



# Policies and Procedures



## **Table of Contents**

1. Document Aim

2. Our Service

3. Child Safeguarding Statement

4. Guiding Policies & Procedures

4. i) Ethos

4. ii) Conduct

4. iii) Risk

4. iv) Site Boundaries

4. v) Parent/Guardian Consent

4. vi) Parent/Guardian Consent for Schools

4. vii Weather

4. viii) Toilet

4. ix) Mobile Phone and Camera

4. x) Site Management

5. Activities - Risk Management & Safety

5. i) The Process of Risk Management - Undertaking a Benefit Risk Assessment (BRA)

5. ii) Arrival to and Departure from the Woodland Site

5. iii) Tool Use

5. iv) Fire Safety

5. v) Eating & Foraging

5. vi) Lost Child

5. vii) The First Aid Kit



## 6. Emergency

- 6. i) Emergency Policy
- 6. ii) Emergency Procedure

## 7. Child Safeguarding

- 7. i) Anti-bullying Policy
- 7. ii) Dealing with Disclosure from a Child
- 7. iii) Retrospective Disclosure from an Adult
- 7. iv) Recording a Disclosure or Concern
- 7. v) Making a Report
- 7. vi) Dealing with an Allegation against a Member of Staff
- 7. vii) Confidentiality Statement

## 8. Roles & Responsibilities

- 8. i) Forest School Leaders
- 8. ii) Forest School Assistants
- 8. iii) Parents/Guardians
- 8. iv) Teachers & Schools
- 8. v) Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- 8. vi) Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP)

## 9. Booking & Cancellation Policy



# 1. Document Aim

The aim of this document is to explain the Badger & Blackbird Forest School ethos and set out the guidelines under which Forest School must take place. Those who will be assisting with activities should read its content prior to commencing in this role, ensuring that they fully understand and adhere to our policies and procedures. The document is aimed, furthermore, at all those concerned with the process, including teachers, parents, youth workers etc. and copies will be made freely available to all parties in the initial setting up phase, and at any later time upon request.

The *Policies and Procedures* document will be reviewed on an annual basis and up-dated as necessary.

# 2. Our Service

Badger & Blackbird Forest School was registered as a sole trader business in 2025 by Veronica McGuire, a qualified Forest School Leader. Badger & Blackbird Forest School offers adults and children aged 4 and upwards opportunities to engage in guided free play and focused activities in a defined area of woodland, or other outdoor environment, through Forest School programmes, seasonal outdoor camps, school tours and various other one-off events. Veronica is responsible for the planning, preparation, delivery and overall supervision and conduct of all events and activities.

# 3. Child Safeguarding Statement

Badger & Blackbird Forest School is committed to safeguarding the welfare of every child that participates in its programmes and activities. Section 7 of this document outlines the policies and procedures for safeguarding children who avail of our service from 'harm', as defined in the Children First Act 2015, i.e., assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse.

We will ensure that all those we bring to assist with leading activities and supervision of children are of suitable character, Garda vetted and made fully aware of our Child Safeguarding policies and procedures. We will respond swiftly and appropriately to any suspicions or allegations of poor practice or abuse. We will work in partnership with parents, guardians, teachers and all concerned to ensure optimum care of the children.

We aim to create a woodland community where all participants are respected, cared-for and protected from harm.

# 4. Guiding Policies & Procedures

## 4. i) Ethos

Any events run by Badger & Blackbird Forest School are learner-centred and we recognise that all learners have a right to be:

- Listened to and supported by caring adults.
- Offered choice in how they play and learn.
- Given freedom, time and space to play and to explore in an environment free from prejudice or discrimination.
- Given opportunities for supported risk-taking.
- Supported in the development of a relationship with the natural world.

Learners will be given the opportunity to participate in all activities regardless of age, ability or gender.

Learners with special needs may be admitted to the Forest School programme after consultation between parents, special needs assistants and Forest School practitioners. Decisions will be made on an individual basis.



The main objectives for all Badger & Blackbird Forest School activities are:

- Promotion of confidence and self-esteem.
- Development of physical and motor skills.
- Acquisition of independence skills and the ability to assess risk for oneself.
- Establishment of a community for growth and development.
- Fostering a connection between the individual and the natural world.
- Supporting and observing the learner's natural ability in a non-classroom environment.

In the delivery of its Forest School programme, Badger & Blackbird Forest School is guided by the 6 Principles, originally laid down by the UK's Forest School Association and later by the Irish Forest School Association on its formation in 2016. The 6 Principles as outlined on the IFSA website are as follows:

- **Regular sessions**  
Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- **Woodland setting**  
Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- **Community**  
Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development, and learning.
- **Holistic development**  
Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- **Opportunity to take risks**  
Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- **Qualified practitioners**  
Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Our seasonal woodland camps, being one-off events, do not come fully under the 6 Principles and we offer as them as separate, and distinct from, our Forest School programmes.

