



Nonsuch
Primary School



Forest School Handbook 2025

Contents of Forest School Handbook

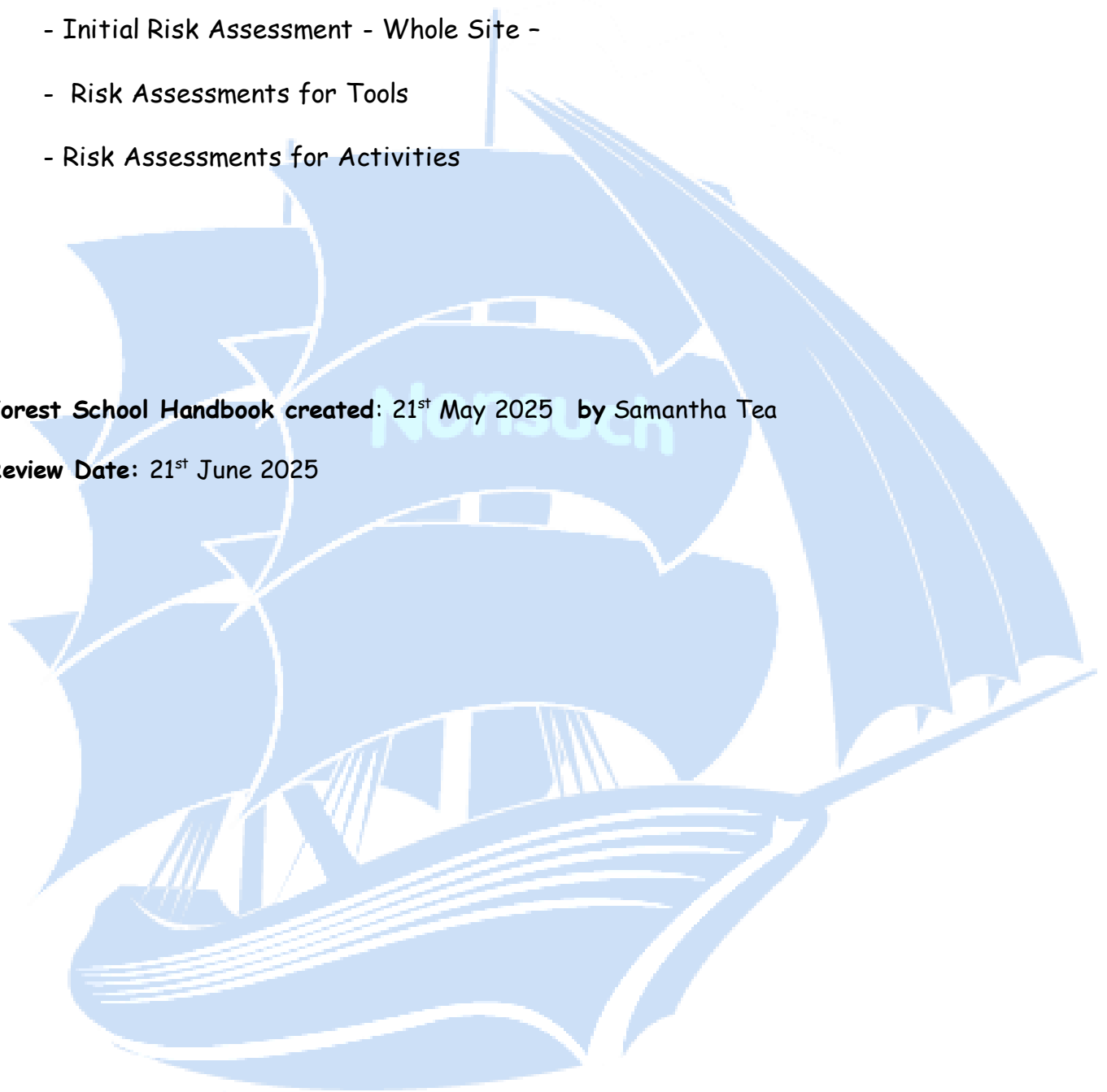
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- Example of our "accident" Log
- Example of our "near miss" accident report form.
- Example of school consent form for photographs
- Copy of Insurance for Forest School
- Initial Risk Assessment - Whole Site -
- Risk Assessments for Tools
- Risk Assessments for Activities

Forest School Handbook created: 21st May 2025 by Samantha Tea

Review Date: 21st June 2025



[What is Forest School?](#)

Forest School was established in the 1950's in the Scandinavian countries as a child-centered approach to learning in the outdoors with its pedagogical roots going back to the 1800's. It is an "inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment." (FSA) It is highly influential on both children and adults and helps to bring people back in touch with nature while helping to develop the learner physically and emotionally through a range of processes.

Forest School allows for deeper learning experiences as it focuses on the journey that the children undertake while exploring the natural environment rather than the end product. It enables the children to explore and learn new skills, take on challenges, accept responsibility and to take supported risks through different activities including, using small hand tools to cut and chop wood.

[Brief Background of Forest School in the UK](#)

In 1993, Forest School in the UK was developed following the visit of a group of nursery nurses at Bridgewater Collage, Somerset to Denmark where they observed the potential benefits of the Scandinavian (frulitsliv) way of live which focused heavily on "child-centered play based pedagogy." They adapted and developed their own version of the Danish model of Forest School upon their arrival back in the UK. The rise and success in Forest School was so instrumental that there are now a large number of forest schools within the UK.

In May 2004, Forest School became established in Birmingham through a [Birmingham Forest Education Initiative Cluster group](#) and the founding partners included "Birmingham City Council (Ranger Service - Parks Sports and Events and Study Support), Groundwork Birmingham and CSV Environment with new members joining all the time."

Our Forest School Ethos

At Nonsuch, we will strive to provide a range of outdoor play activities that will help learners to recognise and manage risks effectively and to help them to realise their potential in an environment where they feel that they belong whatever their needs or abilities.

Our Forest School sessions will provide a deep learning experience and opportunities for practical application of new skills / learning through a range of processes.

This should help our learners to:

Develop their emotional intelligence - social skills, self-awareness, self-motivation and empathy.

Understand and manage their emotions and feelings in a more effective and positive way.

