

LEAF Handbook

Micklands Primary School



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This handbook outlines the policies and procedures for running LEAF – the outdoor learning programme at Micklands Primary School.

What is LEAF?

LEAF stands for Learning, Exploration, Adventure and Fun. It is based on the principles and ethos of Forest School - an experiential approach to learning which aims to nurture social development, creativity, confidence, resilience, independence and self-esteem, as well as physical and motor development. The natural environment offers a myriad of opportunities and invitations for children to learn and develop in the way that suits them best, encouraging curiosity, exploration and a sense of wonder.

Taking a holistic and child-led approach to learning, children are free to explore, take risks and pursue their own interests at their own pace with support from qualified Forest School Practitioners. Please also see the school's behaviour policy (see appendix 4), which outlines the Therapeutic Thinking approach taken by the school and which is very much in-line with the ethos of Forest School and the LEAF programme delivered at Micklands.

During LEAF sessions, learners take part in achievable tasks in a pressure-free atmosphere. Everyone is valued and listened to, and no one is forced to speak up or quizzed for answers.

We aim to create a safe, supportive and non-threatening environment in which learners are allowed to take and manage risks. Children can play, explore, take part in crafts, learn about the natural world, work with tools, investigate fire and much more. Team work and social interaction is encouraged, but it is equally important that each child is seen as an individual and is supported to help them achieve their full potential in a holistic way.

LEAF at Micklands Primary School is led by Nicky Culetto and Selina Hogarth.



Nicky and Selina are both experienced Outdoor Instructors and Level 3 Forest School Leaders. Both hold enhanced DBS; Outdoor Activity First Aid Certificates; Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificates; Mental Health First Aid Certificates; and regularly attend Safeguarding training. Nicky and Selina have their own Public Liability Insurance, alongside the school's insurance.

Site information



1. School office (phone number 0118 937 5500)
2. LEAF kit storage shed
3. Main entrance to school
4. The Mounds, with fire circle
5. The Copse
6. The LEAF Glade
7. The outdoor classroom and meadow, with fire circle
8. Emergency exit and fire meeting point
9. Spare clothing and wellies store
10. The Limes meadow

The Leaders will always be accompanied by an assistant. This will be the class teacher or the teaching assistant. This is for Health and Safety reasons and to avoid lone working outdoors.

Participation

All children are expected to take part in LEAF sessions. Letters are sent home to parents and carers with information on the LEAF ethos, the benefits of taking part, and a list of appropriate clothing. Any further questions can be sent directly to the Leaders.

Weather

LEAF takes place throughout the year, whatever the weather. Children should dress appropriately, with long sleeves and long trousers, whatever the season, supplemented with warm and waterproof layers in the Autumn and Winter or sun hats and sun screen in the Spring and Summer.

If the weather is very wet, the leaders may put up a tarpaulin shelter so that participants have somewhere dry to sit, and we will make use of the outdoor classroom and copse. The only time sessions will be cancelled is during high winds or storms. A judgement on relocating or cancelling sessions will be made by the Leaders.

Use of tools

Using tools enables children to develop practical skills and helps them develop self-confidence. Using tools gives children a sense of responsibility and requires trust between child and leader.

Children may learn to use a fire striker, loppers, secateurs, bow saw, palm drill, sheath knife, and mallets/hammers.

The leaders are responsible for overseeing the safe use and maintenance of all tools. When not in use, tools are kept in the locked, LEAF storage shed. Children must have adult guidance when collecting, transporting and using tools and cannot help themselves. All children will listen to a 'tool talk' before using any tool for the first time and instructions on when a safety glove should be worn.

Tools will be used at a distance of two arm lengths plus the length of the tool from anyone else. Risk-benefit assessments have been completed for tools and equipment and are to be found in appendix 5 at the end of this handbook. Adults should always model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation.

Fire

Exploring fires has many benefits to learners, including developing appropriate risk taking, developing self-confidence, learning about cooking and fostering a sense of community.