However, in all we do, we honour the Forest School ethos of nature connection, community and holistic development of the individual.

#### 4. ii) Conduct

The emphasis is on encouraging good behaviour at Badger & Blackbird Forest School, rather than punishing misconduct. The Forest School leaders, with the support of assisting adults, work towards achieving good conduct in the following ways:

- At the first session of a new programme, the children are encouraged to contribute to a set of simple guidelines for behaviour which we refer to as our "Feeling Safe and Cared-for Policy". All children are asked to agree to this Policy before we commence the day's activities. The Policy is displayed on a nearby tree and referred back to when needed.
- Adults should model good conduct by treating all participants with respect. We endeavour to deal with challenging behaviour with compassion rather than anger.
- The Talking Circle can be used as a place to discuss issues around conduct that may arise during sessions without singling out any individual in front of their peers.
- The Forest School Leaders should try to move individuals away from bad behaviour by engaging them in sessions through their own interests.

If a participant continues to engage in misconduct which is deemed to be negatively impacting on the learning, development or safety of the other participants, they may be asked to leave the Forest School



programme or camp. Excluding any individual from participation would be seen as a last resort option, after all other attempts at resolving the situation have failed.

#### 4. iii) Risk

Badger & Blackbird Forest School recognises that risky play is necessary to the development of healthy individuals. Through risk and challenge children, young people and adults can test themselves, problem solve, develop skills and build confidence and self-esteem. Given that children and young people inherently seek out risky-play, Forest School aims to offer participants opportunities to do this in a supported and managed way, through activities such as:

- Rope swings
- Low ropes
- Tree climbing
- Tool use
- Fire-lighting
- Cooking on an open fire

Not all of these activities will be offered at every Forest School programme as not all environments or circumstances warrant (or permit) their inclusion. A risky activity is only included after passing a benefit-risk assessment carried out by the Forest School leaders prior to the session/programme. (See Section 5 on Risk Management below.)

While participants are encouraged to explore their own boundaries for risk and to develop the awareness and skills required to assess risk independently, it is the role of the Forest School Leaders to ensure that participants are not exposed to unacceptable levels of risk.

#### 4. iv) Site Boundaries

There are no walls or doors at Badger & Blackbird Forest School. On their first day in the woods, the children's attention is drawn to red ribbons tied to trees which encircle us and which mark the boundary of the site. They are told that, for their own safety, they must stay inside this boundary at all times: "red means STOP".

At every session and during games and activities children are repeatedly reminded to look out for red ribbons and to never go past a ribbon under any circumstances (unless led by a Forest School Leader). The safety of all participating children depends on every child obeying this basic and most fundamental rule. Any child that strays outside our marked boundary, despite clear instruction to the contrary, may be asked to leave the Forest School programme or camp.

#### 4. v) Parent/Guardian Consent

Before booking through our website, parents/guardians are asked to read through our "terms". Where booking takes place over the phone or by email, a copy of the terms are emailed to the parent/guardian. In our terms we:

- Set out our policies on **risk** and **site boundaries** (see iii and iv above).
- Ask that parents/guardians disclose any **health/behavioural issues** relating to their child. They can do this on the consent form, or orally, on the morning of registration. However if the issue is more serious and their child has **special needs**, they are asked to contact us directly before booking.
- Inform parents/guardians that any child displaying symptoms associated with **Covid-19** should be kept at home.

On a child's first morning attending a Badger & Blackbird Forest School event, parents/guardians must complete our consent form, which asks for the following information:



1. Confirmation that they have read and understood the terms outlined above and that they agree to let their child/children participate in Badger & Blackbird Forest School activities.
2. Their permission for a Forest School Leader, trained in Outdoor First Aid, to give medical assistance to their child if necessary.
3. Whether they consent for their child to be photographed/videoed and for these images to be used by Badger & Blackbird Forest School for promotional purposes (Yes/No).
4. Whether their child has any health/behavioural issues.
5. Details of two Emergency Contacts.

#### **4. vi) Parent/Guardian Consent for Schools**

We will forward a special consent form for parents/guardians of the children participating through schools. This will include information on our risky play policy, as well as what children will need to bring to Forest School. Consent forms must be completed by the parents/guardians of all participating children and returned to the school to be given to Veronica on the first day of the Forest School programme.

