

Learning in Nature CIC & Beccles Forest Schools



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement:	
3.26 What practitioners know, plan for, and do matters for children's learning, development, safety, and happiness in settings. Providers must ensure that all staff receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities.	

This policy was adopted by:	Learning in Nature CIC & Beccles Forest Schools
Date of adoption:	4th August 2025
Date to be reviewed:	4th August 2026
Signed, on behalf of the provider:	
Name of signatory:	Rach Whitwood
Role of signatory:	Co-Director

Learning in Nature CIC & Beccles Forest Schools

Old School House, Barsham, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 8HA

Company Number: 11747933

Ofsted URN: 2610910 Setting ref: 2610909



Policy Statement

Learning in Nature CIC and Beccles Forest Schools is committed to ensuring staff are supported in knowing their roles and responsibilities, in order to ensure they are suitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This Staff Code of Conduct Policy identifies the boundaries and responsibilities of all staff, guidelines for acceptable behaviours and examples of prohibited behaviours that would be regarded as misconduct. By providing this information, we aim to ensure staff avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of unprofessional conduct, protect the children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care, and ensure the high regard of Learning in Nature CIC is maintained.

Staff conduct is inevitably a broader subject than can be covered within this single policy. Therefore, this document must be used alongside a wide range of documentation provided to staff and volunteers, such as job descriptions, contracts and all the setting's other policies and procedures.

Please see Appendices for the legal framework and definitions upon which this policy is written.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers must uphold the best interests of the children, young people and vulnerable adults at all times. Staff must be aware of the position of trust they are in and behaviour towards and around children and young people in their charge must always be above reproach. As well as ensuring the safety of themselves, the children, young people and vulnerable adults and the organisation as a whole, demonstrating such high standards of conduct also encourages the attendees, parents/carers and wider community to do so, too.

The roles and responsibilities of all staff members are comprehensive. As well as detailing some important aspects in this policy, all other policies contain guidance on the appropriate conduct of staff and volunteers. As such, it is vital that all staff members are intimately familiar with our policies, available on our [website](#). Staff are directed to familiarise themselves with these before starting work with Learning in Nature CIC. In addition, each member of staff has a signed contract or freelance workers agreement, which outlines expectations.

Staff are accountable to the setting for undertaking activities associated with the role, as outlined in their job description and person specification. Staff and volunteers must inform their line manager in the event that they do not feel competent to undertake an activity. They must request reasonable and appropriate training.

Staff have a duty to report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern, in line with the Whistleblowing Policy. Staff have a responsibility to challenge any discriminatory remarks or

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behaviour against other staff members, visitors, children and their families, vulnerable adults and other attendees. Respect must be shown for cultural diversity, opinions and choices. Staff are required to work cooperatively within teams, respecting the contribution of their colleagues. They are expected to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing.

Staff have a duty to notify Learning in Nature CIC of any changes to personal details, such as address and telephone number, and relevant health issues.

Attendance

Staff are required to begin working promptly at their agreed starting times and to remain at work until the agreed finishing times, in accordance with half-termly discussions with management concerning the groups that are running. All staff are required to work their agreed hours each week. Any additional hours worked must be agreed upon with management, and invoiced for by the date requested. Staff must obtain permission from management if they need to arrive later or leave earlier than their agreed normal start and finish times. Persistent issues with timekeeping may result in disciplinary action.

Where possible, Learning in Nature CIC asks staff to make appointments, e.g., hospital appointments, in their own time. However, in cases where this is not possible, appointments must be agreed with management.

In the event that any staff member cannot attend their agreed hours, for example through illness, they must contact their line manager, and the leader of the session if different, to inform them of the situation at the earliest opportunity. For employed staff, self-certification for illness is appropriate for 7 days, after which time, management will request a FIT note weekly for the duration of the absence. Holidays should be taken during the times specified in an employee's contract. All holidays must be requested using the appropriate form. Time off in lieu for staff can be negotiated between staff and their manager and recorded on a holiday form, for contracted staff. (If staff vary the day of delivery and keep within contracted hours of that month, they do not need to complete a holiday form, as long as this has been agreed by a manager.) The terms and conditions vary depending on whether you are self-employed as a freelance worker or employed, so check with your manager if you are unsure.

Caring and Leading in Forest School

All staff and volunteers are expected to supervise the attendees in their groups, in a developmentally appropriate way, with awareness of their safety, education, needs and wellbeing. Staff should support learner-led activities, and respond to the individual needs of the children, young people, vulnerable adults and families to the best of their ability. Staff

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should treat equipment and resources, including those in the natural environment, with care and respect, and be accountable and take responsibility for their actions. All equipment should be returned to the appropriate spaces and stored neatly and safely. Staff and volunteers should have a deep understanding of the Forest School ethos, and of the interconnectedness of learning and the natural world.