- Grow as individuals

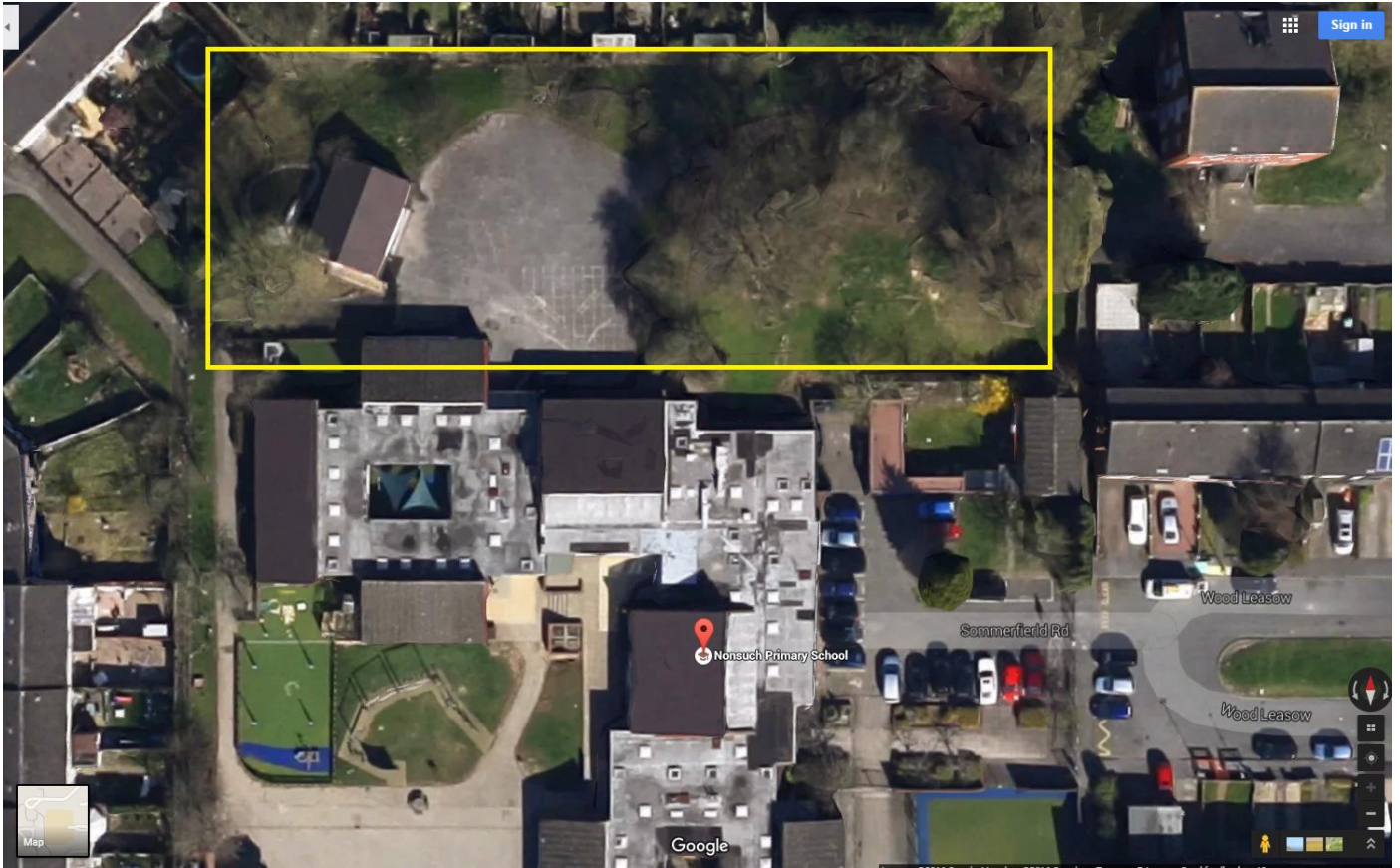
Develop positive behaviours and self-esteem through building trusting relationships between learners and supporting adults.

Review and reflect on their personal achievements.

Become more confident, happy learners by raising self - esteem and breaking the cycle of negative behaviours.

[Our Forest School Site](#)

The forest school will be situated within the grounds of Nonsuch Primary School.



The yellow rectangle marks the area covered by the Forest School and also incorporates the EYFS/KS1 playground. The Forest School will be accessed by the children through the EYFS/ Key stage 1 playground.

In case of an emergency the Forest School Area is accessible from the right hand side of the staff carpark by a gate located by the bin area.

Forest School Adult Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leaders:

Samantha Tea - Class Teacher

- Forest School Leader Level 3 (potentially)
- Level 3 First Aid in the work place valid from December 2024
- Paediatric first aid valid from January 2025
- Designated Safeguarding
- EVC - Educational Trips

Jenny Page - Class Teacher

- Forest School Leader Level 3 (potentially)

It is expected that other adults will support with the Forest School Leaders with sessions for the different year groups.

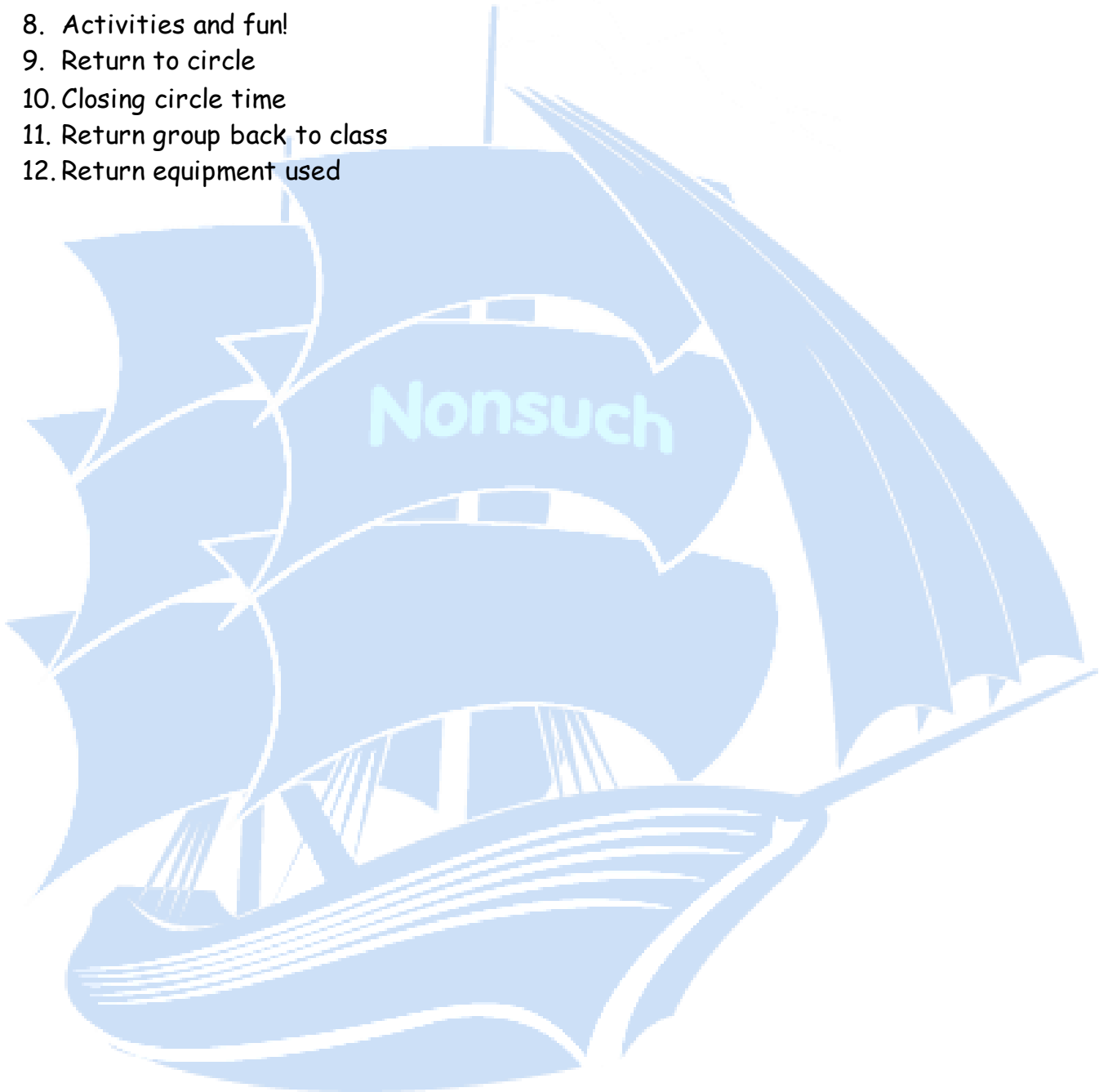
Our Forest School Rules and Behaviour

The school behaviour policy will be followed (See school website) with the following amendment:

At Forest School we expect the children to be at the centre of setting rules for expected behaviour. This is important for developing their sense of belonging, self-esteem and awareness of danger and will be developed through a positive, more holistic approach to dealing with behaviour. Therefore, a three warning system will be adopted when the behaviour of a pupil becomes challenging and /or affects the safety of themselves or others. Warning 3 should only be used on rare occasions as it is important for the children to become responsible in recognising what is appropriate behaviour. The 3 warning system is described below.