#### **4. vii) Weather**

Forest School sessions will go ahead in all but extreme weather conditions (storm warnings, high winds, etc). Parents are advised that their child should be dressed appropriately

- Cold, wet weather
  - ✓ wellies or good boots and an extra pair of warm socks;
  - ✓ warm, waterproof jacket with hood;
  - ✓ woolly hat;
  - ✓ waterproof trousers, if possible.
- Warm, sunny weather
  - ✓ sun hat;
  - ✓ sun screen;
  - ✓ jacket, in case of showers.
- Old clothes are better as they may get muddy.

A tarp will be erected to provide shelter from rain/wind if needed.

Participants will be encouraged to get active in order to keep warm rather than remain under the shelter for long periods.

If the weather deteriorates dramatically during a session, the Forest School Leaders will decide whether to leave the site.

#### **4. viii) Toilet**

There is a temporary compost toilet set up on site, screened-off for privacy, which children are instructed how to use on the first day.

A hand-washing area is set up outside the toilet which children are encouraged to use after each toilet visit.

#### **4. ix) Mobile Phone and Camera**

Participant use of mobile phones is not permitted during sessions (except in an emergency situation). Devices should be left at home or at school. Any devices not left behind should be set to silent mode before the start of each session.

Badger & Blackbird Forest School will ask for photographic consent from parents before the commencement of a Forest School programme or seasonal camp. Where there is no consent given, the child concerned will not be photographed/videoed. Only the Forest School leaders are permitted to take photos/video during Forest School or Camp sessions.



In the case of school visits, the school will be responsible for obtaining photographic consent for children and the teachers may take photos/video accordingly. The Forest School Leaders will ask permission from teachers before taking any photos/video for Badger & Blackbird Forest School.

#### **4. x) Site Management**

Any site used for sessions by Badger & Blackbird Forest School will be managed with respect for the ecosystem, its habitats and its wildlife. The emphasis will be on having a minimum impact on the landscape. 'Leave-no-trace' standards will be applied as follows:

- all litter collected
- no fire damage
- all traces of fire removed
- no removal of trees or large branches

In larger woodlands where it is possible to move to new locations, we do not use the same area of woodland for more than 2 or 3 months at a time, in order to minimise our impact on the habitat and to allow the ground to recover between programmes.





## 5. Activities - Risk Management & Safety

There is a clear set of policies which must be followed for all Badger & Blackbird Forest School activities, as outlined below. These are reviewed and up-dated before each new Badger & Blackbird Forest School programme, or as necessary.

A full Benefit Risk Assessment (BRA) is undertaken for i) each proposed Forest School activity and ii) the Forest School site. All BRAs are signed and dated by the person who has undertaken them. If the activity, or the site, is found, post control measures, to be “unacceptable” (in the range 6-9), the activity or site is not used. (See section entitled The Process of Risk management for Badger & Blackbird Forest School below).

Participating adults are made aware of all policies and procedures relating to Badger & Blackbird Forest School, prior to the commencement of a programme and of their own role during sessions.

### 5. i) The Process of Risk Management - Undertaking a Benefit Risk Assessment (BRA)

#### 1. Risk is identified

e.g. risk of severe burns from falling into fire

#### 2. Risk is assessed in a systematic way

In a Forest School context risk is dealt with as follows:

Risk Rating (RR) = (Likelihood of risk occurring) x (Severity of injury caused)

Key:

Likelihood

Severity of injury

1 = unlikely

1 = minor scratches and grazes

2 = possible

2 = serious grazes, minor breaks

3 = very likely

3 = major breaks, head injury, death

#### 3. Risk is treated

Measures are taken to reduce/control risk:

e.g. 1.5m distance between fire and seating, no walking inside seating area, verbal warnings, etc.

A Post-Control-Measures Risk Rating (PCMRR) is then estimated. A PCMRR establishes whether a perceived risk is minimal, acceptable or unacceptable.

Key: 1,2 = minimal

3,4 = acceptable

6-9 = unacceptable

If, post control measures being applied, the final rating is in the range 6-9, then the activity must not be undertaken.

#### 4. Risk management is monitored.

BRAs are available for inspection by third parties for

i) the relevant Forest School site

ii) each Forest School activity.

All documents are reviewed and up-dated on a regular basis.

#### 5. Risk management is communicated.

All participants are made aware of the policies and procedures to be followed in order for risk to be minimised.



## 5. ii) Arrival to and Departure from the Woodland Site

### Arrival at the Woodland Site

- Tick all participants off the register before leaving the car park/assembly area.
- At the woodland entrance, stop at the Guardian Tree and all say rhyme asking for permission to enter.
- Ensure that participants are aware of the physical boundary of the site and that this is marked with red ribbons ("red=stop").
- Hold a Talking Circle at the beginning and (where time permits) at the end of each session. This will help to establish an atmosphere of openness and equality and to set up a woodland community.