The Leader will ensure that everyone participating in sessions with fires is aware of the fire safety rules and respects the fire at all times. Fires will only be lit in an open area, away from low hanging branches. Fire bowls will be used and enclosed by logs to make a 'fire square' to act as a visual reminder to all about following the fire safety rules. Anything hot will be placed inside the fire square.

Safety equipment will always be present, to include water, flame retardant gauntlet gloves, fire blanket, first aid kit including treatment for burns.

Participants will be directed where to sit around the fire square and only approach the fire when given permission, adopting the 'Respect' position.

All fires will be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of a session.

Risk-Benefit Assessments

Comprehensive risk-benefit assessments have been compiled for all activities and are included as appendix 5 in this handbook. Risk-benefit assessments are regularly reviewed. A site check is conducted before each session.

Food Hygiene

High food hygiene standards will be maintained in relation to the purchase, storage, preparation and serving of any food. Food/ingredients will be stored at correct temperatures prior to the session. Waste food will be taken off site and disposed of properly.

Information about any food allergies or intolerances will be obtained from the school office prior to the session and all efforts will be made to ensure that nothing is offered to a child or adult with a known allergy to it.

All utensils, crockery etc. will be clean before use. Hand sanitiser will be provided for anyone preparing food or eating.

Procedure for the disposal of food, litter and waste water

When working outdoors, close to nature, it is important to follow the general philosophy of 'leave no trace'. That is, to leave a site as you found it with minimal impact to the environment.

This philosophy applies to all LEAF activities, including making fires and cooking. It is difficult to carry out these activities without producing any waste at all. The procedure for the disposal of food, litter and waste water is outlined here.

Litter

A bin bag will always be present for any litter that cannot be recycled. This might include food wrappers, used tissues and napkins, or leftover bits from activities such as wool or string. The bin bag will be removed from site at the end of the session and disposed of via household waste collection. Recycling will be sorted and collected in a separate bag and taken off site to be placed in a suitable recycling bin. This might include cardboard, tins, bottles or paper. It is important to discuss with the group how waste can be minimised by choosing items with less packaging in the first place and not taking with you more equipment/provisions than you need.

Food

Food waste should not be thrown into the bushes, even though it is tempting to do so. This may cause harm to wildlife if eaten. Food should be collected in a separate bag to general litter and disposed of in the food composting facilities on site, or taken home for the scrap food household collection. This can include raw and cooked food, scraps and anything that has fallen on the floor. The recycling of food waste is an interesting topic to discuss with a group.

Waste water

Water that has been used for rinsing can safely be disposed of in the area, or saved to extinguish the fire at the end of the session. To minimise the volume of grey water, dirty pots, pans and utensils will be taken away and washed up in the school kitchen, or taken home in other cases. Any grey water from handwashing can be strained and discreetly poured away. This water should be spread over a wide area and away from the cleared site.

Toileting

Children should be encouraged to visit the toilet before sessions begin. If a child needs to go to the toilet during a session, they can return to the school with a 'buddy'. The children will need to tell the Leader when they are going to the toilet and when they return to the session.

Disability and Equality

Forest School and LEAF is very much for all, and aims to provide a secure and happy environment where everyone is valued without exception.

- Areas should be made accessible to all children, including those with SEND.
- All experiences and games taking place will be adapted as necessary to ensure that all children are able to join in.
- The Leader shall liaise with class teachers and the school SENDCo to ensure that any children with additional needs are fully involved and supported.
- Any children who don't have access to suitable clothing will be provided with appropriate items from a supply kept at school.
- Any children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need additional support (e.g. from 1:1 teaching assistants), but their entitlement to participate in LEAF remains the same as any other child.

Accident and Emergency Procedure

All participants (children and supporting staff) are briefed about the existence of the accident and emergency procedure (please see Appendix 1), a copy of which is kept in the 'Happy Bag' and taken to all sessions. If necessary, an 'Incident Log Sheet' is filled out, acted upon and filed securely (appendix 2).