- **Warning 1** - Gentle reminder e.g. what did you say we would do? or careful modelling to allow time to recognise what the appropriate behaviour should be if the child is unsure of the appropriate behaviour that they should be demonstrating..
- **Warning 2** - The child spends 5 minutes out of activity to reflect on what they should be doing.
- **Warning 3** - The child does not take part in the rest of that session but will be able to take part in the next Forest School session as a fresh start.

1. Forest School Leaders to conduct site risk assessment
2. Set up site including equipment required
3. Collect group for session
4. Take them to the Forest School site
5. Arrival and circle
6. Safety talk
7. Start session
8. Activities and fun!
9. Return to circle
10. Closing circle time
11. Return group back to class
12. Return equipment used



While attending a Forest School session on site the children and staff will:

Boundaries

The Forest School Site boundary will be clearly defined by fencing. However, any further boundaries within the Forest School site will be marked visibly with tape / rope and children will be made aware that they are not to go pass the tape / rope. When needing to gather the children back together we will play 1,2,3 where are you.

Eating and Drinking

Remind children that they should not be picking /eating berries or seeds that they find outside. Remind children regularly that they should keep their fingers away from their mouth. If children are consuming food or drink provided during forest school sessions then they should wash their hands or use wipes prior to doing so.

Picking up and playing with stones

Children will be allowed to use stones for making artwork and for building miniature 3d structures. Children will not throw stones.

Pond Dipping

If children or adults are taking part in pond dipping activities with any open cuts / grazes then they should be covered with a plaster or glove to minimise any risk of waterborne infections or diseases.

Tree Climbing

The children will climb no higher than the height of the adult with them. This will also be done on a 1-1 basis. No adult will lift a child up the tree; if they cannot reach then they cannot climb it.

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children will be allowed to carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but remind them that they need to be aware of others around them and to carry the sticks carefully. Sticks must



Rope and String use

The children will be encouraged to use the skills they have developed through Forest School activities to connect and transport materials. If a child wants to explore constructing something with ropes and it is not dangerous to so then an adult will help them by modelling appropriate knot tying. Prevent and discourage children from tying up each other or themselves.

Digging

The children will be encouraged to dig in the designated areas in our school grounds. Children will be shown how to use digging tools safely and to only dig shallow holes when digging elsewhere e.g. while digging for mini-beasts. Children will be expected to refill holes dug out once they have finished.



Log Circle/ Base Camp

The children will assemble around the log circle. They will step over the logs to sit down whether or not a fire is to be lit. No child will be permitted to walk across the centre of the log circle unless permitted by an adult. When

Fire

A fire will only be lit within the Fire Pit area. This will only be done by one of the Forest School Leaders who will take control of the operation of lighting and maintaining the fire.

around the fire the children will be a distance from the fire which will be marked by the log circle.



Collecting natural materials

The children will be allowed to collect loose natural materials and will be made aware of plants that they can and cannot touch e.g. nettles and brambles. The children may wear gloves to protect their hands from cuts and grazes if they wish, while collecting natural materials from the ground.

Building Dens and shelters

The children will be supervised by an adult when building dens and shelters. The children will be made aware of the potential for logs or sticks falling. The children will not use logs or sticks that are too heavy for them to hold safely. Children will be told not to enter the den or shelter until an adult has checked it is secure.



Emergency Procedure - School / Local Site

There will always be one qualified First Aider in attendance. They will attend to any casualties, giving First Aid, as necessary.

In the case of an emergency:

The situation / injury will be assessed and the following will occur!

Minor Injury:

- The qualified First Aider will attend to the injury as necessary
- Forest School activities may be suspended for a short while, while first aid is given.
- Accident log shall be completed.
- Accident form will be completed and passed to the child's teacher / carer or guardian at the end of the session/ day.

Major Injury:

- Assess the situation
- Before attempting recovery delegate a member of staff to call an ambulance **999** and notify carer or guardian and return to report to the first aider that this has taken place.
- If deemed necessary additional adults will be requested to attend the forest school setting and provide additional support to the injured party or the rest of the group.
- Qualified First Aider to apply immediate temporary care while this takes place.
- While wait for ambulance keep child calm and warm.
- One member of staff to wait by main gates to await arrival of the ambulance.
- Delegate a member of staff to call register and end session and return group to class.

If the Forest School Leader /qualified first aider is injured or becomes ill, another member of staff will take charge of the situation as above.

Any incident / accident will be recorded in the accident log or on a near miss form which will be kept in the designated forest school folder.

In the event of Fire:

- Remove children from the woodland area into the playground
- Children line up
- Take register of children
- Attempt to extinguish fire only if deemed safe to do so.
- Call **999** if necessary.
- Remove children from site.

Lost Child

- Regroup the children at fire circle
- Call register
- Search to be carried out by member of staff to confirm child is not present on site
- Contact the police if child not found within 20 mins (emergency contacts)
- Contact child's carer or guardian.

Stranger Danger

- Call the children back to fire circle and take register
- Alert all adult help
- If deemed as an immediate threat to life or property call 999. Site Manager / office made aware. Ask stranger to leave if safe to do so.
- Keep children under supervision until situation has been dealt with, return to school building if necessary.

Ratios

- The children will only work with a qualified Forest School Practitioner when working with tools on a ratio of 1:1 or 1:2.
- When working within the fire circle the ratio will be 1:1 or 1:2.
- We will aim to conduct forest school sessions with a high ratio of adults to pupils. The actual ratio will vary and be dependent upon the children involved and the planned activities but ideally groups tend to be smaller for Forest School sessions.

The Forest School Leader will make sure that they are fully aware of the location of the remote site and vehicular access points in the case of an emergency, prior to using the site. The Postcode, location or access points for the remote site being used will be recorded and carried with group in case of an emergency.

Minor Injury:

- The qualified First Aider will attend to the injury as necessary
- Forest School activities may be suspended for a short while, while first aid is given.
- School informed, if deemed necessary
- Accident log shall be completed.
- Accident form will be completed and passed to the child's teacher / carer or guardian at the end of the session/ day.