### Leaving the Woodland Site

- Tidy up, collecting and putting away all equipment.
- If there has been a fire, make sure that it is fully extinguished and all traces removed.
- Gather the children together and hold the Closing Circle if appropriate and time allows.
- Check that there is no rubbish or any personal belongings left behind.
- Make sure that all children are present and accounted for before leaving the site.
- On exiting the woodland, acknowledge and thank the Guardian Tree.
- Wait with children until all are reunited with their parents/guardians.

## 5. iii) Tool Use

- Adult:participant supervision ratios for tool use are 1:2.
- Participants will be instructed in the safe use of all tools before being permitted to use them.
- Permission to use tools may only be given by the Forest School Leaders.
- All tools will be kept in a designated area or in a tool box.
- The "Blood Bubble" rule must be strictly observed by children, young people and adults when using knives.
- The working area must have sufficient space for safe use of tools and be free of trip hazards.
- Tools must be kept maintained and in good working order, being inspected before each session.
- Tools must be counted at the beginning and end of each session.
- The Forest School leaders are responsible for the safe storage of tools in a dry place between Forest School sessions.

## 5. iv) Fire Safety

### 1) Positioning and structure of fire circle

- The area for the fire circle should be level and free of any standing water.
- There must be no low-hanging tree branches over the fire circle.
- The fire will be built and lit within a fire circle marked out with stones/logs.
- Seating must be at least 1.5m distance from the fire circle.
- There will be 2 fire exits and these are to be kept clear at all times.
- There will be one water bucket and one fire blanket located outside the seating area at the fire exits.
- Avoid having any trip hazards within or immediately outside the seating area e.g. rocks sticking out of the ground, branches or other debris. If this cannot be avoided, ensure all are made aware of these hazards and instructed to take due care.
- There will be a designated area for all personal belongings (bags, coats etc) outside, and a safe distance from, the fire seating area. A tarp may be spread on the ground for this purpose.



## **2) Lighting the fire**

- If children are undertaking a fire-lighting activity they will be closely supervised by a Forest School Leader.
- The children will be given clear instruction on how to safely do the following:
  - Use the flint and steel to generate a spark.
  - Catch the spark on char-cloth or cotton balls.
  - Fan the flames by blowing low and from one side, not from above, and without inhaling smoke.
  - Carefully build the fire by adding tiny twigs at first, graduating to larger twigs and sticks.
- Children must keep their two knees on the ground at all times while at the fire.
- Other children are permitted to practise using the flint-and-steel at the discretion of a Forest School Leader. They must remain seated at the circle when undertaking this activity.

## **3) Conduct around fire**

- A fire-safety talk will be given prior to the fire-lighting activity by a Forest School leader.
- All participants will be made aware of fire exits, and location of water bucket and fire blanket.
- In order to move seats, children, young people and adults must walk around the outside of the seating. Walking is not permitted inside the seating area.
- Participants will be advised to avoid excessive smoke-inhalation and encouraged to move out of the line of smoke wherever possible.
- Nothing is permitted to be carried or placed inside the seating area unless by an adult.
- Children are not permitted to put anything on the fire unless directed by an adult.
- Long sleeves and trousers should be worn.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate the fire.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- The fire will never be left unattended.

## **4) Extinguishing the fire**

- The Forest School leaders are responsible for ensuring that the fire has been completely extinguished before leaving the site at the end of a session.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Any large remains of wood should be separated from one another.
- The fire must be doused with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, will be dispersed. This must only be done when it has completely cooled. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.
- Leave-no-trace standards will be followed.

## **5) Kelly/storm kettles**

- The kelly kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground.
- Kelly kettles should never be boiled with the cork in.
- If the kelly kettle is being used solely by a Forest School Leader to boil water, an area will be roped off for this purpose and children will not be permitted inside the roped-off area.
- If the kelly kettle is being used as an activity in which the children can participate the following procedures will be followed:
  - The kelly kettle will be positioned in the middle of the circle and the children will remain seated for a talking demonstration of how the kelly kettle works.
  - A fire-safety talk will be given by a Forest School leader prior to lighting the fire in the pan.
  - Children will be invited to take turns coming into the circle to feed the fire with one-to-one supervision after being shown how to do so safely. (Both knees on the ground, stick held at the end and dropped in from the side; the hand should never be held over the top of the kettle)



- Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water (see above).

#### **6) Cooking on an Open Fire**

- Adults only are permitted to cook with pot/pan.
- Children and young people can cook suitable foods on sticks under adult supervision.
- Cooking sticks must be arm-length.
- Participants must keep both knees or bottom on the ground when cooking with sticks.
- There is a no-meat policy for cooking on the fire.

### **5. v) Eating & Foraging**

Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water (provided on site) before eating.

