



Woodland Play Sessions

HANDBOOK OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

To be read by all staff, volunteers and visitors to Gargunnock Playgroup Woodland Play sessions

Latest revision: September 2016



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Introduction & Background

This Gargunnoch Playgroup handbook contains information, policies and procedures relating to the running of Woodland Play Sessions in a safe and enjoyable way.

The Handbook is made available to staff and parents/carers prior to participation. The Handbook is subject to annual review and to immediate review if an incident indicates the need for this.

Activities

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of participants. Examples of Woodland Play activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations

Our Setting

Gargunnoch House is situated 6 miles (9.5km) west of Stirling and 0.5 miles (0.8km) east of Gargunnoch village.

Getting here, parking & access

By bus

Gargunnock is served by the First Scotland East company, service B12 and C12. Please check with the bus company for up to date service information.

By bike

Gargunnock is accessed from Stirling via the A811 (Dumbarton Road)

By car

Six miles west of Stirling on A811

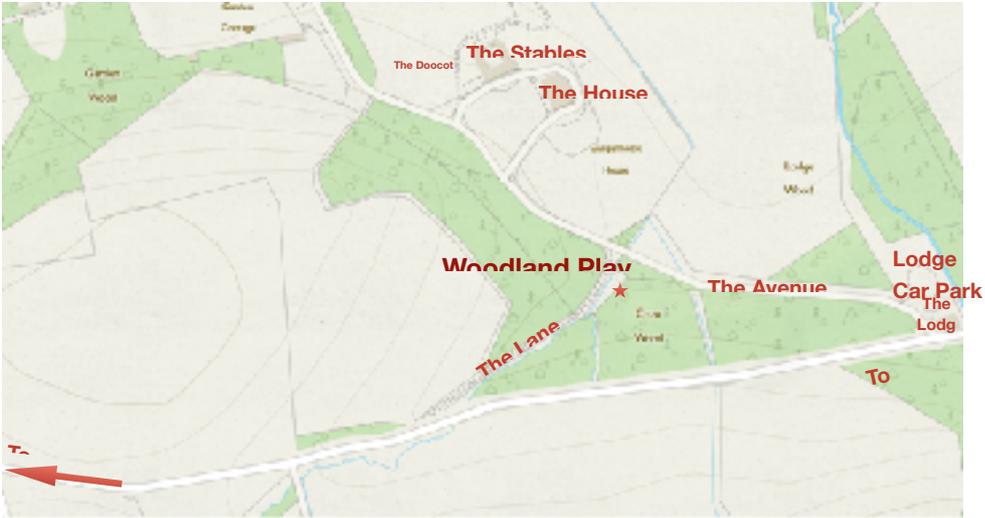
Orientation

Location	Grid Reference	
Woodland Play Site/Crow Wood	56.124286	-4.067371
The Lodge	56.124077	-4.062945
The Stables	56.126018	-4.068680

The following maps detail landmarks and labels which may be useful.

GARGUNNOCK PLAYGROUP





Local medical facilities

Minor Injuries Unit (9am-9pm daily)
Stirling Community Hospital
Livilands Gate
Stirling
FK8 2AU
Phone: 01786 434036

Accident and Emergency department
Forth Valley Royal,
Stirling Road,
Larbert,
FK5 4WR,
Phone: 01324 566 100

Environmental Policy & Environmental Impact Assessment

We aim to engender a high level of respect for the natural world and encourage everyone involved in our group to be involved in decisions about their environment and safety.

We aim to ensure that, where possible, Playgroup purchases products that are considered to have a lower impact on the environment. By operating in a way that minimises waste, optimises recycling and promotes the reuse of materials, we hope to demonstrate and encourage a wider respect for the environment, as well as an understanding that all produce and waste is linked to the health of our planet as a whole.

On site activities such as fires will follow practices that minimise impact on wildlife through being mindful of what is burnt and how any residues are disposed of. Before leaving a site we will ensure that litter is collected and disposed of suitably.

Minimising Impacts

Activity	Impact	Mitigation
Collecting Wood	Dead wood is important to any woodland ecology as it has a multitude of uses, from homes for mini beasts to beds for fungi, so a lack of it is bad for any woodland habitat.	Limit the frequency of fires and evaluate the amount of dry, dead wood before having a fire. Collect only the minimum amount required for any given fire. Reserve specific areas for dead wood conservation.

