



"Together We Achieve"

Swanwick Primary School Forest School Handbook





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1. Mission statement

Forest School is a fantastic way to learn, it brings the classroom outside learning alongside nature to promote self-esteem, motivation and resilience.

(Forest School Association)

At Swanwick Primary School, we offer fun and engaging learning opportunities, through being independent developing confidence and having hands learning to succeed. We teach Forest School in all weathers to get the full benefit of working in a woodland environment.

The Forest School Principles and how they link to our setting:

1. Forest School will be offered to eight children who is finding the classroom a challenge, these children will have the opportunity to learn about themselves and others whilst building relationships and confidence, these sessions will be every week for around two and a half hours in a woodland setting.
2. A base line assessment of each child will give the trainer information in how to plan and adapt each lesson in a fun and motivating way.
3. Forest Schools takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment. Our site has been adapted by Mrs Denny and Miss Ball to create a natural nurturing woodland setting to benefit all the children.
4. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners who are emotionally literate.
5. We offer the chance to let the children learn from risky play which is assessed on a daily basis.
6. Forest School is managed by Mrs Denny who is a qualified level 3 leader, Miss Ball who is coming to the end of her qualification.
7. We will use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-goodpractice/>

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

The expectations of behaviour are set out in our behaviour policy for Forest Schools

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick.'
- Respect for all the woodland areas especially the trees and plants around school and on Forest School trips.
- All children are to stay in the boundaries explained at the beginning of the session.
- Always use walking feet around the site.
- When scavenging, only collect natural recourses off the ground, no rubbish is to be picked up.
- Don't pick up anything that could cause harm to yourself or others.





2. What is Forest School?

In the 19th century there was a rich heritage of outdoor learning, Kurt Hahn founded Gordonstone who inspired the first of the outdoor education centres. The first who founded FS was Susan Isaacs and the Macmillan sisters.

To improve Maths and English our education system moved towards a teacher/outcome centred approach with the curriculum was introduced.

In 1993 some nursery nurses from Somerset visited Denmark, they were so impressed by the outdoor learning approach they started up their own Forest Schools, and they learnt how to scaffold skills and ideas to which they had a massive impact

A 13 month study of Swedish children found the FS children far happier to their urban cousins; more balanced with greater social capacity, fewer sick days, more able to concentrate and have better coordination, have higher self-esteem and self-confidence and be able to work as part of a team.

In 1995 a college developed a Btech in Forest School and offered this to the early years.

From 2002 Wales and other authorities in England started training, England and Wales had support from the Forestry Commission to develop a OCN qualification in 2003.

In 2002 a conference was held and identified the key features of what they expected Forest Schools should provide.

The definition was again reviewed in 20011.

The Forestry commission in Scotland supported Forest School and published a book in the study of forests to which was published by Lynnette Borradaile in 2006.

The Forest School equality improvement framework was launched in in 2009.

The FSA was launched at Alvaston Castle which was the first governing body for Forest School.

Forest School is holistic learning through play and exploration. Children learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others. During Forest School sessions throughout the year, children will learn to build a shelters, help to light fires for cooking and use green woodworking skills and tools to create and build objects from the woodland around them.

Forest School sessions encourage children to:

- Develop personal and social skills
- To work out what hasn't worked and have time to get better
- Be able to use tools safely
- Discovering new practical skills and how to improve them
- Pursue knowledge that interests them
- Learn how to manage failures
- Know ways in how to build confidence and self-esteem
- Develop practical skills
- Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Explore the natural woodland
- Experience success in areas not taught in the classroom
- Be able to reflect on what work well and what didn't
- Develop their language and communication skills
- Improve physical fine and gross motor skills
- Become more motivated
- Improve their concentration skills



3. The Responsibilities of the Forest School Practitioners

Adult Role:

All adults on the session will following instructions from the Forest School leader at all times, talking to the children in a well-mannered way by encouraging motivation, self-esteem and resilience throughout the sessions.

