



Toft Hill Primary School

Forest School Fire Safety Policy

Adopted by Governing Body November 2017

Signed _____(Chair of Governors)

Signed _____(Headteacher)

Date of review November 2019

Toft Hill Primary School Forest School Fire Policy

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Sitting around the campfire as a group: learning, listening, singing, making and sharing food cooked on the fire is a wonderfully communal and magical experience for children. It will stimulate their senses by letting them feel its warmth. They will watch the flames dance and experience its rich smell. We hope it will capture their imaginations and enthusiasm. The children at Toft Hill Primary will also learn:

- why fire is so important in our lives
- how to respect fire
- the dangers of fire
- how to be safe and responsible around it
- to learn about the fire triangle (oxygen, fuel and heat)
- to know what is needed to build a small fire successfully.

Toft Hill Primary School aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location

- Only agreed area will be used for campfire
- Campfire is only allowed within the designated fire pit in the wildlife area
- The positioning of the fire is well away from any buildings.
- Children are only allowed in this area in the presence of an adult
- Adults will be present around the fire at all times when lit, and will ensure that, if any child does approach, who is not part of the session, there is sufficient time to extinguish the fire.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 2 metres from the fire pit.
- When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission. They need to ask, 'May I enter?'
- When allowed to access the campfire, children must walk around the outside of the seating logs and wait for permission to step over.
- Once permission has been given, they must sit, making sure legs are drawn into the log and not outstretched.
- Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- Children will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
- Children will be taught the RESPECT position if they are cooking on the fire. This position allows children to move away from danger, quickly.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.

- Long hair will be tied back.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children (turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
- If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.
- If the wind is too strong then fires will not be permitted.

Safety and Responsibility

1. Lighting and keeping fires burning

When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before the session starts. 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 pit.

- Storm kettles are only used on a stone slab and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.
- No flammable liquids or plastics are to be used on the fire.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be extinguished with water until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- The pit will be filled with water
- These items will be essential whenever a fire is lit:

Fire – what you need

- Water 1 x 10 x litre container and 1 x 20 l container
- Heatproof gloves
- Torch
- Whistle
- Fire gloves
- Ice pack
- Fire blanket
- Toilet roll
- Wipes
- Burns kit
- Scissors
- Storm kettle
- Fire steel and matches
- Cooking equipment
- Grill
- Washing up bowls (washing up liquid, tea towels, bowls, cups etc)
- Tinder and kindling boxes if wet
- Fire starter box – emergency matches, cotton wool, striker, natural ingredients

2. Fire Risk Assessment (see separate risk assessment)

- The Forest School leader may teach a small group how to build a small fire.
- Fires are lit using tinder of various kinds, fire steels or matches.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire.
- Hands should never go over the fire.

3. Extinguishing fires

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Forest School leader should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

4. Education about fire and fire lighting

For a fire we need fuel, fire and oxygen – the fire triangle

- Children will collect **tinder** (dry grasses, very dry leaves, birch bark from the floor, very fine twigs, pine needles or open pine cones) to make an apple sized tinder bundle.
- They collect their **kindling**. Forest School leader will also have alternative tinder if wet. Small twigs are best as it's the thickness not the length that counts. They will be separated into piles of different sizes - very fine twigs (a few mm diameter, size of a toothpick), slightly larger twigs (diameter of a pencil), and bigger twigs (approx diameter of adult thumb).
- Forest School leader will explain that those that make a nice snapping sound when you break them are drier, and good for fire lighting, whereas if they bend, then they're not very dry and not good for fire lighting. Bone dry wood and small twigs make less smoke, and standing dead wood is better than wood from the ground.
- Forest School leader will also have fuel: a few larger diameter pieces of dry wood, own supply of charcoal, dry sticks or small split logs.

Starting the fire

- A few slightly larger pieces of wood will be put in the base of the firepit to create a dry platform and keep the tinder off the floor.
- Tinder will be lit with a spark from fire striker (fire steel or matches). The finest tinder will then go on, e.g. paper thin bark, pine needles, dry grass, dry (dead) nettles, hay, super thin twigs.
- Someone compared tinder and sizes of kindling as gears in a car. You need to go up all the gears in a car. You need to go up all the gears in order. If you skip a gear, you're in danger of not having enough power and your fire faltering.

Gradually add larger sized tinder and kindling. As one piece lights, add another - too much too soon can suffocate the fire of oxygen and put it out.

- Make waffle with chipwood
- Put tinder on top
- Add cotton wool and tepee around it
- Make fire star around it (if in sunken pit and wet) Catch spark on cotton wool or other tinder using fire steel (strike away from body)

Different fires are built for different purposes:

- the above method is best for getting a fire started,
- 'grid fires' are good for cooking (a criss cross piece of metal over it, so that pans and kettles can be heated on a flat surface).
- Long fires are long burning and are good for keeping us warm overnight but we will not be using these at Toft Hill Primary as we have no need to.

Fires will be built with the session length in mind and with an aim for them to extinguish naturally by the end of the session.