Major Injury:

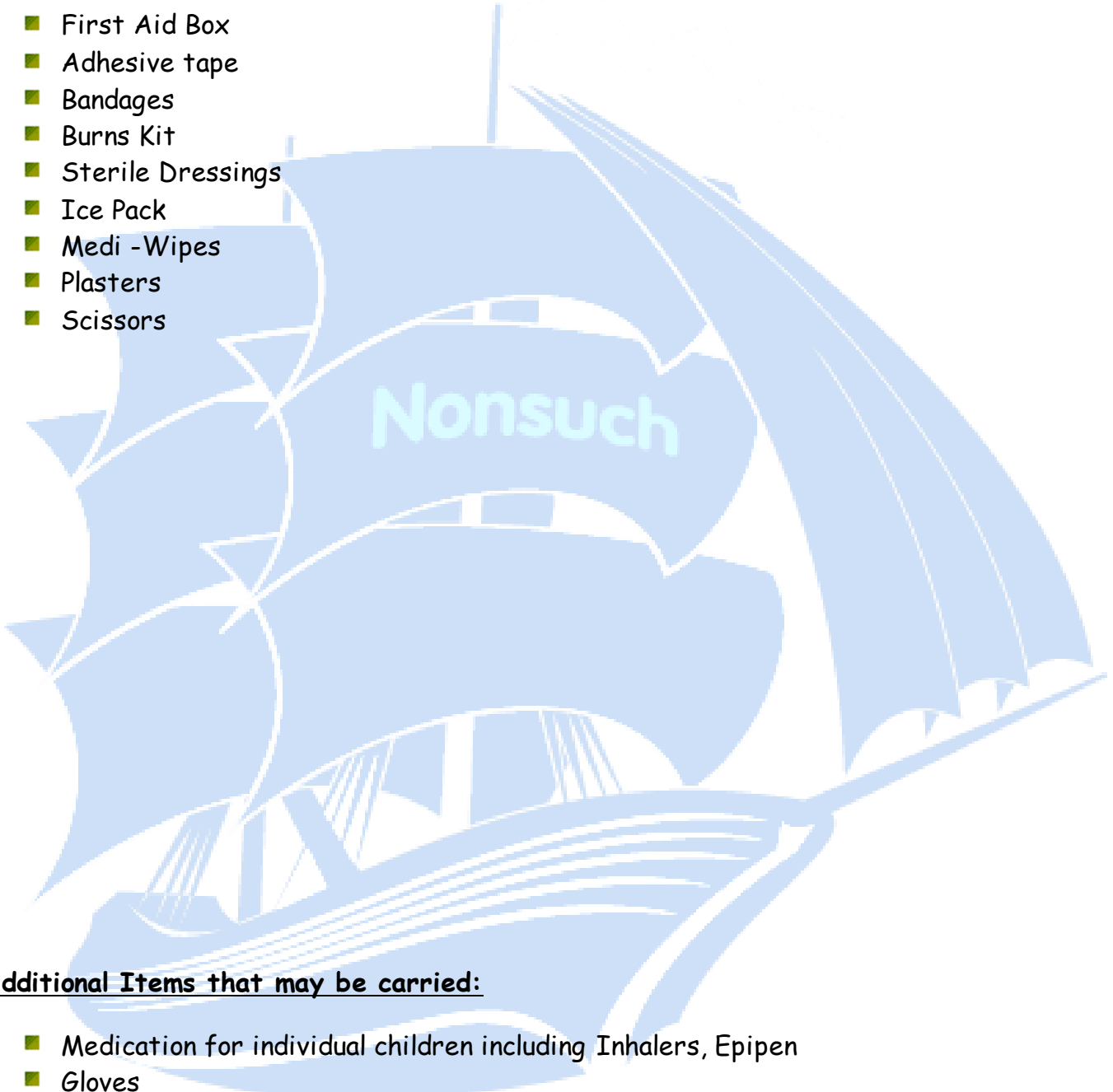
- Assess the situation
- Before attempting recovery delegate a member of staff to call an ambulance **999**. Provide the emergency services with location details.
- Adult to contact the school and ask the school to notify carer or guardian and return to report to the first aider that this has taken place.
- Adults to organise the return of the other pupils back to the school site. Adult may also ask for additional adults to be sent to the remote site to provide support with this. Delegate a member of staff to call register prior to moving off site.
- Qualified First Aider to apply immediate temporary care while this takes place.
- While wait for ambulance keep child calm and warm.
- One member of staff to wait at main access point to await arrival of the ambulance.

[Checklist of First Aid Equipment](#)

The following is a list of First Aid Equipment that will be carried specifically in relation to Forest School sessions. The Forest School Leaders will be responsible for checking that the First Aid kit is replenished and kept up to date on a regular basis.

- Radio for communication with main setting
- Medical Forms / Information

- First Aid Box
- Adhesive tape
- Bandages
- Burns Kit
- Sterile Dressings
- Ice Pack
- Medi -Wipes
- Plasters
- Scissors



Additional Items that may be carried:

- Medication for individual children including Inhalers, EpiPen
- Gloves
- Wet Wipes or hand gel
- Clean Water
- Plastic Bags

[Our Clothing Policy](#)

At Nonsuch Primary School we require all children to be adequately dressed for Forest School activities. We will require all children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear to ensure that they are sufficiently protected throughout the year from the "outdoor elements and the forest school environment."

Forest School leaders and staff will help to ensure that children are appropriately dressed. However, it is expected that parents and children adhere to the clothing policy expectations outlined below to ensure that their child can actively participate in all Forest School sessions.

The school will provide children with the following items of clothing for sessions:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof jackets
- Gloves
- Wellies

Parents will be expected to provide all year round:

- A spare change of clothes as clothing will get wet/muddy at times.

In Winter:

- A warm hat (named)
- Warm / spare pair of socks to be worn inside wellies
- Additional layers of clothing when the weather is cold that can get dirty.

In Summer:

- Sun hat (named)
- Sun cream (named)
- Lightweight long sleeved top and trousers to protect from sunburn / nettles / twigs etc.
- Enclosed shoes or boots as an alternative to wellies.

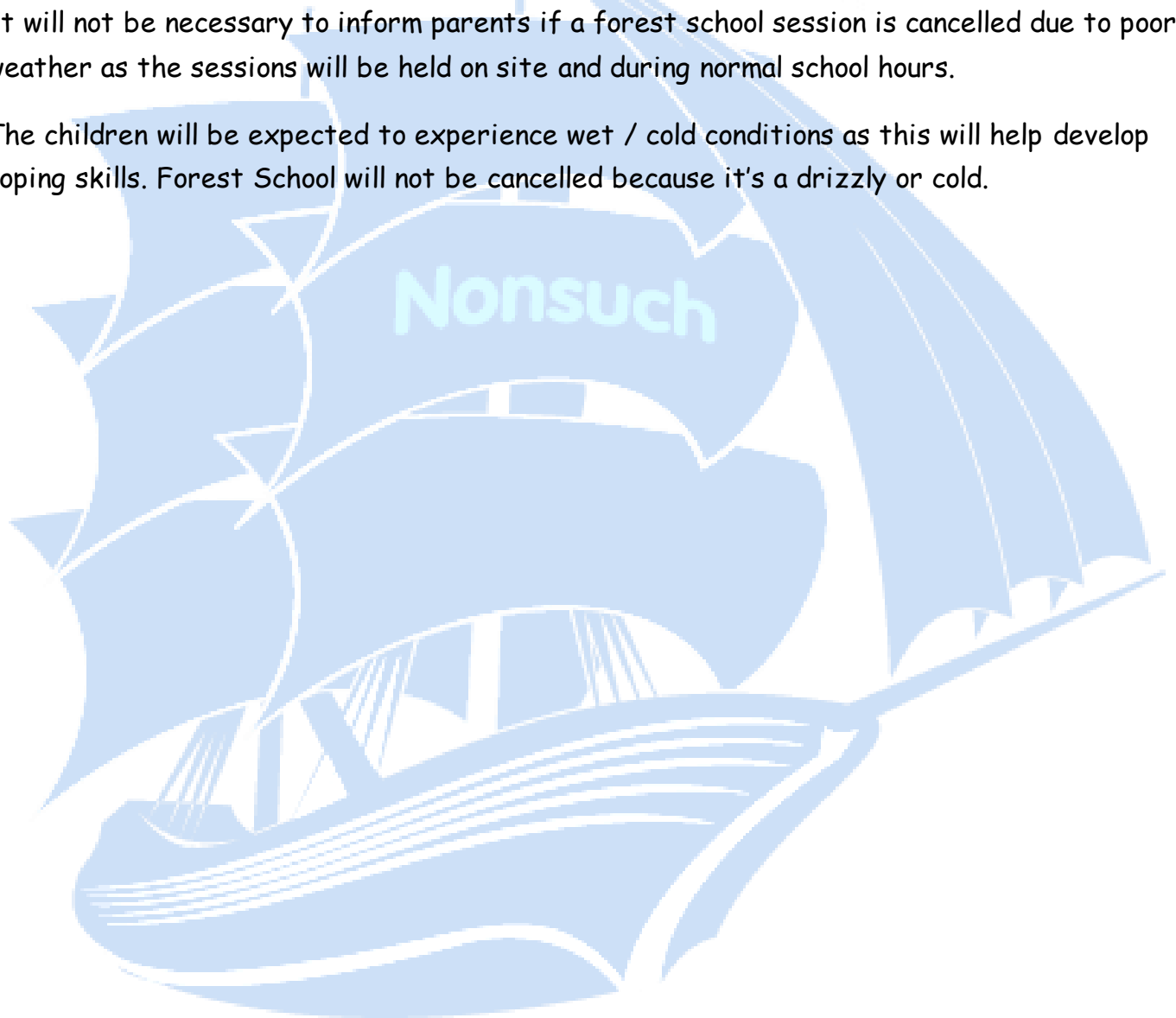
[Poor Weather Procedure](#)