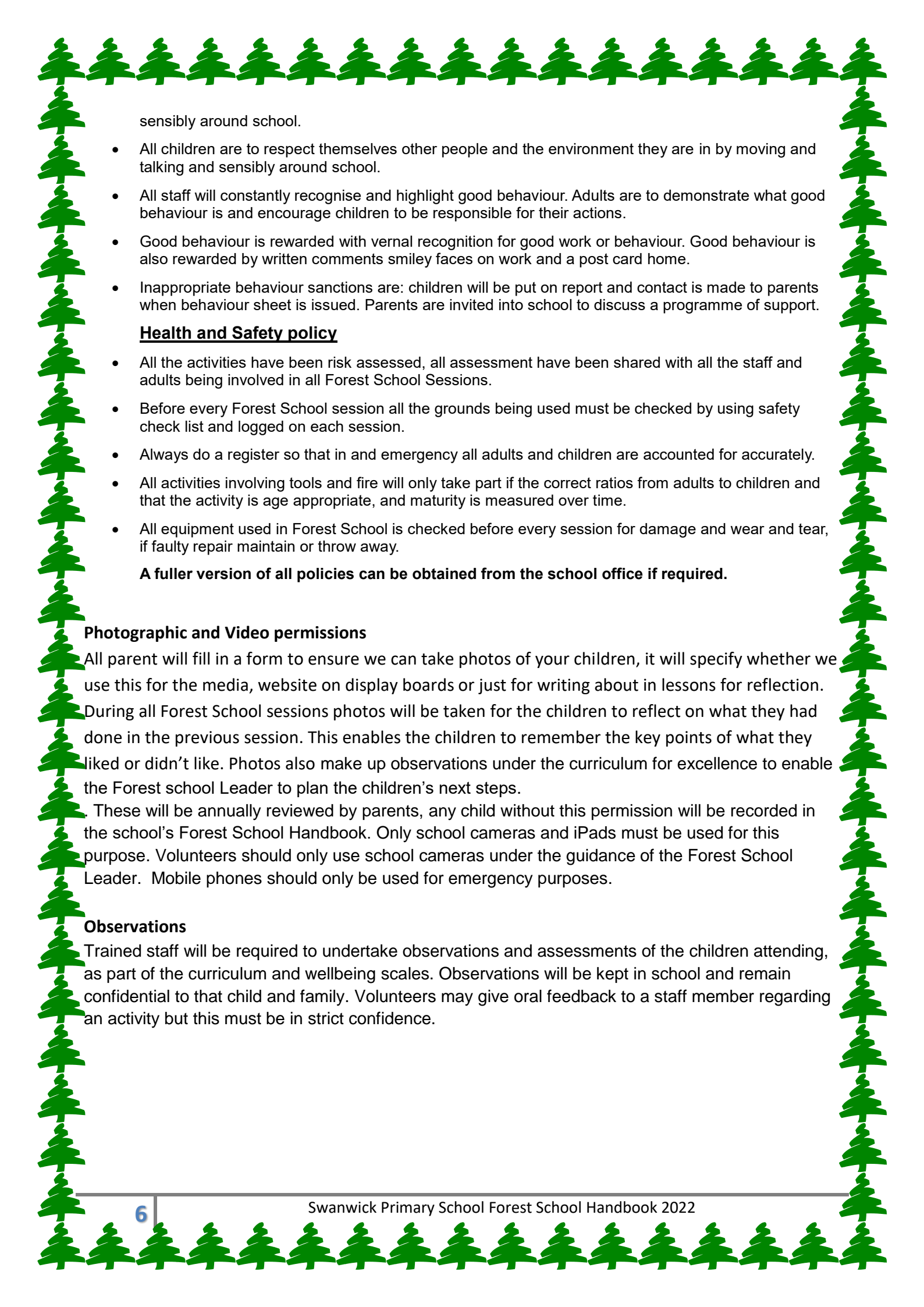
- Carry out all necessary risk assessments.
- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times by creating an environment that is as safe as it can be without undue risk to health.
- Use, maintain and store equipment safely.
- Ensure that all staff is aware of planned sessions, ratios and safety procedures.
- The identification, assessment and control of hazards within the Forest School are vital in reducing accidents and incidents to eliminate or control any such risk identified. The Forest School leader holds ultimate responsibility and liability for ensuring that the Forest School operates in a safe and minimally hazardous manner.
- Carry a first aid kit in the 'Happy bag' ensure everyone is knows the designated area for the first aid kit.
- Ensure everyone is positive for the well-being of the children.
- Encourage good relationships, based on respect of each other.
- Promote honesty, politeness and kindness through example.
- Use encouraging language and show appreciation of each child's contributions and effort
- Ensure fair treatment and equality for all attending, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, in line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- The Forest School team will constantly monitor the Health and Safety policy and amend it as necessary; providing resources as required.
- All accidents/incidents will be recorded in the Accident or Incident book, informing HSE and Care Inspectorate if necessary.
- The accident/incident book will be reviewed after each terms sessions to ensure policies are effective.