In their role as leader, all staff should be positive role models. They should encourage attendees to express their voice, listen with empathy and support, provide opportunities for attendees to undertake experiences that develop self-esteem, and respect the rights of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. Staff are expected to be professional and kind at all times, always considering the impact of their behaviour on others.

Confidentiality

Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times, by protecting information from improper disclosure and following all appropriate policies, e.g., Confidentiality and Client Access to Records Policy. The only instances in which staff may disclose information outside the immediate team is if it can be justified as being in the public interest or there is an issue of safeguarding, e.g., where disclosure is essential to protect a child from risk or significant harm, and where it is required to do so by law or by order of the court. Staff who intend to share information about an attendee or their family with an outside agency must seek prior permission from the family.

Disclosure and Barring Service

Staff are required to notify Learning in Nature CIC immediately of any circumstance which may affect their suitability to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, including all convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings. Please contact us in writing via email or request a formal supervision to discuss in person.

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance checks are performed on all employees and volunteers before they begin working with groups. Annual update checks are run on each member of staff. We ask that all paid staff subscribe to the government's DBS Update Service (this needs to be done within around 19 days of receiving their DBS certificate) to avoid needing to pay for a full enhanced DBS check each year.

Dress Code

Although there is no uniform, staff should wear clothing appropriate for the weather and the sessions they are leading. Clothing should allow free movement, should be unlikely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative, not distract, cause embarrassment or

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give rise to misunderstanding, and be absent of any political or contentious slogans that are not congruent with the ethos of Learning in Nature CIC. Setting a good example to children, young people, parents/carers and vulnerable adults, regarding suitable clothing, is crucial within an outdoor setting.

Staff should consider the safety issues related to their appearance and use their best judgement in deciding the appropriateness of aspects, such as nail length, jewellery and hair style. Any obviously visible tattoos or piercings should be discussed with management.

Gifts

Staff and volunteers must not accept significant personal gifts from our attendees or their families, suppliers or other agencies with whom the organisation has contact. In the case of funding, this should be approached in a professional manner and through respected agencies. All gifts with a perceived value of over £20 must be declared to management.

Health and Safety

During induction, new staff are provided with health and safety training and will engage in on-going health and safety training as part of their continued professional development. All activities must be carried out with the health and safety of all staff, children and visitors as a primary consideration.

Staff must be a role model to attendees, in terms of their own health and hygiene, by having a neat and tidy appearance and being as clean as is reasonably possible while enjoying an outdoor environment. Staff should encourage attendee's awareness of physical development, including exercise, diet and risk-taking.

Legal Frameworks and Guidance

All staff and volunteers are required to adhere to certain legal frameworks and guidance applicable to their role. For example, these may be Ofsted Requirements and the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework. As part of their induction, staff are required to gain a deep understanding of the applicable frameworks and guidance, and know how they apply to their role.

Online Safety

In line with our Online Safety Policy, staff must keep their personal mobile phones switched off and in a secure place away from attendees. Staff must use walkie-talkies and the wolf howl to communicate across the site. There may be certain situations where staff

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need to have a mobile phone to receive a call or message. Where possible, this should be a work phone, or taken well away from attendees. Personal mobile phones or similar devices must not be used to take or store photographs of attendees. Staff must also ensure that parents/carers and attendees do not use their mobile phones in sessions or to take photos of attendees. Failure to comply with the above will result in disciplinary action.

Staff must ensure that they handle photographs and personal information in line with our policies on data handling. Communications with colleagues, parents/carers and attendees must be warmly professional and must not contain offensive, pornographic or obscene language or material or defamatory or slanderous language or material. These should not denigrate, insult or ridicule another person, intimidate, bully or harass another person or adversely comment on integrity, personality, honesty, character, intelligence, methods or motives of another person, unless it is factual response to a formal reference request or part of disciplinary procedures.

Professional Development

Learning in Nature CIC is committed to ensuring its staff are knowledgeable and skilful. As such, continued professional development is a requirement for employees and volunteers. Staff are expected to adopt a life-long learning approach and undertake certain training courses, online as well as through in-house training, requested by management as part of their induction and continued professional development.

All staff will face successes and challenges in their work with Learning in Nature CIC. Regular reflections and supervision meetings provide a space to discuss these. Practitioners should not undertake an activity in which they do not feel competent, or which they believe is outside their knowledge base.

Safeguarding

It is crucial that all staff and volunteers are intimately familiar with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and know which members of staff are the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Alternate Designated Safeguarding Lead at all times. Through comprehensive training, during induction and ongoing, all staff must learn to recognise the hard and soft signs of abuse, including neglect, and know the specific details of how to report any concerns to the DSL or ADSL. It is the duty of all staff to make thorough, detailed and timely reports of all concerns.