In cases of poor weather conditions such as torrential rain, during thunder storms, high winds or during periods of extreme cold Forest School sessions outside will be cancelled for health and safety purposes. Where possible an alternative activity linked to Forest School will take place indoors. If it is expected to be wet then a shelter may be constructed by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area available.

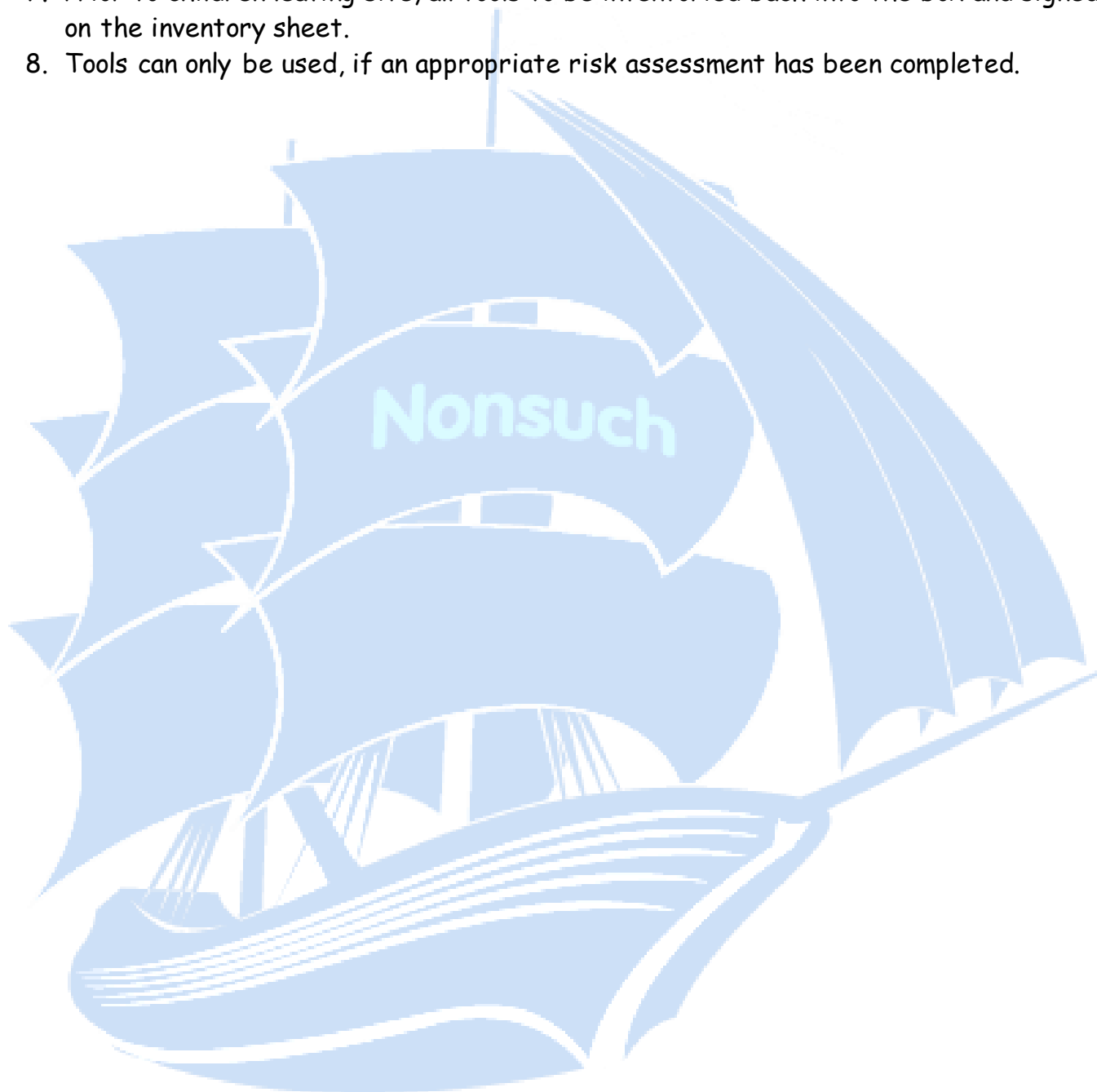
The Forest School Leaders will check expected weather conditions when poor weather is expected prior to the start of a session using the BBC / Met office website in order to help make the decision about whether the forest school session should take place.

It will not be necessary to inform parents if a forest school session is cancelled due to poor weather as the sessions will be held on site and during normal school hours.

The children will be expected to experience wet / cold conditions as this will help develop coping skills. Forest School will not be cancelled because it's a drizzly or cold.



1. Upon arriving at the site, all tools to be inventoried, while members of staff present.
2. Adult to complete inventory form and sign.
3. When tools are not in use, they must be kept in or returned to the tool box.
4. Tool box to be kept locked at all times.
5. Only staff may access the tool box.
6. Children to use tools under qualified adult supervision.
7. Prior to children leaving site, all tools to be inventoried back into the box and signed on the inventory sheet.
8. Tools can only be used, if an appropriate risk assessment has been completed.



- All tools will be kept in a lockable tool box when not in use.
- Tools will only be used by a child when working alongside a qualified forest school practitioner.
- Tools will be checked prior to the start of a session and will be counted and checked back in at the end of a session.
- Tools will only be used following the specific tool talk detailed below which explains how each tool should be used and stored.

Bowsaw



1. I hold my Bow Saw like this (holding top handle with two hands in front of you with the blade facing the floor)
2. I walk with my Bow Saw like this
3. I pass my Bow Saw like this (using two hands - one hand on the top handle and the other hand on the nose of the handle with the blade facing down)
4. When I'm not using my Bow Saw I put it on the ground with its cover on with the blade facing in towards my foot and the handle facing outwards.
5. I use my Bow Saw two arms and a tool length away from anybody else.
6. I use my Bow Saw to saw anything that is larger than a 2p piece.
7. When I have finished using my Bow Saw I put it back in the tool box / bag.
8. I wear a glove on my helping hand.
9. If working with someone else when using the Bow saw we start by crossing our helping hands over the top of the blade to the opposite side to hold the wood we are cutting.
10. I communicate with my partner to check that they are ready and we pull and relax on the blade alternatively.

