

Northbourne CEP Forest School

The Setting and Lighting of Fires Policy

Campfires and the use of storm kettles are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. The Forest school programme at Northbourne aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires and/or storm kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location

- ✻ Only previously agreed areas will be used for campfires
- ✻ Campfire area is enclosed and a purpose-built fire pit used to prevent the spread of fire, and this is situated within a fire circle area.
- ✻ Storm kettles are only used on flat ground, and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.
- ✻ Wind direction and strength must be considered when considering lighting a fire. And if in any date not to proceed.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- ✻ Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit.
- ✻ When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- ✻ When allowed to access the campfire area, 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; ensuring 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.
- ✻ Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- ✻ 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: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes, until the smoke has passed.
- ✻ 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 possible.

Type of Fire

The Forest school leader will demonstrate the best fire lay to use for a particular use:

Example

- ✻ Criss-cross fires are used to provide a large amount of heat and light and are fast burning.
- ✻ Long Log fires are good for cooking as they are slow burning and require little fuel.

Safety and Responsibility

- ✿ Wind direction and strength must be considered when considering lighting a fire. And if in any doubt, do not proceed.
- ✿ Initially only adults are permitted to light fires. This will usually be the Forest School Leader, once suitably trained, Children will be permitted to light small fires whilst being supervised.
- ✿ Fires are lit using a fire steel.
- ✿ 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 adult supervision.
- ✿ Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.

Extinguishing

- ✿ 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.
- ✿ The Forest School Leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.
- ✿ At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water or sand and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- ✿ Large build ups of ash, from several fires, will need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural composting.

Storm (Kelly) kettles

- ✿ Only adults initially are to light the fire in the fire pan. Once suitably trained children may light the fires under strict supervision.
- ✿ The storm kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground.
- ✿ The spout must face away from everyone .
- ✿ Children must be seated at least 1.5 metres away from the storm kettle when observing the process.
- ✿ Children can feed the fire with close supervision but they must have been shown how to do so safely. (stick held at the end and dropped in from the side; hand should never be placed over the top of the kettle)
- ✿ Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water in a safe and controlled manner by the FS leader
- ✿ Storm kettles should never be boiled with the cork in.

Reviewed July 2016

Reviewed July 2017

Reviewed July 2018

Reviewed July 2019

Reviewed July 2020

Reviewed October 2021

Reviewed August 2022

Reviewed Sept 2023

Reviewed May 2025

Reviewed June 2026