



Bee's Knees Forest School

Working with Tools Policy

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At Bee's Knees Forest School, we believe in the educational value of practical, hands-on learning, including the responsible use of tools. Using tools helps children develop physical coordination, confidence, and an understanding of how to manage risks. This policy sets out guidelines for the safe use of tools, ensuring that all children and staff can work in a safe and controlled environment.

The tools we use include, but are not limited to:

- **Potato peelers**
- **Hand drills**
- **Palm drills**
- **Small hacksaws**
- **Bowsaws**
- **Loppers**
- **Bill hooks**
- **Hammers/mallets**

Safety is our top priority, and we are committed to following best practices in the supervision and use of tools during all forest school activities.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure the **safe use** of tools by children, staff, and volunteers.
- Provide children with the opportunity to learn and develop **practical skills** safely.
- Encourage children to **understand and manage risks** through hands-on experience.
- Ensure staff are appropriately trained and equipped to **supervise tool use** and respond to any incidents.
- Comply with **health and safety regulations** and best practices.



General Guidelines for Tool Use

Supervision

- Tools will only be used under **direct adult supervision** at all times. The ratio of children to staff will be adjusted according to the type of tool being used and the level of risk associated with it.
- Staff must ensure that they are positioned to maintain a clear view of the children using the tools and intervene when necessary.

Risk Assessments

- A **risk assessment** will be carried out before any activity involving tools. This will be done as part of the daily manual risk assessment conducted before each session.
- Each tool will have its own **specific risk assessment** that outlines potential hazards and the safety precautions required.

Tool Safety Rules

- Children will be introduced to tools gradually, starting with those requiring **lower skill levels and risk**, such as potato peelers, before progressing to more advanced tools like bowsaws and bill hooks.
- Children must receive clear **tool safety instructions** before use, including demonstrations on proper technique, handling, and safety precautions.
- Tools will be used in designated **tool-use areas**, ensuring there is adequate space for safe handling and free from hazards.
- Tools will never be used when children or staff are tired, distracted, or rushing. **Slow, careful work** will be emphasised.
- Tools will only be passed using a "**handle first**" approach or laid down for the next person to pick up.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Where appropriate, children and staff will use **personal protective equipment** such as gloves, goggles, and sturdy footwear when working with tools, especially during tasks involving cutting, sawing, or chopping.
- Staff will ensure that all PPE is worn correctly before the tool use begins.



Specific Tool Use Guidelines

The following outlines the safe use and supervision requirements for each tool used at Bee's Knees Forest School:

Potato Peelers

- Used for whittling or stripping bark from wood.
- Suitable for beginners and young children under close supervision.
- Children will sit or kneel while using peelers, ensuring the tool is directed away from their body.

Hand Drills & Palm Drills

- Suitable for drilling small holes in wood.
- Children will use these tools on flat, stable surfaces with the wood secured in place.
- Staff will check drills regularly for wear and ensure children understand how to use them safely.

Small Hacksaws

- Used for cutting small pieces of wood.
- Children must use a **sawing horse** or similar tool to secure the wood while cutting.
- Close supervision is required, and children will be taught the correct technique to avoid injury.

Bowsaws

- For cutting larger branches or wood pieces.
- Only used by older children or those with appropriate experience, and always under one-to-one supervision.
- Staff will ensure the blade is sharp and properly tensioned before use.
- Children will be taught the correct stance and technique to avoid accidents.

Loppers

- Used for cutting branches and vegetation.
- Children will be shown how to use two hands to operate the loppers and cut away from their body.
- Supervision will ensure children only cut branches within their ability level (typically no thicker than the loppers' blade capacity).



Bill Hooks

- Used for splitting small wood or clearing undergrowth.
- Only used by older children and those with proven ability, under **direct supervision**.
- Staff will ensure bill hooks are kept sharp and children are taught safe chopping techniques, including maintaining a safe working distance from others.

Hammers/Mallets

- Used for hammering stakes, pegs, or nails into wood.
- Staff will ensure that children understand how to hold the hammer correctly and focus on the task.
- Mallets are typically used for softer striking tasks such as tent peg insertion, with children standing clear of others when using them.

Storage and Maintenance of Tools

Storage

- All tools will be stored in a **locked tool box** or designated storage area when not in use. Children will not have access to tools without adult supervision.
- Tools will be counted out and back in to ensure no tools are left unattended in the forest school area.

Maintenance

- Tools will be inspected regularly by staff to ensure they are in good working condition. Any tools that are damaged or show signs of wear will be **removed from use** until repaired or replaced.
- Staff will ensure that cutting tools, such as saws and bill hooks, remain sharp, as blunt tools can pose a greater safety risk.

Training for Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers will receive appropriate training on:

- The safe use and handling of tools.
- How to supervise children while using tools.
- The appropriate personal protective equipment for each tool.
- How to assess and respond to risks related to tool use.



Staff will receive refresher training annually, or sooner if required, to maintain best practices and safety standards.

Emergency Procedures

- In the event of an accident involving a tool, staff will follow the school's **First Aid and Emergency Procedures**. All staff will be trained in first aid, and first aid kits will be readily available during sessions.
- Any incident involving a tool will be recorded in the **incident log**, and a review of the activity will be conducted to prevent similar occurrences.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or after any significant incident involving the use of tools. Any changes in best practices or regulations will be incorporated into the policy as needed.