Penknife



1. You open the blade like this (1/4, relax, open full, relax and lock)
2. This is the sharp cutting edge.
3. I kneel on one knee in the safe position and always work away from my body and keep the knife on the right side of my body during use it should never cross over my body (right handed person)
4. I close the Pen Knife like this (1/4 relax, fully close, relax and then lock)
5. I hold my Pen Knife like this.
6. I walk with my Pen Knife like this.
7. I pass my Pen Knife like this.
8. When I'm not using my Pen Knife I put it down on a glove next to where I am working.
9. I use my Pen Knife two arms and a tool away from anyone.
10. I use my Pen Knife to whittle wood and cut string.
11. I can wear a glove on my helping hand.
12. When I have finished using my Pen Knife I put it back in the tool box/bag.

1. I hold my Bill Hook like this (the Blade facing down)
2. This is the handle and this is the sharp cutting blade.
3. I walk with my Bill Hook like this (blade facing back at side of my leg in a vertical position).

4. I pass my Bill Hook to someone else like this (two hands - one pinching the nose of the Bill Hook and the other on the handle,

Bill Hook



Loppers



1. I hold my Loppers like this
2. This is the handle, this is the blade, this is the sharp cutting edge
3. I walk with my Loppers like this (Loppers at side, blade pointing down to the ground (blade with a smiley face))
4. I pass my Loppers to someone else like this.
5. When I'm not using my Loppers I place the blade section on top of a glove with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing behind me. .
6. I use my Loppers two arms and a tool length away from anyone.
7. I use my Loppers to cut wood smaller than a 2p piece.
8. When using my Loppers with a partner we each stand an arm's length away from the wood to be cut. My partner wears a glove on both of their helping hands. I have no gloves on the tool.
9. When I have finished using my Loppers I put them back in the tool box / bag.

Fires are an important aspect of Forest School and can be used for a number of activities. To help ensure safety fires will only be used with groups when the Forest School leader/s feel that the group of children attending Forest School are ready and have demonstrated the appropriate behaviour over a number of weeks. If the Forest School leader/s deem it unsafe to continue with a lit fire for any reason including the behaviour of pupils it will be put out instantly. Please see Fire Risk Assessment for any additional details.

Adults and children's awareness of fire and positioning

- The fire will be surrounded by seating logs at a distance of at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit. For the Early Years children may be positioned further back to ensure that they are at a safe distance.
- Engage group as to the purpose/ reason for lighting a fire.
- Demonstrate **stop, drop and roll** procedure to group in case of fire coming in contact with any person or persons.
- When the fire is lit children / adults are not permitted to access the area surrounding the fire without permission from the Forest School Leader.
- Children will be expected to walk around the outside of the seating logs and to step over the log to sit down at all times. A fire will not be lit with a group until all children have demonstrated that they **can do this at all times**.
- Once seated the children must remain seated until they are directed by an adult to move or to enter the fire circle.

Fire Lighting

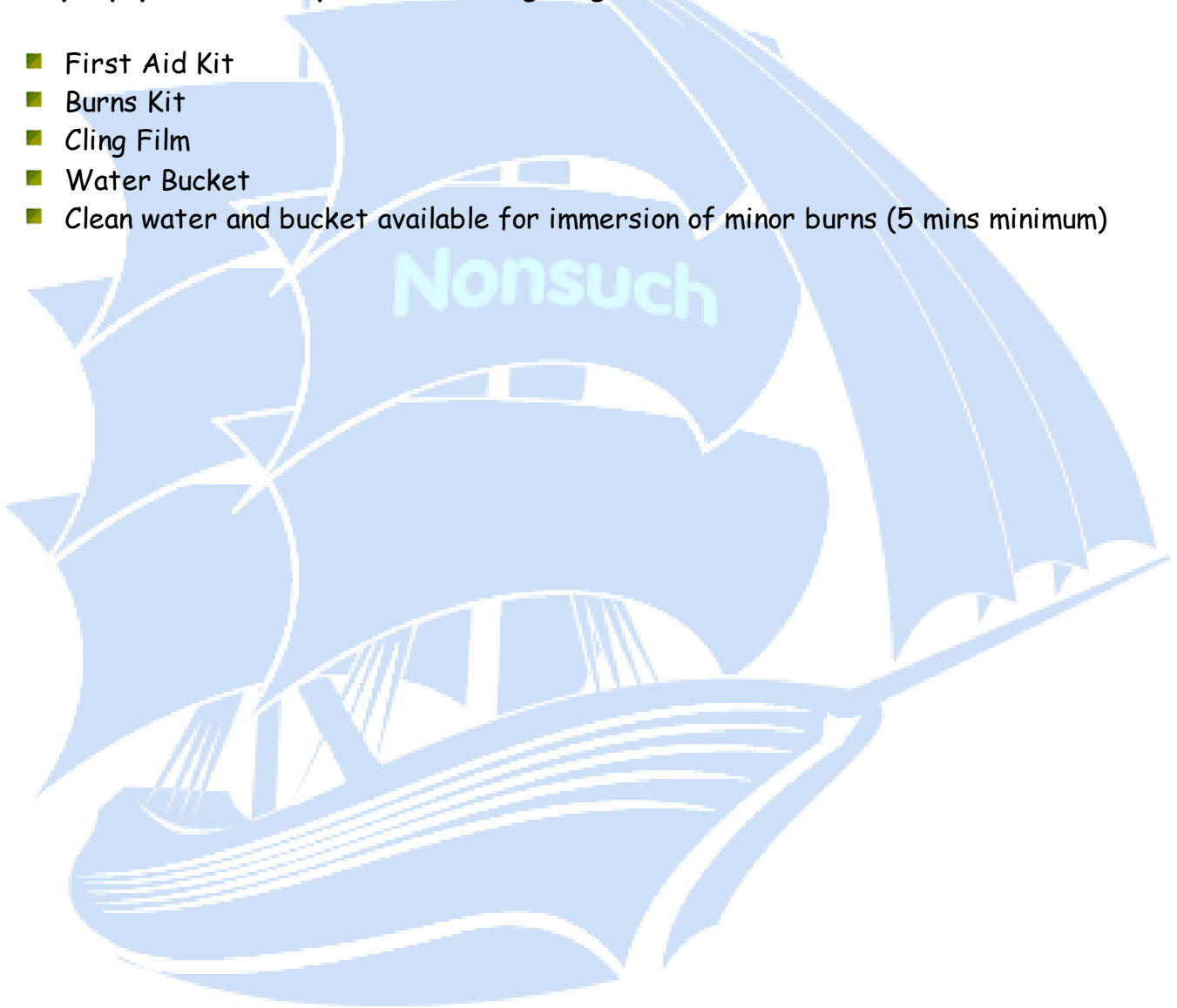
- Only the Forest School Leaders will light a fire as they have been trained in how to construct and light a fire safely.
- However, children may be given the opportunity to attempt to use fire striker under close supervision.
- When in the fire circle a safe kneeling position used be adopted when placing sticks / cooking on fire.
- A burns kit, clean bucket of water must be sited close to the fire pit in case of any burns.
- No Flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate the fire.
- No plastics are to be burnt on the fire.
- Sticks/ wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire. No lighted sticks should be taken away from the fire.
- No more than two children at the fire at any one time.
- Fire must be attended/ supervised at all times by the designated person.

Extinguishing the fire

- A bucket of water will be kept by the fire at all times for extinguishing it.
- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session and where possible all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Forest School leader is responsible for checking that the fire is properly out.
- When a large build-up of Potash has occurred from several fires, it will need to be dispersed but only when it has totally cooled either that day or the following day. It will be added to the compost bin or scattered through the woodland area to enable natural decomposition, so no trace of the fire remains.