Parents are asked to inform us of any food allergies/intolerances that their child may have on our consent form. We request that they do not send in sweets to share with the group, as some children have a no-sugar/ low-sugar policy at home. We discourage (but do not prohibit) the sharing of children's lunches.

Verbal warnings will be given to participants not to eat any foraged food without the permission of a Forest School Leader.

Any poisonous species will be flagged so that all learn to recognise them.

### **5. vi) Lost Child**

If a child goes missing during a session, one Forest School Leader will search for the missing child, while the other will gather the remaining children and stay with them. The person searching should call out the child's name and ask passing members of the public if they have seen a child matching his/her description..

If, after 30 minutes, the child has not been found, the guards should be contacted and the missing child's parents notified. Arrangements should be made to remove the remaining children from the site and have them picked up by their parents as soon as possible. Both Forest School Leaders will remain on site, helping with the search until the incident is resolved and the search is called off.

In the aftermath of the incident, the details of it should be recorded with a timeline and an analysis of how it was handled.

### **5. vii) The First Aid Kit**

The First Aid kit will comply with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 and contain the following items:

- Triangular bandages (ideally at least one should be sterile) - x 4.
- Sterile dressings:
  - a) 3 x Small (formerly Medium No 8)
  - b) 3 x Medium (formerly Large No 9) – HSE 1
  - c) 3 x Large (formerly Extra Large No 3) – HSE 2 - x 3.
- 1 x composite pack containing 20 assorted (individually-wrapped) plasters.
- 2 x sterile eye pads (with bandage or attachment) e.g. No 16 dressing
- 1 x container of 6 safety pins
- Guidance card as recommended by HSE 1.

In addition to the first aid equipment, each box should be supplied with:

- 2 x pairs of disposable plastic (PVC or vinyl) gloves.
- 1 x plastic disposable apron.
- 1 x children's forehead 'strip' thermometer.
- 1 x small jar of jam



The First Aid kit will be kept in a purpose-made and clearly marked bag. Any used kit will be replaced between sessions.

The First Aid bag will be kept in a location which is easily accessible and known to the Forest School Leaders but will be out of bounds to the children. The Forest School Leaders are responsible for making sure that the First Aid kit is fully stocked and is present on site for sessions. They will also ensure that there is clean water on site.



## 6. Emergency

### 6. i) Emergency Policy

- Veronica McGuire, is responsible for ensuring that her Remote First Aid qualification is renewed and always up-to-date. the person responsible for assessing and treating any casualties in the group. It is her responsibility to ensure that she maintains an up-to-date Remote First Aid Certificate
- However, if the Forest School Leaders are in separate areas of the woods when an accident occurs, the closest to the scene of the accident will become the designated person and immediately take on the role of chief medic.
- If the Forest School Leaders are in separate areas of the woods when an accident occurs, the closest to the scene of the accident will blow the emergency whistle to alert the other Leader, who will calmly stop what they are doing and bring all the remaining children to the scene, along with the First Aid kit.
- This person will be responsible for looking after the rest of the group, ensuring they remain calm and organising their safe removal from the site once the casualty has been seen to. They will also assist the designated leader with the casualty where necessary.
- A relevant *Emergency Plan* is prepared and brought along to each Badger & Blackbird Forest School session. This plan will be kept in an agreed location so that it can be accessed by all adults if and when necessary.
- The Emergency Plan must contain the following:
  - ✓ A copy of our Emergency Procedure (below).
  - ✓ Directions to the site for emergency services.
  - ✓ Register of names of all children, young people and adults present on site.
  - ✓ Contact details and any relevant medical information for each participant.
  - ✓ Parents' signed and dated written permissions for emergency medical advice or treatment.
  - ✓ Name, location and phone no. of nearest G.P.
  - ✓ Location of nearest hospital, directions to hospital and A&E times.
  - ✓ First Aid Book.
- The Forest School Leaders will ensure they have an up-to-date qualification in Outdoor First Aid.
- No un-prescribed medication is given to children, parents or staff.
- All accidents and emergencies will be recorded in an accident log book.



## 6. ii) Emergency Procedure

- If a participant is injured or becomes unwell during a session, either the designated Forest School Leader, or the Forest School Leader closest to the accident (see above), will assess the casualty using the “DR. ABCDEFG” method and give whatever First Aid treatment is required.
- If the Forest School Leaders are in separate areas of the woods when an accident occurs, the closest to the scene of the accident will blow the emergency whistle to alert the other Leader.
- On hearing the emergency whistle, the other Leader will stop what they are doing and calmly bring all the remaining children to the scene, along with the First Aid kit.
- This person will be responsible for looking after the rest of the group: ensuring they remain calm and organising their safe removal from the site once the casualty has been seen to. They will also assist the designated Leader with the casualty where necessary.
- The parent/guardian of the injured child will be contacted at the first available opportunity, after the assessment has been made.