Accident procedures and near missis policy

- Only qualified First Aid Forest School Leaders and qualified First aiders should attend to an accident and only as skill and knowledge permits.
- If alone send a responsible child to the office and tell them to come back straight away, or shout for help. (I've gone to Head Teacher if policy can be changed and use a traffic light system for the children. child to take red card to the office, all adults to recognise that there is an emergency.
- A Qualified FS First aider should make the decision whether to move a person, if unsure get a second opinion or cover patient with coats ect to keep warm and send for an ambulance.
- Inform office that an ambulance is required. All children should not travel to hospital other than in an ambulance. If an ambulance can't get, two adults should go in the car with the child. School office to inform parents.
- Forest School leader should or first aider should fill in the accident forms as soon as possible after the accident or a designated first aider that has seen the accident and know the details. First aid kit is found.

Behaviour Policy

- All children are to be polite, helpful and do what they are told to do straight away. All children are to respect themselves other people and the environment they are in by moving and talking quietly and



sensibly around school.

- All children are to respect themselves other people and the environment they are in by moving and talking and sensibly around school.
- All staff will constantly recognise and highlight good behaviour. Adults are to demonstrate what good behaviour is and encourage children to be responsible for their actions.
- Good behaviour is rewarded with verbal recognition for good work or behaviour. Good behaviour is also rewarded by written comments smiley faces on work and a post card home.
- Inappropriate behaviour sanctions are: children will be put on report and contact is made to parents when behaviour sheet is issued. Parents are invited into school to discuss a programme of support.

Health and Safety policy

- All the activities have been risk assessed, all assessment have been shared with all the staff and adults being involved in all Forest School Sessions.
- Before every Forest School session all the grounds being used must be checked by using safety check list and logged on each session.
- Always do a register so that in and emergency all adults and children are accounted for accurately.
- All activities involving tools and fire will only take part if the correct ratios from adults to children and that the activity is age appropriate, and maturity is measured over time.
- All equipment used in Forest School is checked before every session for damage and wear and tear, if faulty repair maintain or throw away.

A fuller version of all policies can be obtained from the school office if required.

Photographic and Video permissions

All parent will fill in a form to ensure we can take photos of your children, it will specify whether we use this for the media, website on display boards or just for writing about in lessons for reflection.

During all Forest School sessions photos will be taken for the children to reflect on what they had done in the previous session. This enables the children to remember the key points of what they liked or didn't like. Photos also make up observations under the curriculum for excellence to enable the Forest school Leader to plan the children's next steps.

These will be annually reviewed by parents, any child without this permission will be recorded in the school's Forest School Handbook. Only school cameras and iPads must be used for this purpose. Volunteers should only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader. Mobile phones should only be used for emergency purposes.

Observations

Trained staff will be required to undertake observations and assessments of the children attending, as part of the curriculum and wellbeing scales. Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family. Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity but this must be in strict confidence.



7. Equipment for Forest Schools

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag with them. The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment. There are of course also essential items that should be carried out for every session.

Essential Equipment:

- First Aid Kit
- Emergency Procedures
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Devices (mobile phone and/or walkie talkie – checked for working order and signal strength)
- Clean Water
- Emergency whistle
- Emergency Life Blanket
- Accident forms
- Medication for individuals will be kept in school in the designated area as usual and a FS Assistant (with the appropriate First Aid training) will retrieve and administer this if/when necessary
- Appropriate spare clothing
- Wet wipes, antibacterial hand gel
- Sun cream (parental permission required)
- Chocolate/sugary food
- Plastic bag
- Fire blanket
- Torch
- Burns Kit
- Tick Remover

8. Policies and Procedures

The Forest School Site:

The Forest School Leader will visually check site upon arrival and complete a Pre-Session Check Form. Anything that could be deemed as potentially hazardous on the site (at all levels), will be recorded down on the Pre-Session Form and signed by all participating adults before the start of the session. Forest School Leader will keep a check on the conditions and the site. If the Forest School Leader deems the site unsafe for any reason the following action will be taken:

- Forest School Leaders to gather the group ensuring head counts.
- Forest School Leaders to gather equipment if safely accessible.
- Forest School Leaders to exit the children via the safest route.
- In the event of a fire the Emergency services will be alerted and all children will assemble and be counted in the designated Fire Assembly Point.
- The Forest School Group will stay together.



9. Poor Weather

Forest School sessions will go ahead in all weather conditions with only a few exceptions:

- Strong winds that make woodland areas hazardous for use due to falling debris.
- When it is dangerous to get around the site by foot due to snow, flooding or ice etc.
- Very wet cold conditions where hypothermia is a real possibility.

