



Colourbox Montessori School and Forest School Fire Safety Policy

Outdoor cooking and fire safety demonstrations are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Colourbox Montessori 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.

As outlined by Forest Schools Association UK:

“If any teacher or practitioner working with children/young people decides to use tools and/or fire with groups, their employer has a legal responsibility to ensure that health and safety law is adhered to.

Legally employers must ensure that any significant risks are managed, and that staff have appropriate training, first aid provision, welfare requirements, supervision levels, protective equipment, risk management systems and emergency procedures for all aspects of their job and workplace (this would include the outdoor environment and outdoor learning as well as indoor).”

Staff at Colourbox Montessori School all have mandatory training in Fire Awareness, Food Hygiene and Safety, and First Aid Training which is kept up to date in accordance with training schedules.

The following arrangements and activities are in place in order to meet the above policy requirements:

1. A risk assessment system that includes assessment of the risk from fire and the identification of adequate preventative controls carried out by a fire consultant annually.
2. Clearly defined Fire Evacuation Procedures tailored to each site to be maintained and kept up to date. Ensuring all persons with responsibilities clearly understand their duties
3. A reporting system that enables any staff member to raise any concerns regarding the current fire precaution arrangements
4. Equipment for dealing with a fire that might break out and the appropriate positioning of such equipment to enable quick and easy access to it. These will be serviced in accordance with relevant schedules.
5. A fire alarm system by which the entire organisation can be alerted to the outbreak of any fire, with appropriate call points at each exit point.
6. Signs clearly displayed to enable all persons to follow a safe route to the nearest exit in the event of a fire.
7. Monthly testing of fire evacuation procedures and fire drills involving all personnel on the premises to ensure the safe and swift evacuation to a pre-designated point of safety.
8. A system of waste management to minimise the amount of rubbish and waste materials allowed to build up in order to remove as much flammable materials from the premises. Waste receptacles are kept in a designated locked store to prevent arson to the building.
9. The provision of appropriate storage cabinets in order to store those materials and substances that are used for fuel (i.e., wood, kindling)

10. A system by which all visitors and contractors required to enter the premises are informed of the key points regarding fire precautions and the rules by which they must abide by using the school visitor book & fire register kept in reception.
11. An induction programme for all new staff joining the organisation (whether temporarily or otherwise) that includes information and instruction on fire precautions and the rules by which they must abide. Fire tours showing them escape routes and final exit doors.
12. Annual fire safety training for Forest School staff members to ensure confidence, compliance, and sound understanding of fire procedures, and safe methods of using fires at the forest school.

Location

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for campfires and fire safety demonstrations.
- Campfire areas are enclosed by logs to prevent the spread of fire.

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, 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 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.

Safety and Responsibility

Fires will not necessarily be a part of everyday learning, but instead are focal activities for children and staff based around other areas of learning.

1. Lighting and keeping fires burning

- Only adults are permitted to light purposeful fires (for cooking or demonstrations).
- Fires are lit using fire lighting blocks, newspaper, tinder, and matches or a strike stick.
- 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. The hand should never go over the fire.

2. Extinguishing fires

- All fires must be extinguished thoroughly at the end of a session following the correct procedure.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Forest School Leaders 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.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, 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 decomposition.

3. Fire limitations

- Small, purposeful fires created in the fire pit must not exceed focussed limitations, and by no means are bonfires permitted.

This policy will be reviewed in September 2024