If the incident is **life-threatening, or the casualty cannot be moved**

- ✓ The designated Forest School Leader will immediately ring, or assign someone else to ring, for an ambulance via the Emergency Services.
- ✓ The designated Forest School Leader will then administer whatever appropriate emergency First Aid is required.
- ✓ The parent/guardian of the injured child will be contacted at the first available opportunity after the initial assessment has been made.
- ✓ While waiting for the ambulance to arrive, the designated person will:
  - remain with the casualty and do all she can to assist them (placing them in the recovery position, keeping them warm and dry, etc.)
  - will record any relevant medical details, including vital signs, to pass on to the paramedics.
- ✓ The other Forest School Leader will organise the safe removal of the uninjured children from the site as quickly as possible after the serious incident has occurred.
- ✓ This person will contact the children’s parents and wait with them until they are collected.

If the incident is **serious enough to require immediate professional medical attention, but is not life threatening and the casualty can move**

- ✓ They will be brought by car to the local GP, the Local Injury Unit or the nearest A&E hospital by the designated Forest School Leader.
- ✓ The other Forest School Leader will be responsible for looking after the rest of the children and for organising their safe removal from the site.
- ✓ This person will contact the children’s parents and wait with them until they are collected.





## 7. Child Safeguarding

The following set of policies and procedures deals with the specific issue of safeguarding children availing of our services from 'harm', as defined in the Children First Act 2015<sup>1</sup>. These will be followed at all times and any concerns about the welfare of a child in our care will be reported to the relevant authorities by a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and, in the absence of the DLP, by a Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP).

An open environment, both physical and verbal, is encouraged when working with children.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Child Care Act 1991).

### 7. i) Anti-bullying Policy

**Bullying** is defined as repeated aggression which can be verbal, psychological, or physical. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion. Bullying can be conducted by an individual or by a group against others.

Badger & Blackbird Forest School recognises that bullying behaviour can occur in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and can be caused by the following factors:

- Puberty
- Peer pressure
- Gender differences
- Stereotypes/prejudice
- Structure of the group-hierarchy
- Feelings of inferiority/fear of failure
- Family background of the victims and/or the bullies.

Badger & Blackbird Forest School works to create an environment in which the risk of bullying behaviour developing is minimised. The following preventative techniques are used:

- Respect for others is role-modelled by the Forest School Leaders in their own behaviour towards all participants and towards each other.
- A Behaviour Policy is drawn up on the first day with input from the children, which we refer to as our "Feeling Safe and Cared-for Policy". All children are asked to agree to this Policy before we commence the first day's activities. The Policy is displayed on a nearby tree in this and future sessions and referred back to when needed.
- Holding circle time at the beginning and (time allowing) at the end sessions provides a safe forum for children to express their feelings and to be listened to by all.
- Our high ratio of adults to children ensures that all voices are heard.
- Encouraging participants to engage in activities which are designed to promote feelings of self-esteem and well-being.
- A culture of openness and trust is fostered where individuality is respected and valued.

When bullying behaviour does occur we will work continuously towards a solution. Incidents of bullying are discussed and worked through in partnership with the children themselves.

### 7. ii) Dealing with Disclosure from a Child

There is no simple set of rules to follow in responding to disclosure of abuse from a child. However the following are some key points which may be of assistance for workers:

- Stay calm.
- Listen and learn rather than question directly.
- Do not overreact.

---

<sup>1</sup> i.e. assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse





- Give time to the child to say what they want.

The procedure for dealing with a disclosure is as follows:

- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Do not enquire into the details of the abuse.
- Do not make the child repeat the story unnecessarily.
- Record in writing what was said as soon as possible.
- Report it to the appropriate person.
- Record any report made.
- Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to deal with the problem alone.
- Take all allegations seriously.

### **7. iii) Retrospective Disclosure from an Adult**

In the case of an adult disclosure of abuse suffered as a child, establish whether any child is at current risk from the alleged abuser.

If there are grounds for concern in this regard, ensure this is followed up and that correct procedures are followed.

### **7. iv) Recording a Disclosure or Concern**

A detailed record should always be made at the time of a disclosure or concern. The record should:

- Be confined to the facts and not include any personal opinions.
- Distinguish between your own personal knowledge and what others have told you.

The record should contain the following information:

- The child's name, age and date of birth.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether these are your concerns or someone else's.
- The nature of the concerns or allegations, including dates, times and any other relevant information.
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, their location, size etc.
- Any indirect signs such as behavioural changes.
- The child's/witness's account of what happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred.
- Contact details of witnesses to the incident.
- Whether the parents have been contacted and what was said.
- The details of any contact that may have been made with Tusla or the Gardaí.