The school grounds are secure and enclosed by a high fence with gates operated by buttons well out of the reach of any child. But in the event of a missing child, the group should be called back with "1,2,3 come back to me", which they all learn in the first session. The school office is called immediately and help requested. An adult will stay with the group whilst other adults conduct a search. The police should be called, along with the child's parents/carers if the child cannot be found on the school grounds.



Appendix 1: Accident and Emergency Procedure

A copy of this procedure is kept in the 'Happy Bag' and taken to all sessions.

In the event of an emergency

The Leader will:

- assemble all participants by either blowing the emergency whistle on the 'Happy Bag' or shouting "123, come back to me"
- assess the situation and the nature/extent of the emergency
- attend to any casualties, giving First Aid as required
- if necessary, contact the School Office for support
- after the situation has been dealt with, fill out an Incident Log Sheet (see Appendix 2) which will be filed securely
- review risk-benefit assessments if necessary

Other Supporting Adults will:

- ensure that remaining group members are safe from danger and adequately supervised
- if possible, secure any sharp tools and extinguish any fires
- assist the Leader as needed

In the event of a serious injury

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by First Aid and requires medical assistance, the Leader will:

- contact the Emergency Services using a mobile telephone
- attend to any casualties, giving First Aid as required, until medical assistance arrives
- after the situation has been dealt with, fill out an Incident Log Sheet (see Appendix 2) which will be filed securely
- review risk benefit assessments if necessary

Other Supporting Adults will:

- move the remaining group members away from the incident, ensuring they are adequately supervised and safe from danger
- contact the School Office for support
- if necessary, meet the emergency services and direct them to the injured party

If someone is to be taken to hospital:

- either a Leader or Supporting Adult will accompany them
- the injured party's emergency contact will be updated about the situation by School Office.

If a Leader is injured or becomes ill

- Supporting Adults will take charge of the situation, following the above guidance.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Nicky - 07751832732, Selina – 07729405099. Micklands School Office - 0118 937550, emergency services - 999.

Appendix 2: Incident Log Sheet

Complete this form for every occurrence of the following:

- an accident leading to injury;
- a violent or aggressive incident;
- ill health or disease;
- or a near miss.

Date and time of incident:

Location:

Person(s) affected:

- Was the incident:
- ☐ an accident leading to injury
 - ☐ a violent or aggressive incident
 - ☐ ill health or disease
 - ☐ a near miss

What happened (describe below including the nature of any injury/illness):

Was anyone else involved (note names if so)?

Was anything damaged (e.g. equipment)?

What follow up is needed?

What action has been taken to prevent a recurrence?

Name of person completing form:

Appendix 3: Links to School Policies

Micklands is a Local Authority Maintained Primary School. All schools have a statutory duty to provide certain documents and information on their website. The LEAF Leaders will ensure that they are familiar with these documents and use them as guidance when writing policies for the LEAF programme.

This page of the School website provides links to many policies which can be used in conjunction with this handbook. Particularly important are the safeguarding policy and the behaviour policy. Micklands Primary School follows the therapeutic thinking approach to behaviour which is endorsed by Brighter Futures for Children (responsible for delivering Children's Social Care, Early Help and Education services across Reading). This is very much in-keeping with the Forest School ethos, described on page 3 of this handbook.

<https://www.micklands.reading.sch.uk/statutory-information/policies>

Appendix 4 – Risk-Benefit Assessment

Risk-Benefit Assessment	LEAFI at Micklands Primary School	Prepared by Nicky Culetto and Selina Hogarth, September 2021.
		Review date: September 2022
Description of site: Large school playing field, surrounded by areas of long grass, groups of mature trees, wooden outdoor classroom structure, hedgerows full of native trees and plants, mini orchard and tarmacked playgrounds around the school buildings. The school is fortunate to have a Copse, consisting of large oak, ash, lime and beech trees (100+ years), and many other species including yew, holly, hawthorn, elder and cherry laurel. Native bluebells emerge throughout the Copse in late Spring. The Copse is home to an active Badger sett, monitored by a member of the local badger society. There is also a fox den, and two muntjac deer are regularly seen in the Copse and on the field. The school is surrounded by housing to the south, east and west. There is a cemetery to the north. The school site is maintained by Reading Borough Council.		