<p>Fires</p>	<p>Changes in soil chemistry can lead to increases in PH levels, carbon, phosphorous, etc. which can be harmful to some plants, whilst other essential nutrients may be depleted.</p> <p>Fire can travel underground to roots even after appearing to be extinguished.</p> <p>Designate fixed locations for fires on parts of the site that aren't particularly ecologically interesting or unique.</p>	<p>Designate fixed locations for fires on parts of the site that aren't particularly ecologically interesting or unique.</p> <p>If possible, dispose of ash into patches of nettles.</p> <p>Ensure that all fires are extinguished fully before leaving a site.</p> <p>Where needed, use a fire wok to contain fire.</p>
<p>Cooking</p>	<p>Food waste may attract animals to the site or increase numbers of certain species, potentially leading to adverse changes in biodiversity.</p>	<p>Inform participants of these impacts and provide a container (to be taken away) or an ecologically sound place for food disposal.</p>
<p>Tree Climbing, Shelter Building & Swings</p>	<p>Damage to trees.</p>	<p>Restrict these activities to suitable trees that will tolerate them.</p>
<p>Collecting Natural Materials</p>	<p>Damage to plants - some plants are far more sensitive to losing their leaves or flowers than others and different seasons affect this too.</p>	<p>Inform groups as to which types of plants are best to pick, if any.</p> <p>Ensure leaves or flowers are taken from fallen parts where possible.</p> <p>Limit the frequency of this type of activity. Leave plants unpicked whenever picking is not necessary.</p>
<p>Toilet Use</p>	<p>Wipes and nappies contain plastics Human waste entering waterways</p>	<p>All toilet waste sealed and bagged to be taken away at the end of each session</p>

Health & Safety

Health & Safety Policy

Our Woodland Play Sessions may include activities that could be considered higher risk of minor injury or upset than is usual for participants of our “normal” playgroup sessions. We aim to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits and learning experiences encountered. We seek to minimise risk however by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk benefit assessment covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session.

Legislation

Gargunnock Playgroup has legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The purpose of this act is to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of health and safety at work. It protects not only all people at work, but also the health and safety of the general public who may be affected by the work activities.

Staff & Training

Our staff are appropriately qualified professionals who are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), who are members of the Protection of Vulnerable (PVG) scheme and who hold an up to date first aid qualification.

Risk / Benefit Analyses

We believe that, while there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. We also recognise that taking risks is an important part of learning and developing and we want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn about risks, challenges and personal safety. Consequently, we will use a risk/benefit analysis in our assessment of our sites and activities.

On Site Risk Assessment Procedure

Our Woodland Play site is considered to be safe and easily accessible. Before each session our staff will visit and assess the site. During our assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level. The location of the site and its grid reference are noted in the Site Information page of this Handbook. All staff and parents will have access to this information in case the session leader is unable to attend to an incident.

We will make agreements with the Estate Trustees and explore specific site issues if necessary. Whilst doing this we will identify any hazards and implement the necessary controls, check for mobile phone coverage and access in case of emergency, and assess toilet facilities. We will ensure all staff and accompanying parents are aware of the risk assessment prior to an activity. Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Identify hazards, such as windblown trees or litter
2. Decide who might be harmed and how

3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
4. Record the findings
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary

Shared Information & Responsibility

Any special knowledge of the group - for example a participant may have a particular fear of dogs or a food allergy - can be useful when planning activities as we aim to make every session as beneficial to participants as possible. Parents must provide information on behaviours that may present risk to individuals and/or the group and, if necessary, a separate risk assessment prepared.

Insurance

Gargunnock Playgroup is insured through Early Years Scotland (underwritten by Royal Sun Alliance)

Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure

Emergencies are never wanted, but they are a possibility, and so we must ensure that all adults are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures. Most emergencies can be resolved on-the-spot by the session leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or extreme change in weather the following procedures will be followed:

1. Secure safety of whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed in advance. If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger. If the group is removed from the site the emergency assembly point is at **The Stables**
2. First Aider will attend to any casualties with adult helper and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one first aider must be on site at all times. A record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them to be made if possible.
3. Emergency services contacted as necessary, ideally by an adult helper. Charged mobile phones are carried by staff. If possible/necessary an adult will meet emergency vehicle at **The Lodge**
4. Safety of the rest of group will be maintained by the remaining staff and adults, as far as possible away from the scene of the incident.
5. Informing next of kin should be carried out as soon as practicable after the incident by the designated member of staff or accompanying parent.
6. Inform Gargunnock Playgroup committee of any major incident as soon as possible. Following this as soon as is possible the Estate Trustees should also be informed.
7. Incident report and/or first aid book should be filled in on site if possible. This should be filled in whenever the emergency plan is used even if no one was harmed and it was just a near miss.