### **7. v) Making a Report**

If it is decided that there are grounds for reporting a child protection concern, the DLP should:

- Make the report either by phone or in writing to Tusla and/or the Gardaí.
- To make a written report to Tusla, use their 'Child Protection and Welfare Report Form', available for download on the Tusla website.
- Make a record of any report submitted, whether by phone or in writing, with date and time.
- Ensure all relevant information is available when making the report.
- Inform the parents/carers that a report has been submitted to Tusla or the Gardaí, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.



Discuss/Report a Concern	An Garda Siochána
<b>Tusla Social Worker for Co Clare:</b> Child and Family Agency, Unit 3, St. Camillus Hospital, Shelbourne Road, Limerick. (061) 588 688	<b>Ennis:</b> 24 hours, 7 days - (065) 684 8100  <b>Scarriff:</b> Daily, 10am-1pm - (061) 922 790  <b>Tulla:</b> Mon-Sat, 2:30-3:30pm - (065) 683 5103

## 7. vi) Dealing with an Allegation against a Member of Staff

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, the DLP should follow the following procedure:

- Inform the member of staff that an allegation has been made against him/her and of the nature of the allegation.
- Allow the member of staff sufficient time to respond to the allegation.
- Record this response for inclusion in the formal report to Tusla.
- Any necessary protective measures should be taken as a matter of urgency. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not *unreasonably* penalise the staff member, financially or otherwise.
- Consult with Tusla and the Gardaí in order to establish what the next step will be.
- Following this consultation, the DLP should inform the staff member of the actions which are to be taken.
- In the event of the allegation being made against the DLP, the DDLP will inform him/her of the actions to be taken.

## 7. vii) Confidentiality Statement

Where a child protection concern arises, information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interest of the child.

Sharing information with the appropriate agencies regarding a child safeguarding concern is not a breach of confidentiality.

When it is deemed necessary to share information with other agencies for the safeguarding of the child, parents and children will always be informed.

Records are kept in a safe and confidential manner known only to the DLP and the DDLP.



## 8. Roles & Responsibilities

### 8. i) Forest School Leaders

Gráinne Vaughan and Veronica McGuire are fully qualified Forest School Leaders (Open College Network Level 3 Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership) and joint partners of Badger & Blackbird Forest School. Their role is to oversee planning, preparation and delivery of all Badger & Blackbird Forest School activities. They are responsible for the following:

- Compiling a set of governing policies and procedures, including a Child Safeguarding Policy, which will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
- Being aware of Child Protection issues and completing Tusla's *Introduction to Children First* e-learning programme.
- Adhering to all policies and procedures in the running of all Badger & Blackbird Forest School activities and events.
- Ensuring that all those assisting in a Forest School programme or seasonal camp understand our ethos and follow our policies and procedures.
- Making our *Policies & Procedures* document freely available and keeping a hard copy on hand, so that we, or others, can refer to them at any time.
- Having an up to date Emergency Plan and being able to access it on site if needed.
- Keeping their own Garda Vetting and First Aid Certs up to date and renewing them as required.
- Garda Vetting all those asked to assist with Forest School or seasonal camps before their commencement in this role.
- Using observation of group/individual interests in the planning of future sessions wherever possible.
- Fully risk-assessing all activities and locations, completing a Benefit Risk Assessment (BRA) form for each.
- Bringing all the necessary equipment to and from the site, and making sure that the site is properly prepared with regard to safety, weather and activities.
- Making sure that all equipment is well-maintained and fit for purpose.
- Making sure that the First Aid kit is fully stocked and present on site for sessions.
- The overall supervision and conduct of all sessions.
- Having suitable insurance to cover all activities and events.
- Ensuring that there is a mobile phone signal on, or near, the site and that the phone is fully charged.
- Ensuring that all participants are present and accounted for before leaving the woods.
- Communicating all relevant information (clothing, lunch, toilet facilities, risk, etc.) to parents prior to their child attending a Badger & Blackbird Forest School event.
- Gaining consent for participation in our activities and yes/no to photographic consent from all parents of children booked onto our Forest School programmes or camps.
- Ensuring that no child is photographed/videoed where no consent has been given.
- Informing parents of any issues, concerns, accidents or incidents regarding their child attending a Forest School programme or camp as soon as is practically feasible.
- Investigating any incidents or accidents that occur during sessions and using the information gathered for future risk assessment.
- Undertaking Continuous Professional Development (CPD).



