Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

Forest School sessions may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for children. It is the approach of Home Ed-Venturers to consider the risk:benefit ratio of each activity. We believe that it is important to allow children to take risks and we support them to make their own risk assessments. Allowing children to take risks increases their confidence and self-esteem and prepares them for life.

Home Ed-Venturers seeks to minimise hazards by following safety procedures for riskier activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessments covering anything the children may come into contact with. We regularly review, update and practise the health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments.

**LEGISLATION** The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 attempts to provide a comprehensive system of law to cover the health and safety of people at work and it is a criminal offence not to comply with its provision.

Employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees by:

● Assessing all risks

● Ensuring emergency procedures are in place

● Providing adequate sanitary and washing facilities

● Ensuring that all equipment is safe and in good working order

● Providing adequate training on substances that may damage health

● Providing protective clothing

Employees are responsible for the health and safety of themselves and other people who might

be affected by their actions.

Children’s Act 1989/2004 key areas:

● Ratios for children’s activities

● Equal opportunities

● Communication with parents and carers

● Suitable persons - DBS checks

**FIRST AID** There will be at least one person on site who has a current outdoor-specific paediatric first aid certificate. First aid certificates will be updated every 3 years. An outdoor first aid kit, a mobile phone, parent/carers contact details and details for the emergency procedure will be available on-site every session.

**INSURANCE** Home Ed-Venturers holds Public Liability Insurance and Employers’ Liability Insurance through Peach Pi / NPA Insurance Ltd. Staff are fully insured to care for children on site and to undertake forest school activities.

**RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE** Risk assessments are required to assess the severity and likelihood of a hazard and to provide precautions for minimising the hazard.

A full, documented risk assessment of the site, that covers changing conditions and any planned

activities will be done once a year, with updates made as required to accommodate any changes to the circumstances or to legislation.

At the start of each day in the woods a risk assessment of the site will be carried out to identify hazards and action needed to reduce risk to a safe level. In addition, an activity risk assessment

will be carried out and included in the session plan.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

● Look for the hazards, such as windblown trees and litter

● Decide who might be harmed and how

● Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more/different should be done

● Record the findings

● Review the assessment and revise if necessary

**ACCIDENT, INCIDENT AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURE**

If there is an accident:

● We will reassure the injured child while making sure that other children are safe.

● Then, if possible, we will deal with the situation. If not, we will ring 999 for help.

● We would aim to tell parents immediately and arrange either for them to take their child to hospital or to meet them there.

● If a member of staff must accompany a child to hospital, any other children will be left in the care of an individual who holds a valid DBS check.

● The remaining staff member will contact the parents/carers of the remaining children and ask for them to be collected as soon as possible, as the group will be a staff member down.

● The remaining staff member can ask a parent to wait with them to assist with ratios.

● We hold written permission from parents to get emergency treatment for their child if it is needed.

● We keep written accident/incident records and ask parents to read and sign them.

**TOOL USE PROCEDURE** Tools that may be used at Home Ed-Venturers include, but are not limited to; bow saws, loppers, knives, axes, hammers, hand drills. The following guidelines are to be followed:

● All staff and children are to be trained in correct and safe use of tools.

● Tools will be introduced to children in a structured way, including a ‘tool safety’ talk and once trust/ability level is established.

● All children are to be supervised by adults until deemed competent to work unsupervised, some, more hazardous tools, will always be supervised eg. an axe.

● Tools are to be kept in a secure box and returned to this place when not in use (counted in and out).

● Tools should not be left unattended or on the floor.

● When using tools, a designated area will be marked for tool use. Those not using tools

should not enter this area.

● All knives are to be closed or put in a sheath immediately after use.

● Saw guards are to be replaced immediately after use.

● Walking around with open/unsheathed tools is not permitted.

● A staff member will check all tools have been returned before the end of the session.

● Tools will be maintained and sharpened as necessary.

**PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT** All group members will wear suitable boots/shoes and outdoor clothing for the activity they take part in. Gloves will be provided for handling brash etc. and fire gloves for around the fire. Glove to be worn on the supporting hand when using tools, tool hand stays bare for better grip.

**FIRE PROCEDURE** Some sessions will include the use of open fires and cooking. In order to maintain the highest level of safety the following procedures will be used:

● Children and staff will be appropriately trained in fire-lighting, maintaining and extinguishing.

● Only those appropriately trained in fire-lighting will teach fire-lighting to children.

● Fire and fire-lighting will be introduced to children once trust/ability level is established.

● Fires will always be supervised by an adult.

● Children will maintain a safe distance from the fire (see Risk Assessment) and at the discretion of the adult supervising the fire.

● A first aid kit, including a burns kit, water and a fire blanket will be kept on site.

● Fires will only take place within the fire pit.

● By the end of the session, fires will be properly extinguished with water, ensuring the ground is not hot.

● The rocket stove will only be lit by an adult.

**PARENT/CARER CONSENT PROCEDURE** Parents/carers will be asked to fill in an online booking form before their child starts at Home Ed-Venturers. The completed booking form will include relevant medical details of the child, permission to administer first aid, emergency contact details and optional permission to take and use photographs of the child. A copy of the booking forms will be kept on-site at all times, in a locked box.

Last reviewed: 16th October 2024

Signed by: Veronika Simon