Exposure to the elements is part of the magic of nature and therefore an integral part of forest school. In more adverse weather we will review the planned activities and site areas and may change plans and in some cases, may complete some of the session indoors or within the shelters. In the summer the trees in the woodland area and our shelters will provide good sun cover. Please remember to apply sun cream to your child and/or supply it so that they can put it on. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions. Ultimately, our Head teacher (Miss Fogg) and Forest School Leader (Mrs Denny) will make the decision deeming if the weather is unsuitable for Forest School. Any session that is cancelled will be, wherever possible, rescheduled.

10. Forest School Emergency Procedure

In the case of an injured child:

- Secure the area and make it safe, including moving other children away to a safe area/distance.
- FS Leader and other trained assistants to carry out first aid and remain and monitor casualty.
- FS Leader or assistant will call the school office and emergency services and give location and condition of the casualty.
- Class teacher should gather all other children, do a head count and keep them calm. If necessary, take them back to class.
- Office staff to be called to call parents.
- School office staff to await assistance from the emergency services and to ensure they reach the casualty promptly.

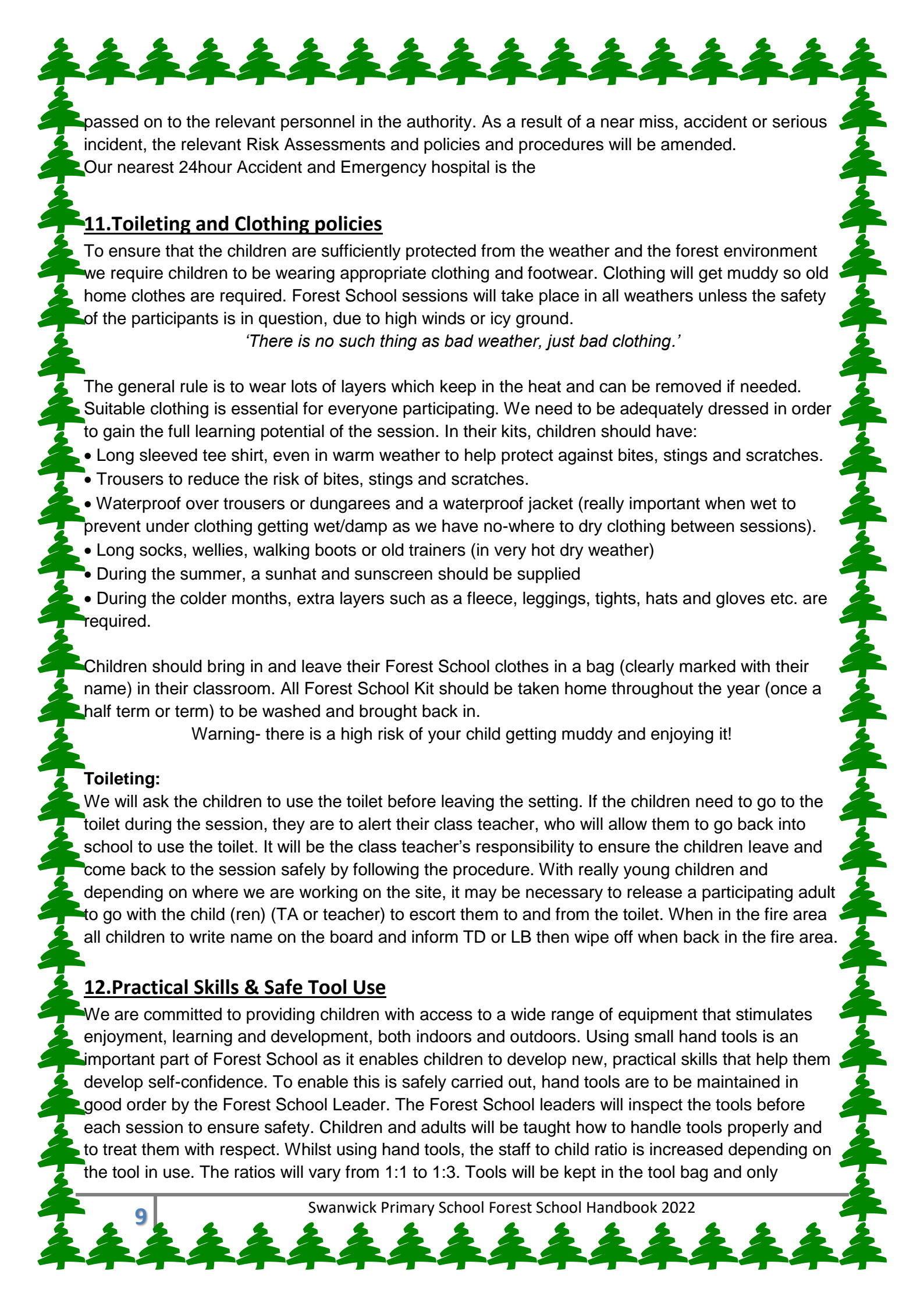
In the case of an injured Adult (assistant/ Parent/ Visitor):