## 8. ii) Forest School Assistants

The role of those asked to assist with Forest School is as follows:

- Help with activities and supervision as and when necessary.
- Adopt a policy of observation rather than intervention (where practicable), especially when children are engaged in free-play activities.
- Make observations of the children's progress to aid the Forest School Leaders in the planning of future sessions.
- Communicate any observations, concerns, or conflicts of interests to the Forest School Leaders after, not during, sessions (unless this is a concern about the immediate safety or well-being of a participant).

They are responsible for the following:

- Reading and understanding the *Policies and Procedures* of Badger & Blackbird Forest School before assisting at a session.
- Adhering to all policies and procedures.
- Knowing where the Emergency Plan is kept during sessions so that they can access it if needed.
- Only taking photos/video during sessions when expressly instructed to do so by a Forest School Leader and only with the designated camera.

## 8. iii) Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are advised that they should read all the relevant information before booking a Badger & Blackbird Forest School event so that they know what to expect for their child and how to prepare them re clothing, lunch, etc.

At registration on the first morning, parents/guardians are required to complete our consent form which asks for the following information:

1. Confirmation that they have read and understood our terms and that they agree to let their child participate in Badger & Blackbird Forest School activities.
2. Their permission for a Forest School Leader, trained in Outdoor First Aid, to give medical assistance to their child if necessary.
3. Whether they consent for their child to be photographed/videoed and for these images to be used by Badger & Blackbird Forest School for promotional purposes (Yes/No).
4. Whether their child has any health/behavioural issues.
5. Details of two Emergency Contacts.

We endeavour to keep parents informed about the progress of their child from a Forest School perspective and we invite them to talk to us at any time if they have any questions or concerns.

## 8. iv) Teachers & Schools

We ask that schools distribute our consent forms to the parents/guardians of all participating children to be returned completed prior to the commencement of the forest school programme with the school.

Badger & Blackbird Forest School will not take any photos/video without first obtaining permission from accompanying teachers.

The role of teachers on site is as follows:

- Assist the Forest School Leaders with supervision.
- Assist with activities when requested by a Forest School Leader.
- At other times, adopt the role of participating child, or observer, and have some fun.



## 8. v) Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person are as follows:

- Reviewing the Child Safeguarding policies and procedures annually and updating it as necessary.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers have read and understood the Child Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Providing advice and support when workers/volunteers have a child protection concern.
- Recording any child safeguarding concerns raised and any disclosures made.
- Contacting a Tusla social worker for advice if unsure whether there are grounds for reporting a concern.
- Completing and submitting a Tusla 'Child Protection and Welfare Report Form' if it has been established that there are grounds for reporting a concern.
- Keeping a record of any report made.
- Recording any decision *not* to make a report and giving a clear, written explanation to the concerned person.
- Ensuring that all records and information are kept confidential and in a secure way.
- Trying to keep parents informed of any actions we may need to take.
- Ensuring that any concerns or allegations made against a worker/volunteer, are followed up and that correct procedures are applied.

## 8. vi) Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLp)

In the absence of the DLP, it is the role of the DDLp to take on the responsibilities of the DLP as outlined above.

They are also responsible for dealing with any concerns or allegations raised about the DLP and ensuring that these are followed up and correct procedures applied.

DLP	
<p><b>Veronica McGuire</b> 083 827 0075 vronlmcg@gmail.com</p> <p><b>Relevant Training</b> <u>2018</u> Completed Tusla's 'Introduction to Children First' e-learning programme (certificate received). <u>2008</u> Attended HSE 'Keeping Safe' child protection awareness-raising workshops and completed the following modules:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness of Child Protection Issues</li> <li>2. Child Protection Policy and Procedures</li> <li>3. Recruitment and Managements Issues</li> <li>4. Code of Behaviour</li> <li>5. Awareness of Disability Issues</li> </ol>	



## 9. Booking & Cancellation Policy

- Payment should be made on or before the start date of a forest school term or camp.
- Places are secured with payment and cannot be guaranteed until payment is received. Arrangements can be made to pay in instalments where requested and at the discretion of Badger & Blackbird Forest School.
- Forest school is charged per term and there is no refund for missed sessions by participants.
- If a participant cancels a forest school term or camp BEFORE the start date, we will try to refill the place from our waiting list. If we succeed in filling the place, we will refund the amount paid minus a cancellation fee of 10%.
- If a participant cancels a forest school term or camp AFTER the start date and we succeed in refilling the place, we will refund for the remaining sessions/days only, minus a 10% cancellation fee.
- If we cannot refill the cancelled place there will be no refund.
- If we have to cancel a forest school session or camp day due to extreme weather we will try to reschedule. If we cannot reschedule we will refund the amount for that session/day.

### Schools

- Arrangements for payment will be made with the relevant teacher prior to commencement.



This Policies and Procedures document will be reviewed annually, being signed and dated by Veronica upon completion.

**Veronica McGuire:** Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**Review date:** January 2025