Social Contact

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Staff must uphold professional boundaries. They have a duty to approve any planned social contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and their families with their manager. Otherwise, contact should be in a professional capacity. Confidentiality of employment must always be adhered to and respected during social contact. Staff and volunteers must advise senior management immediately of any social contact they have with a child, parent/carer or attendee which may give rise to concern.

Staff should be cautious when undertaking activities or work outside Learning in Nature CIC, that may conflict with the interests of or adversely affect the reputation of the organisation. Employees and volunteers should consult management before taking on additional work. Additional work must not hinder an employee's or volunteer's ability to perform their role.

Criminal offences that involve violence or the possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are regarded as unacceptable. Any criminal investigation or offence relating to a member of staff, including convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings, must be reported to management immediately, in line with our Safer Recruitment Policy.

Where there is a private agreement between a parent and staff member or volunteer for childcare outside of the setting, Learning in Nature CIC will not be held liable. It is not acceptable for a member of staff to transport a child by car directly to and from the setting, unless it has been approved by a manager, an appropriate child seat is available and the parent is present or has given written permission, e.g., via email, to do so. The member of staff transporting the child does so as a private arrangement and is responsible for their own insurance. The setting accepts no liability for the child once away from the site.

Staff must maintain a professional relationship with children, young people, parents/carers and vulnerable adults at all times. Feedback to or regarding attendees, e.g., to parents/carers, must be given in a respectful, open, honest and friendly manner.

Substances

Alcohol consumption is strictly forbidden during work hours, and while in locations directly associated with Learning in Nature CIC, unless it is part of an agreed event authorised by management. Any employee found consuming alcohol or non-medicinal drugs, intoxicated or suffering from the immediate after effects of alcohol or drug consumption while at work will face disciplinary action, in line with our Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures Policy. These will be considered gross misconduct.

Smoking is forbidden during work hours, while in locations directly associated with Learning in Nature CIC, unless it is part of an agreed breaktime, authorised by management and off site. Any member of staff who is found smoking on site, where not permissible, will face disciplinary action, in line with our Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures Policy. Staff who wish to smoke before their work hours start, or at break times, must ensure they are a

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reasonable distance away from the site and ensure they do not smell of smoke at any time during working hours. Cigarettes, matches and lighters must be stored securely away from attendees. Electric cigarettes must be treated in the same way as cigarettes, following the same no smoking policy.

Staff and volunteers must not be under the influence of any medication which may affect their ability to lead groups or care for children, young people or vulnerable adults. If a member of staff is prescribed medication that may impact their ability to work, then this must be discussed with management. Medication must be stored securely away from attendees.

Vulnerable Situations

Staff and volunteers must discuss intimate care routines with the child's parents. Staff should always encourage the child to undertake self-care tasks independently, where developmentally appropriate. Staff should use their judgement in assessing whether first aid and hygiene tasks are necessary, or whether an injury might require more professional intervention.

Staff must not be placed in situations which render them vulnerable. Where this is unavoidable, full and appropriate risk assessments are conducted and agreed, and measures taken, such as informing other leaders of the situation, such as for lone working situations. Staff need to report any actions of another individual they deem inappropriate to senior management.

Whistleblowing

Whilst all staff are required to be professional at all times and hold the welfare and safety of every child as their paramount objective, we recognise that there may be occasions where this is not happening. It is crucial that all staff and volunteers are intimately familiar with the Whistle Blowing Policy, and that they discuss their concerns with their line manager at the earliest opportunity.

If a member of staff or volunteer becomes aware of information which they reasonably believe demonstrates any of the following, they must follow safeguarding disclosure procedures outlined in the Safeguarding Policy:

- A criminal offence is being, has been or is likely to be committed
- A colleague is failing, has failed or is likely to fail to comply with their legal obligations, e.g., EYFS Statutory Framework
- The health or safety of any individual is being, has been or is likely to be endangered
- The caring environment is being, has been or is likely to be damaged

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- Information showing any of the above is being, has been or is likely to be deliberately concealed
- Witness discriminatory behaviour

Employees and volunteers will suffer no detriment for making a disclosure in accordance with this procedure.

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By signing this Staff Code of Conduct, you
acknowledge that you have read, understood
and agree to your role and responsibilities
at Beccles Forest Schools.

Name:	
Role:	
Signed: <i>(a typed name alongside email submission is taken as a signature)</i>	
Date:	

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Legal Frameworks and Guidance

Department for Education (2024) *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for group and school based providers*, Available at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65aa5e42ed27ca001327b2c7/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers.pdf (Accessed 4th August 2025)

Ofsted (2024) 'Childcare Register: core requirements' in *Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted*, Available at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/registration-requirements> (Accessed 4th August 2025)