- Secure area and make safe, including moving other children away to a safe area/distance.
- FS Leader will carry out first aid treatment and to remain and monitor the casualty with the assistance of the FS Assistant.
- FS Leader or any other adult will call emergency services and office staff and give location and condition of the casualty.
- Office staff to call next of kin/emergency contacts to collect the casualty's child(ren).
- Class teacher to gather other children do a head count and keep them clam until help arrives.
- Keep the Forest school group together, insulate casualty and if necessary provide shelter.
- FS Leader waits and monitors casualty until Emergency services arrive.

In the case of injured FS Leader:

- Assistant to secure area and make safe.
- Assistant to carry out first aid.
- Assistant/ other adult to call emergency services and office staff and give location.
- Next of kin/emergency contacts to be called by office staff.
- Forest School group stay together away from casualty if possible with the class teacher or other available adult in school, insulate and if necessary provide shelter until children collected.

If an accident occurs this must be documented in the accident or incident book then depending on the severity inform the Health and Safety Representative in school who will judge whether this is



passed on to the relevant personnel in the authority. As a result of a near miss, accident or serious incident, the relevant Risk Assessments and policies and procedures will be amended.
Our nearest 24hour Accident and Emergency hospital is the

11.Toileting and Clothing policies

To ensure that the children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the forest environment we require children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Clothing will get muddy so old home clothes are required. Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy ground.

'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.'

The general rule is to wear lots of layers which keep in the heat and can be removed if needed. Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating. We need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session. In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved tee shirt, even in warm weather to help protect against bites, stings and scratches.
- Trousers to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches.
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and a waterproof jacket (really important when wet to prevent under clothing getting wet/damp as we have no-where to dry clothing between sessions).
- Long socks, wellies, walking boots or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Children should bring in and leave their Forest School clothes in a bag (clearly marked with their name) in their classroom. All Forest School Kit should be taken home throughout the year (once a half term or term) to be washed and brought back in.

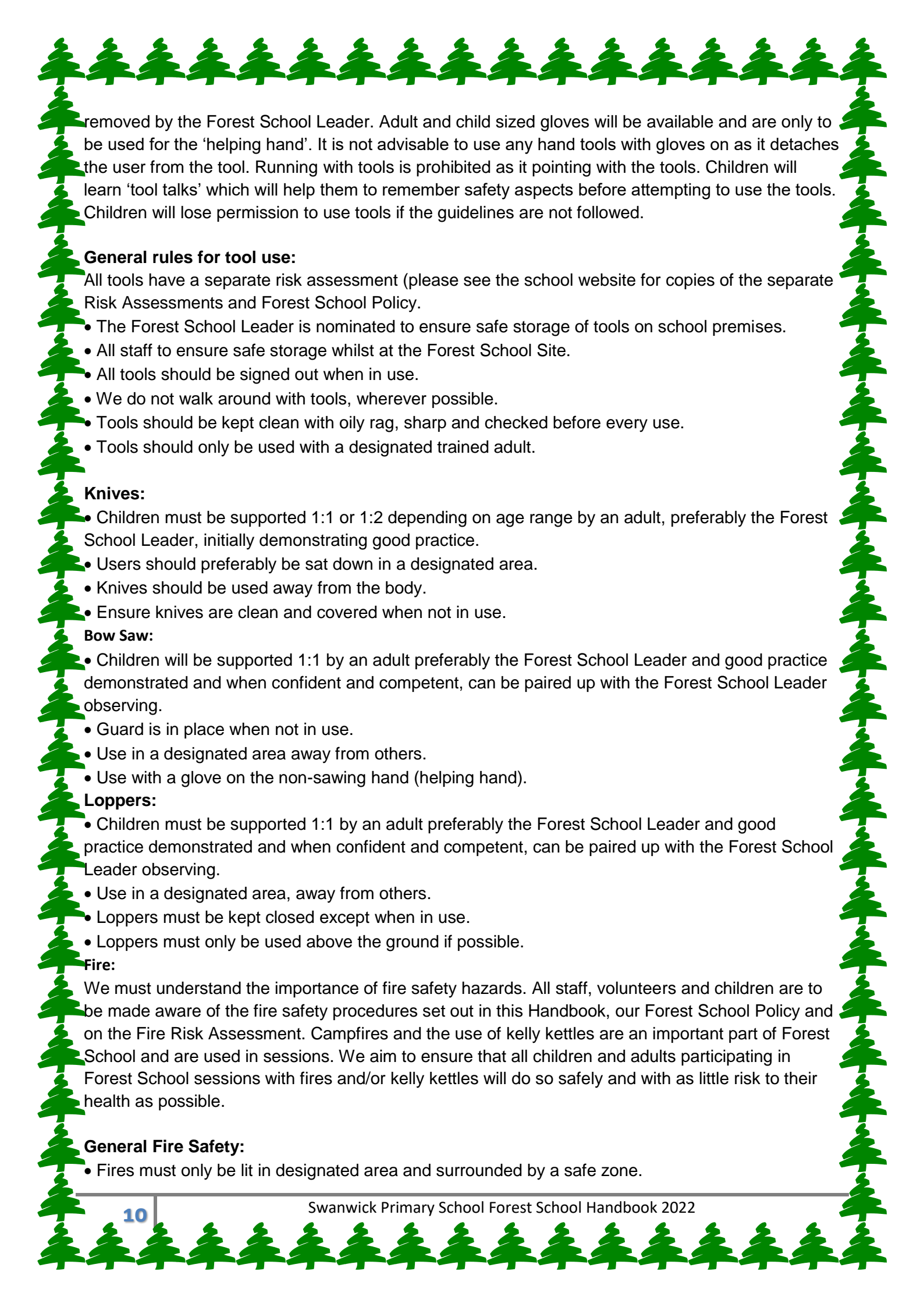
Warning- there is a high risk of your child getting muddy and enjoying it!

