Stick Policy – Forest and Farm School

Purpose

At Forest and Farm School, sticks are a natural and valuable part of outdoor learning. They can be used for building, den making, imaginative play, art, measuring, problem-solving and exploring the natural environment.

This policy aims to help children enjoy using sticks safely while understanding the responsibilities that come with handling them.

Our Approach

We recognise that appropriate risk-taking is an important part of outdoor learning. We do not aim to remove all risks from children's experiences. Instead, we teach children to recognise hazards, make sensible decisions and manage risks appropriately.

Sticks may be used during Farm and Forest School activities when adults have assessed that the activity is suitable and children have been taught the relevant safety expectations.

Stick Rules

Children are taught the following simple rules:

1. **"STICKS DOWN LOW"** Sticks stay below shoulder height unless an adult has specifically given permission for a particular activity.
2. **"STICKS NO LONGER THAN YOUR ARM"** Sticks must be approximately no longer than the child arm from fingertip to shoulder
3. **"LOOK AHEAD"** Look where you are going when carrying a stick.
4. **"POINT YOUR STICK DOWN"** Stick down and point it away. Carry sticks carefully, with the end pointing down and away from other people.
5. **"GIVE PEOPLE SPACE"** Keep a safe distance from others when using a stick.
6. **"STICKS ARE FOR EXPLORING NOT FOR HITTING"** Never use sticks as weapons or deliberately hit, poke, chase or threaten another person or animal.
7. **"KEEP YOUR STICK IN YOUR HAND"** Do not throw sticks unless this is part of a specific, supervised activity.
8. **"GIVE PEOPLE SPACE WITH STICKS"** Do not pull or push another person with a stick.
9. **"WALKING FEET WITH STICKS"** Do not run while carrying a stick**.**
10. **"USE YOUR STICK FOR ITS JOB"** Use sticks only for their intended purpose during an activity.
11. **"STOP AND DROP!"** Listen to adults and stop immediately when asked.

Choosing Sticks

Children are encouraged to choose sticks that are appropriate for the activity.

Adults will encourage children to consider:

- Is the stick an appropriate size and weight?
- Is it safe to carry?
- Does it have dangerous or sharp broken ends?
- Is it suitable for the activity?
- Could it cause harm to another person, animal or the environment?

Children should not deliberately break large branches from living trees. Where possible, they should use sticks that have naturally fallen to the ground.

Group Activities

When sticks are being used as part of a planned activity, the supervising adult will establish clear boundaries and expectations before the activity begins.

For activities involving increased risk, such as stick carving, den building or tool use, additional risk assessments and closer supervision will be provided.

Unsafe Use

If a child uses a stick in an unsafe manner, the adult will calmly explain the concern and remind them of the agreed rules.

Where appropriate, the child may be asked to put the stick down or take a short break from the activity. If unsafe behaviour continues, the child may be removed from the activity and supported to understand how they can participate safely.

Any serious incident involving a stick will be recorded and dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour and safeguarding procedures.

Animals and Livestock

Sticks played with in the forest must not then be taken around during the animal feeding session.

Sticks must never be used to threaten, chase, hit or tease animals or livestock.

Children must follow the instructions of adults when working around animals always.

Respect for the Environment

Farm and Forest School encourages children to care for the natural environment.

Children should:

- Avoid damaging living trees and plants.
- Use naturally fallen materials wherever possible.
- Return materials to the area where appropriate after an activity.
- Leave habitats, nests and other signs of wildlife undisturbed.

Parent/Carer Responsibility

Parents and carers are responsible for supervising their children throughout Farm and Forest School sessions and for ensuring that their child follows the Stick Policy.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Remain responsible for their child during the session.
- Support their child to follow the stick safety rules.
- Intervene if their child is using a stick in an unsafe manner.
- Follow instructions given by Farm and Forest School staff.
- Encourage their child to make safe and appropriate choices.
- Ensure that sticks are not used to hit, poke, chase or threaten people or animals.
- Ensure that their child stops using a stick when asked by a member of staff.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff will:

- Explain the Stick Policy and safety expectations to children and accompanying adults.
- Identify and communicate foreseeable hazards associated with planned activities.
- Set appropriate boundaries for activities involving sticks.
- Provide guidance and instruction where necessary.
- Intervene where they observe an immediate or significant safety concern.
- Ask a child to stop an activity where their use of a stick presents a risk to themselves, another person, an animal or the environment.
- Communicate concerns to the parent/carer where appropriate.

Children's Responsibilities

Children are expected to:

- Follow the stick rules.
- Listen to staff instructions.
- Take reasonable care of themselves and others.
- Tell an adult if they see an unsafe situation.
- Stop using a stick immediately when instructed to do so.
- Treat people, animals and the natural environment with respect.

Parent and Carer Information

Parents and carers are informed that sticks and natural materials are a normal part of Farm and Forest School activities. Farm and Forest school recognise that outdoor learning involves managed risk and uses appropriate supervision, teaching and risk assessment to help children develop confidence and safe risk-management skills.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and following any significant incident, accident or change to Farm and Forest School activities.

Policy owner: ___Terri Smithson_____
Date adopted: _____06/10/2026_____
Review date: _____
Signed: _____