Site										
	Hazard	Harm	People at risk	Existing control measures	Probability 1-5	Severity 1-5	Overall risk score out of 10 (PxS)	New control measure if risk score is over 12	Who? When?	Benefits
1	Uneven or Slippery ground, due to mud, tree roots, brambles etc	Injury due to trip, slip or fall	Children, teachers and leaders	Inform children where the ground is uneven and/or slippery. Point out any areas of increased risk. Children to be vigilant and careful and encouraged to step over roots. Leader to conduct a site inspection and carry first aid kit.	2	2	4			Opportunity to run, jump, explore and engage in imaginative play. Experience different weather conditions. Exposure to bacteria in nature beneficial to immune system. Appreciation for forest floor. Improved balance and coordination.
2	Logs or fallen deadwood	Injury due to trip or fall	Children, teachers and leaders	Warn children and adults to step over logs. Move any big trip hazards during site inspection.	2	2	4			Appreciation of natural resources, provides habitat, maintains ecosystem.
3	Overhanging branches, twigs in face, branches falling	Scratches, eye injury, bumps to the head.	Children, teachers and leaders	consider the area chosen for the activity – avoid areas with low hanging branches if possible. Site inspection before session. Report any hazards to RBC.	2	2	4			Encourages self-awareness and responsibility for safety. Increases deadwood and natural resources.

4	Rough surfaces or sharp points/edges on wood	Cuts, grazes, splinters	Children, teachers and leaders	Remove hazards if possible. Inform children of any hazards and boundaries. Participants to be vigilant and careful. Children to wear appropriate footwear and clothing for the woods. Leader to carry first aid kit	2	2	4			Appreciation for natural environment. Assessing and managing own risk.
5	Open spaces, straying outside boundaries	Getting lost, distress or harm to child	Children, teachers and leaders	Set and show clear boundaries. Instructor to have a method of calling the group back to a meeting point such as a specific call or whistle, or 123 where are you? Regular head counts completed by instructors to ensure all group are present.	1	1	1			Children have the space and freedom to explore, develop confidence, and become independent. Children learn to stay safe and follow adult instructions.
6	Animal/bird faeces	Illness	Children, teachers and leaders	Check site before each session and either remove or give verbal warning of where faeces is located. Wet wipes and tissues available. Children to wash hands when returning to the classroom.	1	1	1			Nature connection and identification/observation opportunity. Fosters independence and self-control and an understanding of hygiene.
7	Insect bites/stings	Allergic reactions, discomfort	Children, teachers and leaders	Access to relevant medical details. Any medicine necessary to be taken to site, point out stinging nettles, carry first aid kit. Children to wear long sleeves and trousers.	2	2	4			Nature connection and identification/observation opportunity.
8	Pollen	Allergic reactions	Children, teachers and leaders	Access to relevant medical details of those attending; relevant medication to be taken to site; first aid kit on site; wash hands at end of session	2	2	4			Understanding the natural world and avoiding allergens if susceptible.
9	Poisonous plants or fungi (e.g. Lords and Ladies)	Illness	Children, teachers and leaders	Explain to children that plants/fungi should not be picked and eaten and hands should not be put into the mouth; point out any poisonous plants/fungi and give verbal warnings; wash hands at end of session. No Pick No Lick	1	2	2			Connection to nature; promoting independence and self-control in learning to avoid touching
10	Weather Extremes	Illness (eg. Hypothermia)	Children, teachers	Weather forecast checked each day and a judgement is made on	1	3	3			Understanding of seasons and