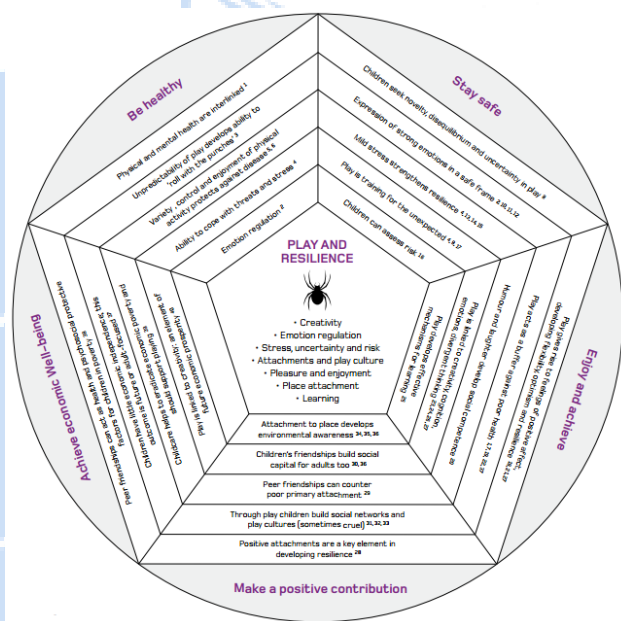
Safety equipment to be present when lighting a fire:

- First Aid Kit
- Burns Kit
- Cling Film
- Water Bucket
- Clean water and bucket available for immersion of minor burns (5 mins minimum)



Why should children be given the opportunity to play outside?

A Forest School programme is beneficial in fostering positive forms of play that help benefit the individual child in becoming a more well -rounded person with higher levels of self- esteem over time. It is important in a child's education to have a range of opportunities to experience adult directed and freely chosen self-directed play as it develops their resilience, positive attitudes and relationships towards others. It is also beneficial in the fact that "play can make a significant contribution in broad, principled terms to the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda (*1) as shown below in the spider web diagram:



At Nonsuch Primary School we understand that play has an significant impact on children's lives and aim to provide a stimulating but challenging environment in which the children can explore, develop and create their own experiences while trying our best to ensure "that they have the freedom to play without coming to serious physical or emotional harm through carefully managed play opportunities." (2*) This is important as some of the children will have limited opportunities for play with their peers outside of break times at school and therefore, need to be given the time and space to play freely as part of their school week. As play is one of the most important aspects of a child's life and positively contributes to their health, well - being and happiness as well as to their learning and ability to learn. We believe that we can make a very positive contribution to children's lives by valuing their urge and desire to play and will aim to provide a broad range of play opportunities through Forest School.

"We recognise that children will naturally create or seek out challenging situations; while making the most of their play some children may have accidents, get dirty or wet or upset. We recognise that any potential risk of harm to children needs to be balanced with the potential for good that may come from their taking part in a particular form of play." (*2)

Signed:

Play Policy adapted from the following website: www.playwales.org.uk/.../Schools/Sample%20School%20Play%20Policy For play policy (*2) Acknowledgements :>(*1) <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120519/play-for-a-change-summary.pdf>

Examples of Forest School activities

During Forest School sessions the children will have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities. This is a list of possible activities that the children might participate in but there are many more activities that they will have the opportunity to experience during their time at Forest School and will vary depending upon the time of year, children's interests and year group.

- Collecting natural materials
- Making Fairy houses using natural materials
- Making animal homes using natural materials
- Making mud faces
- Mud kitchens - making soups and potions
- Mud play - sliding, painting, puddle splashing
- Making Nature crowns
- Dens and Shelter building
- Clay creatures
- Trust / Teamwork games
- Making bows and arrows
- Weaving
- Low level ropes and obstacle courses
- Construction
- Large scale natural artwork using different materials
- Plant and mini-beast identification
- Mini-beast hunts
- Using tools to make objects / woodland crafts
- Learning about use of fire and how to make fire safely
- Story telling
- Using our senses - listening to sounds around us
- Woodland / Nature walks and trails
- Rope work and games
-

MOST IMPORTANTLY THE CHILDREN WILL HAVE THE OPPURTUNITY TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP THEIR IMAGINATION!

Food Hygiene Policy

Food hygiene will be carefully managed when cooking or eating outdoors.

- Hand gel / wipes or clean running water will be provided for cleaning of hands.
- Utensils will be cleaned before and after handling food.
- Food will be appropriately stored prior to use.
- No meat products will be used.

Toileting

Prior to starting a Forest School session, all children will be given the opportunity to go to the toilet. During a Forest School session, children needing the toilet will be escorted back into school by a member of staff who is not the forest school leader to the nearest toilets available. During this time certain activities may need to be temporarily suspended to cater for the change in adult/pupil ratios.

In relation to the Early Years it may be necessary to schedule in mini-breaks during the session to allow for group toileting to reduce the number of occasions that a member of staff is absent from the main group.

Parental Consent

Parental Consent for Forest School Participation will be obtained prior to the first session a child attends. An example of the letter used is shown in appendix.

Photographs

Use of photographs will be taken in accordance with the Nonsuch Primary School Consent letter signed by parents or the Forest School Consent letter (see appendix). A list of children who do not have parental consent for use of photographs will be obtained by the Forest School Leaders. Photographs may be used on the school website, frog learning platform or as part of Forest School evidence.

Observations

During Forest School sessions trained staff may be required to undertake observations of the children participating in Forest School as part of the curriculum or for assessment purposes. Observations will be kept confidential.

Parental Consent Form - Nonsuch Primary School

Activity: Forest School

Year:

Child's Name: _____

Age: _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD

1. Are there any medical conditions requiring medical treatment, including medication? YES /NO
If yes, please give details below:

2. Please outline any special dietary requirements

3. Does your son / daughter have any known allergies? YES /NO
If yes, please specify below:

4. If inhalers for Asthma are used they should be provided by you in school. Does your child have an inhaler?

Yes

5. Please provide your child's Doctor's address:

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

6. As an important part of our evaluation of Forest School and its activities; video, audio and photographic evidence of your child may be recorded, this material may also be used on our school website or learning platform. Please sign to say you consent to this.

Yes signed:

PARENTAL / CARER DECLARATION

7. I agree to my child having appropriate medical care in the event of an accident OR any First Aid Treatment as deemed necessary by the Qualified First Aid Leader.

Yes

8. I agree to my child participating in Forest School activities including tools and camp fire sessions. I understand the need for my child to behave in a responsible manner.