Toileting:

We will ask the children to use the toilet before leaving the setting. If the children need to go to the toilet during the session, they are to alert their class teacher, who will allow them to go back into school to use the toilet. It will be the class teacher's responsibility to ensure the children leave and come back to the session safely by following the procedure. With really young children and depending on where we are working on the site, it may be necessary to release a participating adult to go with the child (ren) (TA or teacher) to escort them to and from the toilet. When in the fire area all children to write name on the board and inform TD or LB then wipe off when back in the fire area.

12.Practical Skills & Safe Tool Use

We are committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development, both indoors and outdoors. Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. To enable this is safely carried out, hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader. The Forest School leaders will inspect the tools before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools, the staff to child ratio is increased depending on the tool in use. The ratios will vary from 1:1 to 1:3. Tools will be kept in the tool bag and only



removed by the Forest School Leader. Adult and child sized gloves will be available and are only to be used for the 'helping hand'. It is not advisable to use any hand tools with gloves on as it detaches the user from the tool. Running with tools is prohibited as is pointing with the tools. Children will learn 'tool talks' which will help them to remember safety aspects before attempting to use the tools. Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.

General rules for tool use:

All tools have a separate risk assessment (please see the school website for copies of the separate Risk Assessments and Forest School Policy.

- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises.
- All staff to ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site.
- All tools should be signed out when in use.
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible.
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use.
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult.

Knives:

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by an adult, preferably the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice.
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area.
- Knives should be used away from the body.
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

Bow Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated and when confident and competent, can be paired up with the Forest School Leader observing.
- Guard is in place when not in use.
- Use in a designated area away from others.
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand (helping hand).

Loppers:

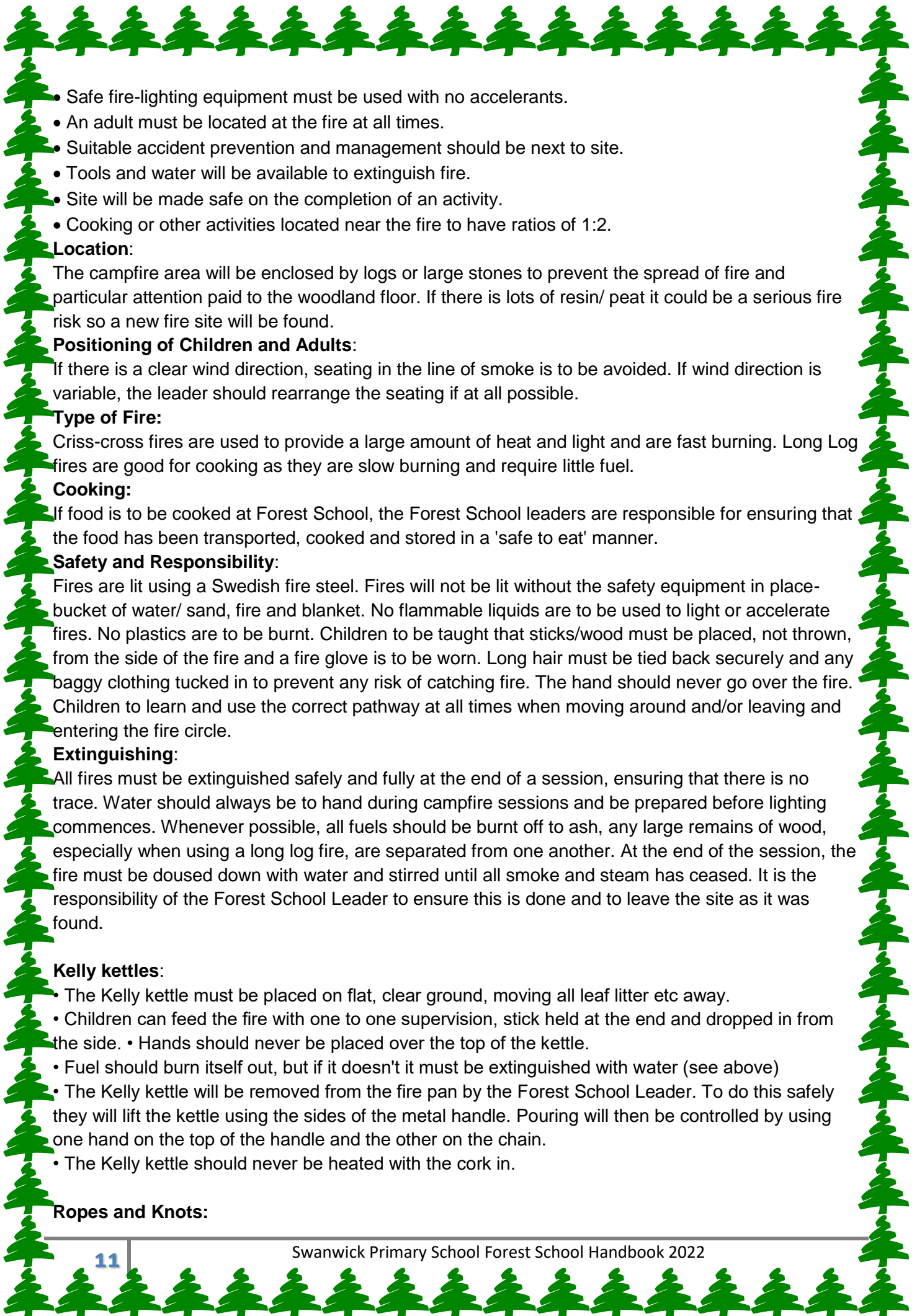
- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated and when confident and competent, can be paired up with the Forest School Leader observing.
- Use in a designated area, away from others.
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use.
- Loppers must only be used above the ground if possible.

Fire:

We must understand the importance of fire safety hazards. All staff, volunteers and children are to be made aware of the fire safety procedures set out in this Handbook, our Forest School Policy and on the Fire Risk Assessment. Campfires and the use of kelly kettles are an important part of Forest School and are used in sessions. We aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires and/or kelly kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

General Fire Safety:

- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone.



- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants.
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times.
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site.
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire.
- Site will be made safe on the completion of an activity.
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.

Location:

The campfire area will be enclosed by logs or large stones to prevent the spread of fire and particular attention paid to the woodland floor. If there is lots of resin/ peat it could be a serious fire risk so a new fire site will be found.

Positioning of Children and Adults:

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.

Type of Fire:

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.

Cooking:

If food is to be cooked at Forest School, the Forest School leaders are responsible for ensuring that the food has been transported, cooked and stored in a 'safe to eat' manner.

Safety and Responsibility:

Fires are lit using a Swedish fire steel. Fires will not be lit without the safety equipment in place- bucket of water/ sand, fire and blanket. No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires. No plastics are to be burnt. Children to be taught that sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire and a fire glove is to be worn. Long hair must be tied back securely and any baggy clothing tucked in to prevent any risk of catching fire. The hand should never go over the fire. Children to learn and use the correct pathway at all times when moving around and/or leaving and entering the fire circle.