		a or over-heating), fatigue	and leaders	whether it is safe to go ahead with the session; children should wear appropriate clothes for the weather and have sun screen if needed. Adults to also be dressed appropriately for the weather conditions. In very hot weather, participants will be encouraged to find shade and drink regularly. Anyone showing signs of being unwell will be sent to the school office.						appreciation of different weathers.
11	High winds or thunderstorm	Injury or death	Children, teachers and leaders	Weather forecast checked each day and a judgement is made on whether it is safe to go ahead with the session. if high winds or thunderstorms are forecast, session may be cancelled; if high winds or thunderstorms begin after the start of the session the leader will decide to end the session and move everyone to safety. Woodland areas safety checked following high winds for fallen or 'hung' trees and branches	1	5	5			Understanding the weather, appreciating health and safety rules.
12	Poor Visibility due to weather and/or time of day	Falls, collisions and the increased chance of getting lost	Children, teachers and leaders	Leader to consider the impact of poor visibility on the activity and adjust the safety briefing and activity delivery to manage the increased risk such as: Increase the frequency of role calls, reinforce the increased risk of bumping into objects and falling over when operating in poor light, adjust boundaries if certain areas become too risky in poor light Consider increasing the staffing.	2	2	4			Understanding the weather, appreciating health and safety rules
Activities and equipment										
13	Collecting natural materials	Scratches, stings, touching	Mainly children, but also	Leader to conduct a site check of the area that will be used, indicate to group which plants are not safe	2	2	4			ID skills, nature connection, valuing the site, imagination and

		poisonous plants	teachers and leaders	to touch or areas that should be avoided. Ensure knowledge of any allergies that might require medication, make sure there are wipes/handwashing/sanitiser available. Repeat the 'no pick no lick' policy. First aid kits for scratches etc.						creativity in use of natural materials.
14	Using ropes, string, tarps and hammocks	Strangulation, entanglement, anxiety if under a tarp.	Children	Safety discussion before activity. Children to be supervised as needed. String and rope to be stored away when not in use. Reassurance given where needed on how to enter and exit a tarp shelter and how to get into a hammock safely and only 1 child at a time.	1	2	2			Problem solving, decision making, fine and gross motor skills, perseverance, sense of achievement, communication
15	Carrying sticks	Tripping, hurting self or others with sharp points	Children	Rules established at the start - no running when carrying sticks, sticks to be carried vertically, pointing down. If the stick is large, work in pairs to move it. Encourage a sense of spatial awareness.	1	1	1			Team work, communication, imagination, nature connection, responsibility
16	Climbing trees or onto fallen logs	Falling	Children	Children to be directed to suitable area for climbing; verbal warnings to only go as high as they feel comfortable and not above adult head height; always keep 3 points of contact; adults to be vigilant about observing children climbing	1	2	2			Gross motor skills, self-risk assessment, perseverance, self-achievement, self-esteem, confidence building
17	Games including running around	Trips, falls, collisions	Children	Leader to make sure the rules and boundaries are clear, and instruct children to look out for roots and uneven ground. Leader to bring the game to an end if these instructions are not adhered to.	1	1	1			Team building, collaboration, fun, exercise, problem solving, turn-taking
18	Eating	Choking, allergies	Children and potentially adults	Leader to have a register with known allergies recorded, along with any medicine requirements. Leader to verbally ask as food is offered. Leader to hold current up to date first aid certificate.	2	3	6			Community building, nourishment, energy, working together and learning new skills if cooking.