Yes

9. I will provide my child with suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor wear.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

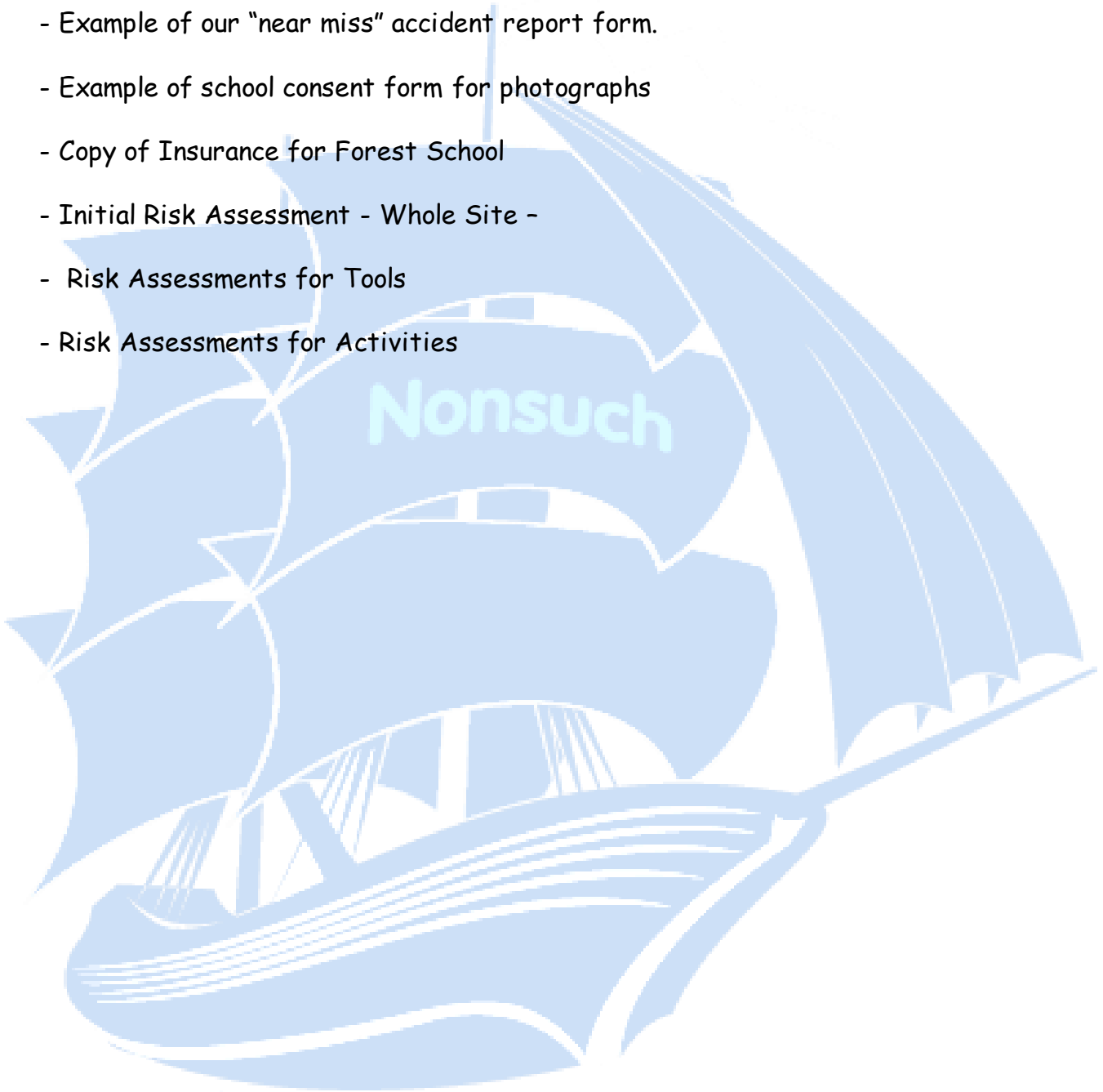
Contact No: _____

Emergency Contact Number: _____

G.P Name and Address: _____

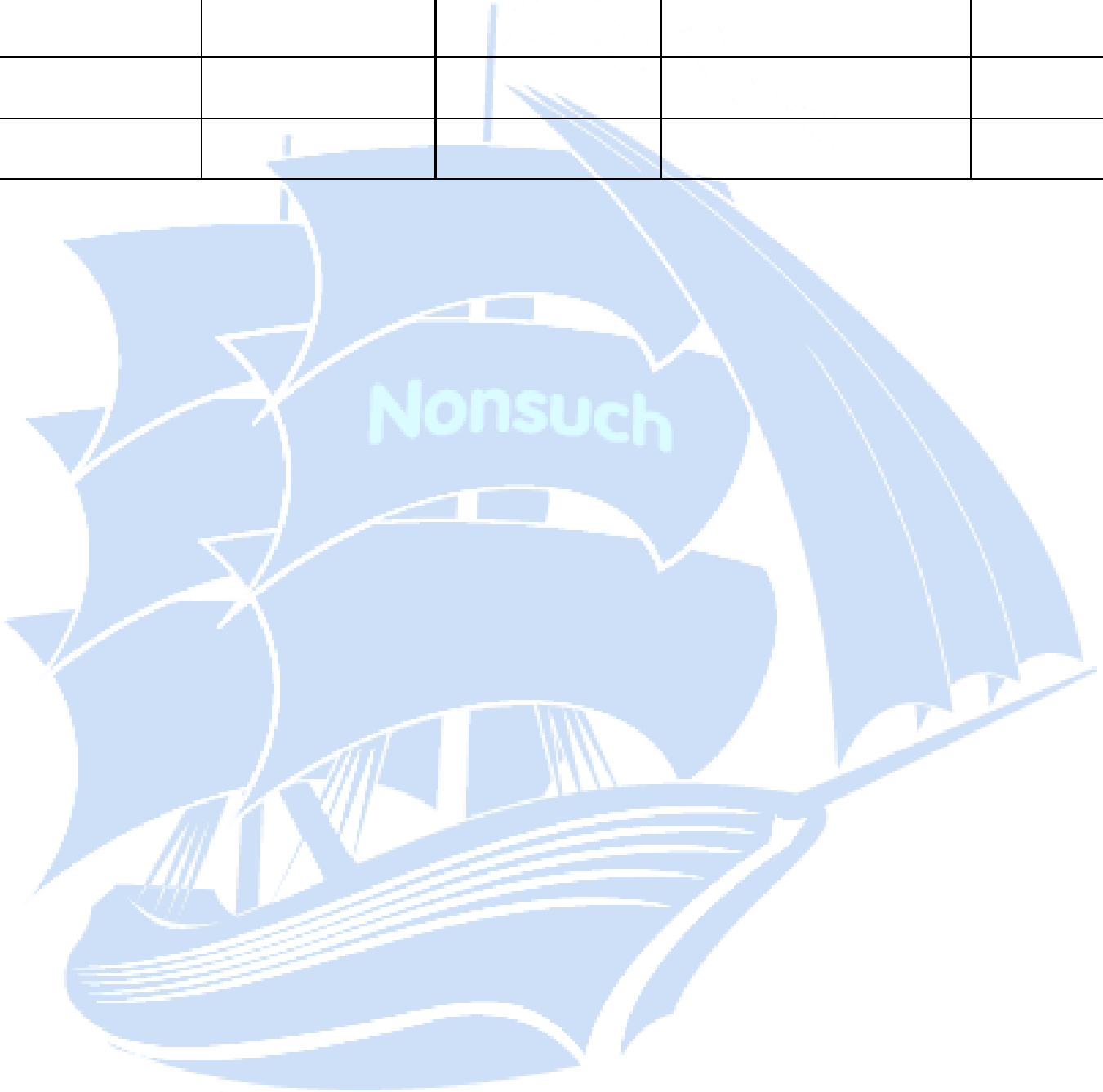
Appendices

- Example of our "accident" Log
- Example of our "near miss" accident report form.
- Example of school consent form for photographs
- Copy of Insurance for Forest School
- Initial Risk Assessment - Whole Site -
- Risk Assessments for Tools
- Risk Assessments for Activities



Example of Accident Log

Name of child	Time and Date	Injury	Treatment	Signed
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Example of Near Miss Accident Report Form

Practitioner:

Location:

Child's Name:

Date:

Details:

Risk assessments required for future sessions:

Signed:

Date:

Practitioner Name: