

Forest School Tool-Use Policy

1. Purpose

To enable safe, structured learning of practical outdoor skills using a *bow saw*, *knife*, *loppers*, and *bill hook* in a natural environment while balancing risk and educational benefit. Tool use supports the development of confidence, coordination, responsibility, and respect for the natural world.

2. General Safety Principles

- Tool use is **supervised at all times** by a qualified level 3 Forest School Leader.
 - Tool activities take place in a designated area with controlled access.
 - Before and after use, tools are checked for damage, cleaned, and an itinerary is taken.
 - Tool talks are used to introduce the tools to all learners, explaining purpose, correct use, and risks.
 - Maintain a clear safety zone around each tool and learner during tool-use activities.
 - First aid equipment, a secure tool box, and a trained first aider must be easily accessible during sessions.
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3. Tool-Specific Guidelines

Knife

- Used only in the designated area and with one-to-one supervision.
- Ensure the agreed safe distance away from other staff and learners.
- Always cut away from the body; sit or kneel with stable posture.
- The knife must be sheathed and secured in the designated tool box when not in use.

Bow Saw

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- Used in pairs with an adult on wood larger than a small branch.
- Ensure the agreed safe distance away from other staff and learners.
- Wear a glove on the non-sawing hand; keep hands clear of the blade.
- Carry with the frame to the side of the body, and the blade must be covered when not in use.

Loppers

- Used for cutting smaller wood under supervision.
- Ensure the agreed safe distance away from other staff and learners.
- Blades must be closed and locked when carried and stored.
- Use directed away from the body.

Bill Hook

- Used only with direct adult supervision.
- Ensure the agreed safe distance away from other staff and learners.
- Always cut away from the body.
- Carry to the side of the body, and the blade must be covered when not in use.

4. Supervision and Ratios

- Tool use ratios must be determined by age and experience, taking into account dynamic risk assessments of weather, terrain, and behaviour.
- Staff must be competent, briefed, and able to intervene at any time.

5. Behaviour and Accountability

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- Participants must demonstrate positive behaviour and verbal understanding of tool use before using a tool.
 - Misuse of tools results in withdrawal from tool-use activities until re-assessed.
 - Parents/carers are informed of tool use and consent is obtained where required.
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6. Review and Risk Assessment

- This policy and associated risk assessments are reviewed annually or after any safety accident, incident, or near miss.