19	Fire	Burns, smoke inhalation, trips around fire circle, fire out of control	Children mainly	Fire circle rules established and practiced at the beginning of the session before fire is lit. No crossing the fire circle, everyone to go around the outside. Leader to outline the risks so all are aware. Children to wait until invited to approach the fire. Fire safety gloves to be worn when cooking on the fire, adding sticks etc. Fire safety equipment and first aid kit close to hand and to include a fire blanket, bucket of water, burns first aid treatment. Location of the fire to be considered e.g not under a tree or near to a building and fires will not be lit in windy conditions. Fires will always be lit within the designated fire square or fire bowl.	2	3	6			Excitement, following instructions, self-risk-assessment, self-control, team building, community building
20	Craft activities using scissors, wool, clay, paints etc	Cuts and scratches, damage to clothing	Children	Safety advice given and supervision if needed. Children and parents to be told and reminded of appropriate clothing.	1	1	1			Creativity, imagination, perseverance, satisfaction, fine motor skills.
21	Muddy play and water play	Ingesting mud, mud on face or in eyes, bacteria in water, illness	Children	Advise children not to put mud in their mouths or near eyes, nor to throw mud around or at anyone. Ensure there is a fresh supply of water available in case of minor first aid treatment being needed. Check water play for signs of stagnation.	1	1	1			Nature connection, child-led play, creativity, loose parts play, exposure to beneficial bacteria needed to build healthy immune systems.
22	Using blindfolds	Trips, falls and collision	Children	Blindfolds only to be used for specific activity. Adult supervision at all times, verbal assistance given to avoid hazards	1	1	1			Confidence, sense of achievement, team work, communication, sensory enhancement.
Use of tools										
23	Using tools such as loppers, knives, bow	Cuts/grazes/ damage to hands,	Children mainly, but could	Leader responsible for demonstrating the safe use of tools, how tools should be carried, and	2	3	6			Fine and gross motor skills, sense of achievement, self-

	saw, bill hook, secateurs, hammers, drills, mallets.	fingers, body or legs; loss of blood; going into shock; loss of consciousness	include teachers and leaders	where they should be stored when finished with. Gloves to be worn on helper hand for certain tools. Safe distances to be adhered to. Supervision required. Leader to maintain tools and carry out checks before the session begins. First aid kit readily available.						confidence, self-esteem, self-control, manual dexterity, managing risk, resilience, problem solving, new skills, fun, communication, listening skills, team work, taking turns.
23	Use of fire steels	Burns to skin, damage to clothing from sparks a lit cotton wool	Children mainly	Supervision whilst using the fire steel. Instructions and demonstration given. Fire steel to always be pointing towards the ground and never struck whilst standing up. One knee at least to be in contact with the ground. First aid kit and first aider close by. Bucket of water close by to plunge hand into, or extinguish fire.	1	2	2			Perseverance, resilience, patience, problem-solving, fine motor skills, sense of achievement, following instructions.

Comments	Recommendations:
<p><u>Main concerns:</u></p> <p>Injury, if safety rules are not adhered to. Best practice and safe tool/equipment use should always be modelled by staff. Children should be supported and encouraged when trying new things, directly supervised when required, but also given space and freedom to make new discoveries for themselves.</p> <p><u>Main positive features:</u></p> <p>Following simple safety procedures results in happy and safe sessions.</p> <p>Lots of scope for imaginative, fun, learning and play. Opportunities for the development of fine and gross motor skills, instilling confidence, sense of achievement, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-control, manual dexterity, managing risk, resilience, problem solving, new skills, fun, communication, listening skills etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a variety of resources and encourage the children to use the natural resources around them. • Site inspection to be carried out before each session • Rules and boundaries established from the outset and refreshers given as needed. • Both children and adults can all take responsibility for taking part in tool use/activities/use of equipment in a safe way. • Leader to check equipment and tools before each session • First aid kit and first aider to be present at every session.

Appendix 5: Resources Checklist

Every Session	Depending on activity
Happy Bag	Bug hunting kit
First aid kit	Fire steels and fire making kit (cotton wool, dry sticks etc)
Safety equipment for fire – fire blanket, bucket of water, gloves	Den building kit
Mobile phone	ID sheets for flora and fauna
Tarps and ropes	Craft box
Hand sanitiser	Safety gloves
Bin bag	Tools
Fire kit for personal use	Paper, pencils, clipboards
Class list with any medical details noted	Hammocks
Named medicines	Wool, string, ropes
Children's water bottles	Litter pickers
Paperwork: Session plans, briefing notes, equipment checklists	Story books