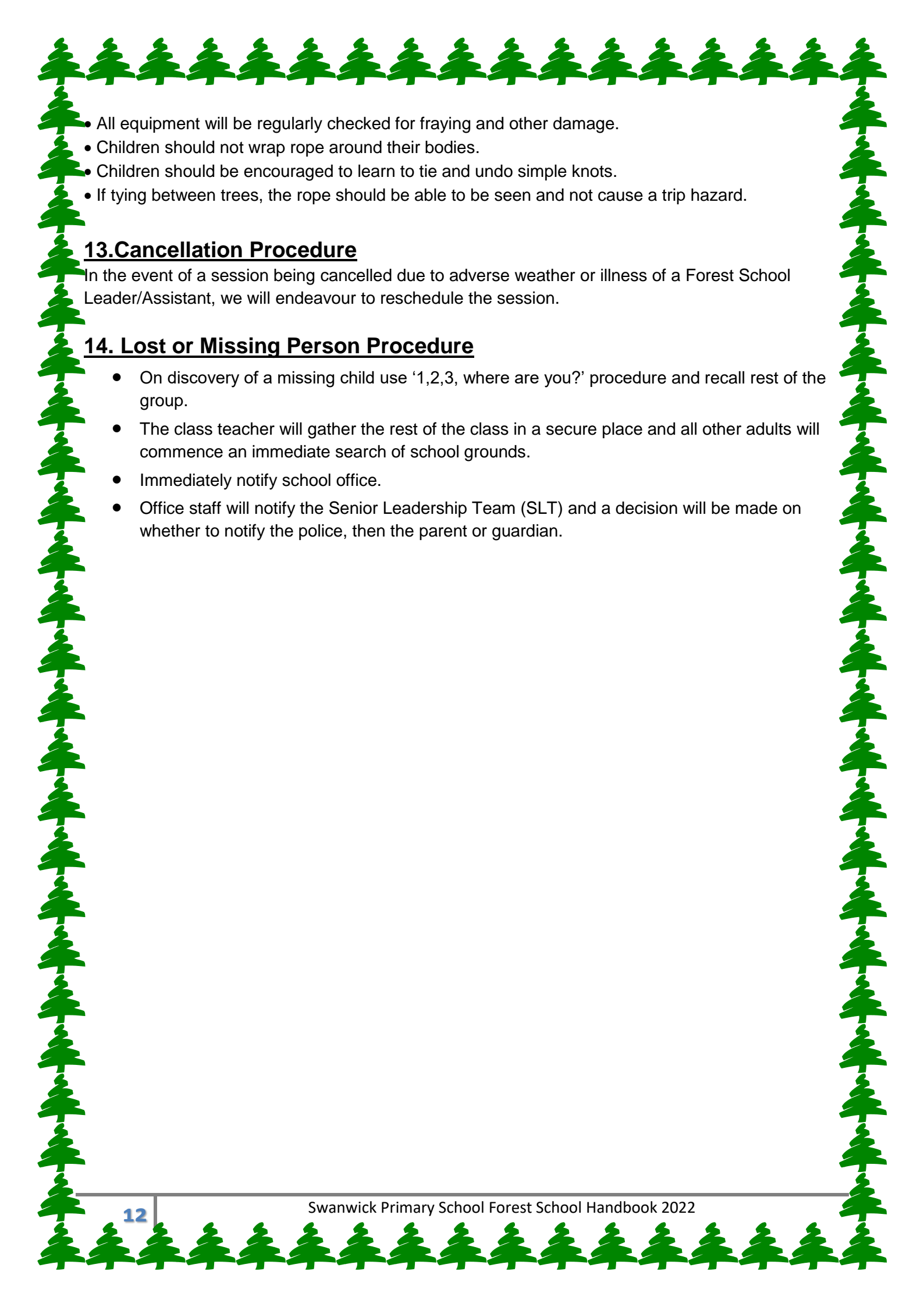
Extinguishing:

All fires must be extinguished safely and fully at the end of a session, ensuring that there is no trace. Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions and be prepared before lighting commences. Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash, 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 and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased. It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure this is done and to leave the site as it was found.

Kelly kettles:

- The Kelly kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground, moving all leaf litter etc away.
- Children can feed the fire with one to one supervision, stick held at the end and dropped in from the side.
- Hands 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 (see above)
- The Kelly kettle will be removed from the fire pan by the Forest School Leader. To do this safely they will lift the kettle using the sides of the metal handle. Pouring will then be controlled by using one hand on the top of the handle and the other on the chain.
- The Kelly kettle should never be heated with the cork in.

Ropes and Knots:

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- All equipment will be regularly checked for fraying and other damage.
 - Children should not wrap rope around their bodies.
 - Children should be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots.
 - If tying between trees, the rope should be able to be seen and not cause a trip hazard.

13.Cancellation Procedure

In the event of a session being cancelled due to adverse weather or illness of a Forest School Leader/Assistant, we will endeavour to reschedule the session.

14. Lost or Missing Person Procedure

- On discovery of a missing child use '1,2,3, where are you?' procedure and recall rest of the group.
- The class teacher will gather the rest of the class in a secure place and all other adults will commence an immediate search of school grounds.
- Immediately notify school office.
- Office staff will notify the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and a decision will be made on whether to notify the police, then the parent or guardian.