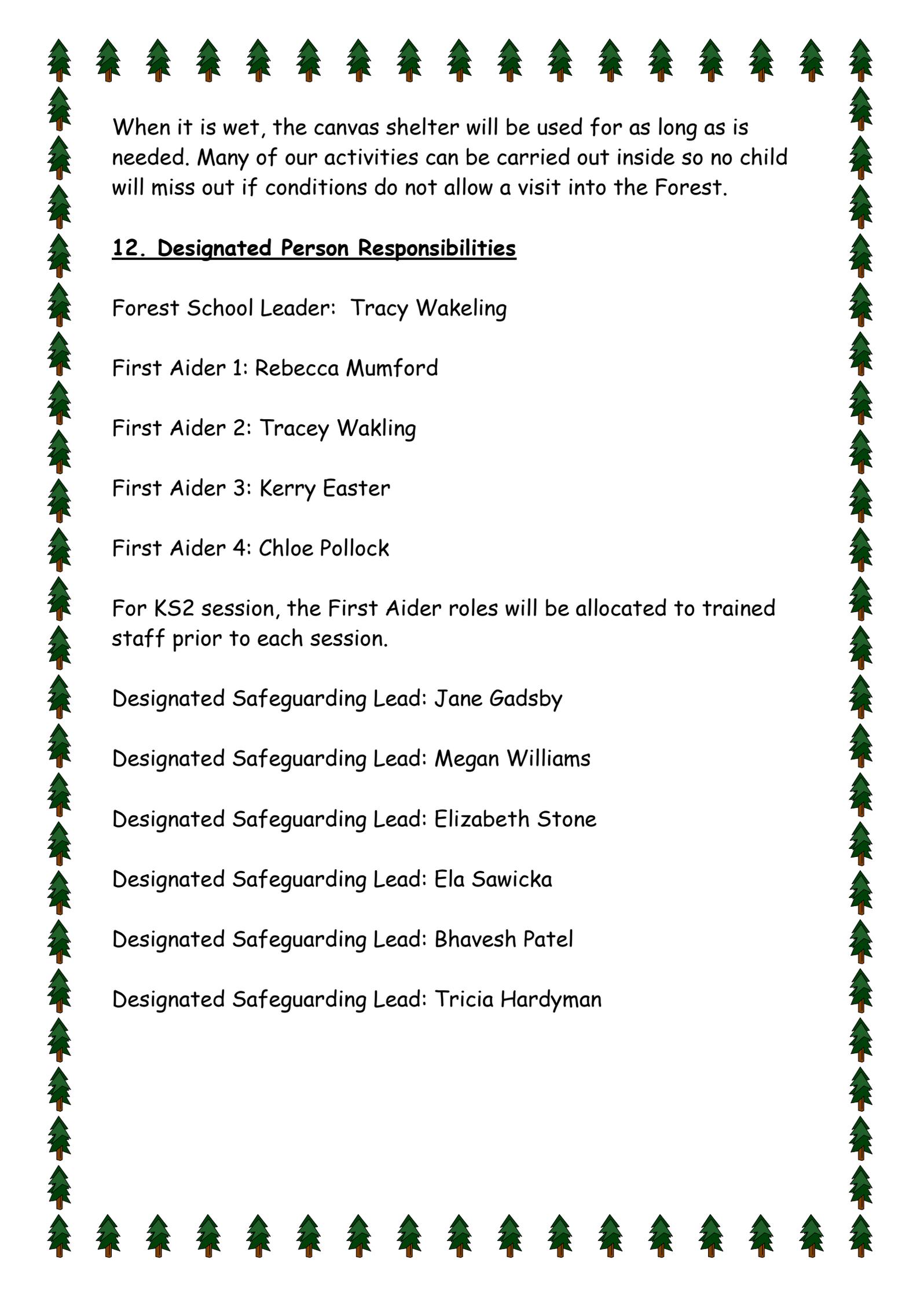
An intruder should be challenged, asked to leave immediately and escorted from the site. The school office should be informed. If a child is involved, the police must be called, and the child/children involved are to be removed from situation. Parents/guardians should be briefed by staff in accordance with advice of the police, as soon as possible.

### Behaviour problems

An adult should talk to the child concerned and remove other children from the area of risk, if it is deemed to be necessary. Help should be requested from the school office if necessary. The child should be debriefed after a calm down period, the incident logged and parents/guardians informed. A personal risk assessment should be written if necessary and close supervision and monitoring of behaviour provided at subsequent Forest School sessions.

## 11. Poor weather procedures

Children will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunder storms, or during periods of extreme cold. The Forest School leader will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions.



When it is wet, the canvas shelter will be used for as long as is needed. Many of our activities can be carried out inside so no child will miss out if conditions do not allow a visit into the Forest.

## 12. Designated Person Responsibilities

Forest School Leader: Tracy Wakeling

First Aider 1: Rebecca Mumford

First Aider 2: Tracey Wakling

First Aider 3: Kerry Easter

First Aider 4: Chloe Pollock

For KS2 session, the First Aider roles will be allocated to trained staff prior to each session.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Jane Gadsby

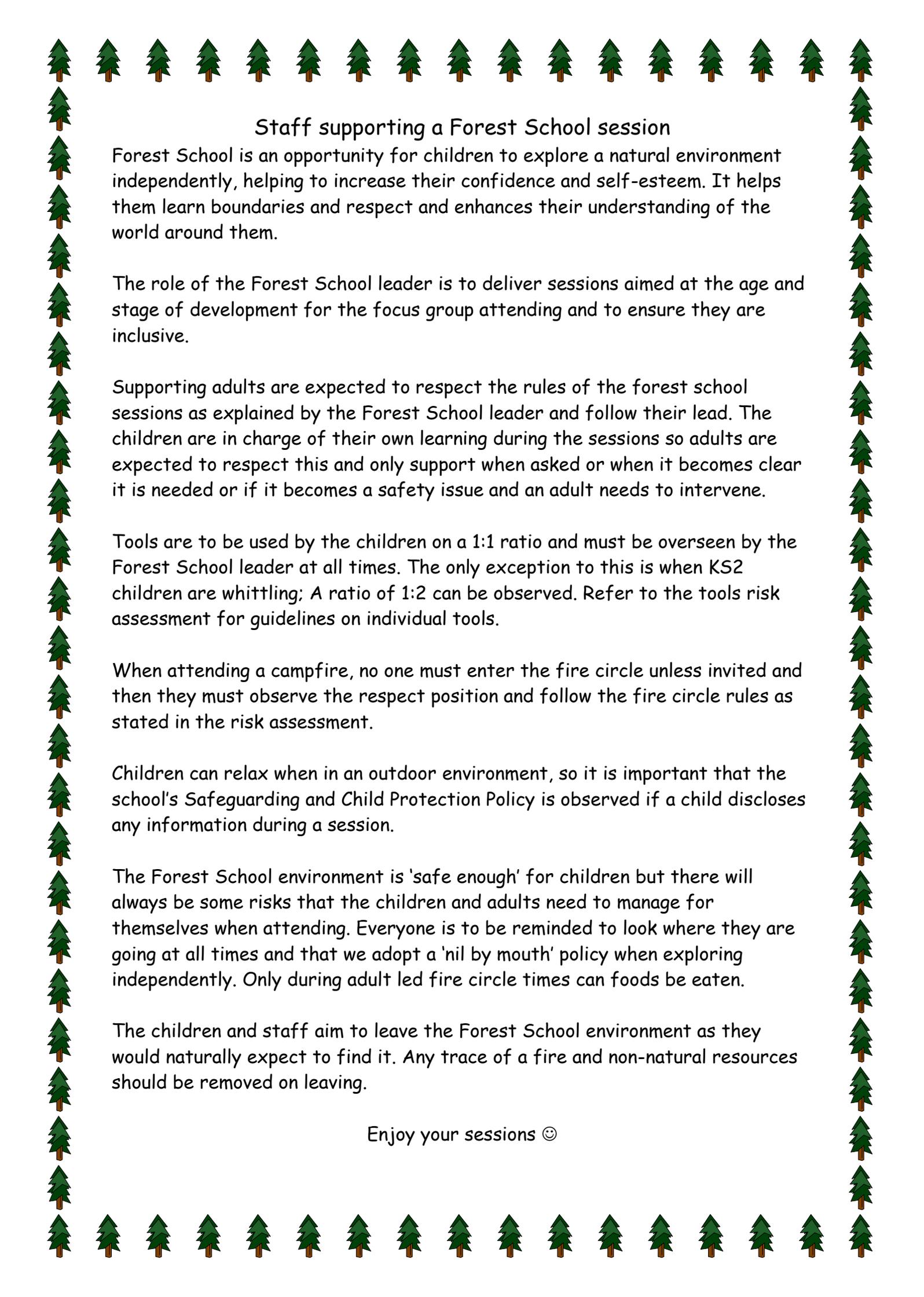
Designated Safeguarding Lead: Megan Williams

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Elizabeth Stone

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Ela Sawicka

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Bhavesh Patel

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Tricia Hardyman



## Staff supporting a Forest School session

Forest School is an opportunity for children to explore a natural environment independently, helping to increase their confidence and self-esteem. It helps them learn boundaries and respect and enhances their understanding of the world around them.

The role of the Forest School leader is to deliver sessions aimed at the age and stage of development for the focus group attending and to ensure they are inclusive.

Supporting adults are expected to respect the rules of the forest school sessions as explained by the Forest School leader and follow their lead. The children are in charge of their own learning during the sessions so adults are expected to respect this and only support when asked or when it becomes clear it is needed or if it becomes a safety issue and an adult needs to intervene.

Tools are to be used by the children on a 1:1 ratio and must be overseen by the Forest School leader at all times. The only exception to this is when KS2 children are whittling; A ratio of 1:2 can be observed. Refer to the tools risk assessment for guidelines on individual tools.

When attending a campfire, no one must enter the fire circle unless invited and then they must observe the respect position and follow the fire circle rules as stated in the risk assessment.

Children can relax when in an outdoor environment, so it is important that the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is observed if a child discloses any information during a session.

The Forest School environment is 'safe enough' for children but there will always be some risks that the children and adults need to manage for themselves when attending. Everyone is to be reminded to look where they are going at all times and that we adopt a 'nil by mouth' policy when exploring independently. Only during adult led fire circle times can foods be eaten.

The children and staff aim to leave the Forest School environment as they would naturally expect to find it. Any trace of a fire and non-natural resources should be removed on leaving.

Enjoy your sessions ☺