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Legislation

Ensure that all equipment involved in an accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by the police.

Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record i.e. a log, of all facts, events, times and circumstances and retain this record until all matters are finally settled. If possible take photographs.

Do not allow anyone to interview any party member without an independent witness being present.

An incident report or entry in the first aid book must be completed, signed and dated.

Incidents leading to admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours Tel 0845 3009923 (HSE - Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

First aid kits must be restocked after use and a stock check carried out every 12 months.

Any incident or near miss must be subsequently investigated by staff team to review existing controls and procedures.

Lost or Missing Person Procedure

Unknown woods can be disorientating, especially if a participant is unused to this kind of environment. Many woodland sites are not surrounded by walls or fences, and whilst we appreciate this sense of freedom can be beneficial to all, there is also the possibility that a participant may get lost. There are a number of ways we can prevent this:

- We encourage all our participants to take an interest in their surroundings so as to help them find their bearings. Ultimately we would like to inspire all who are able to become responsible for their own safety with respect to staying close to the rest of the group.
- Boundaries will be chosen, clearly marked and made known to the group. Going outside the boundaries will require all of the group to go or a sub group, with at least one leader – allowing at least two leaders to stay with remainder of group.
- The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of day, then at other relevant points in the day – particularly after activities that include members splitting up.
- Good communication within the group will encourage collective responsibility for each others' safety – staff are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participants whereabouts.

In the event of leaders fearing that a member of the group has gone missing:

1. All the group will be immediately called back in, by prearranged call or whistle, and counted and missing member determined. The time will be noted.
2. The Group Leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least two adults must stay with them at all times.
3. One or more adults should immediately start searching for the missing group member – calling and whistling as appropriate.
4. If the missing group member is not found within 5 minutes, the group Leader must contact police by telephoning 999 (this will result in the emergency plan coming in to action).

Leaders must recall and write down a description of what the missing person was wearing and any distinguishing features. Any information on their last known location and time should be noted. Also if they have

any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted down. All information then must be passed to police or other agencies.

Tools, Fires & Activity Guidance

Tool Use Procedure

Using a range of tools will be necessary in many site based activities and is an important part of our work as it enables participants to develop new practical skills that help develop self-confidence. Gargunnock Playgroup aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with tools do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Tools that may be used include potato peelers, bow saws, pruning saws, loppers, knives, drills and hatchets. Please refer to our Risk Benefit Analysis on use of Tools for more information.

Guidance on Knife Use

Knives may be used during Woodland Play Sessions. Please refer to our Risk Benefit Analysis on use of Tools for more information

Fire Procedure

Fires and the use of storm kettles are an important part of our Woodland Play Sessions. We aim to ensure that all people participating in sessions with fires and/or storm kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Fires will only be used where it is appropriate to do so and where there has been an agreement with the site owner prior to the session.

- Leaders will explain to participants the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood. Those in smoky areas will be encouraged to move to less smoky areas
- Fires will only be lit in suitable defined spaces or in a fire wok
- Participants will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment
- All participants will be given clear guidelines about how to behave and move around the area when the fire or kettle is lit
- A lit fire will be supervised by an adult at all times, as will all cooking activities
- Related safety equipment, including heat-proof gloves, a fire blanket, a burns kit and water will be kept within close range of fires
- All fires should be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of a session, except where the landowner has agreed that a designated fire pit may be used repeatedly. Please refer to our Risk Benefit Analysis on use of Fire for more information

Food Hygiene & Eating

All participants on activities will be encouraged to wash their hands with water and soap, which will be provided, before eating food.

During some sessions, we may cook items such as popcorn, damper bread or marshmallows over the fire. Staff will ensure that safe procedures are undertaken accordingly.

Parents of children attending sessions will be expected to take turns on a parental rota and accompany children and staff when their turn occurs. Part of their responsibility will be to provide a snack for attending children.

Guidelines of what to provide for snack can be found on our website. In the woodland environment preparation facilities are more limited and parents should take this into account when considering what to bring for snack. Plates, cups and cutlery are provided as is drinking water. Where possible dishes will be washed and dried during a session (water for washing available), should this not be possible staff will arrange to wash and return ready for the next session.

General Session Safety & Group Guidance

Session Safety Resources

Whenever outdoor activity sessions are run there will always be the need for key items to meet the health and safety requirements of leading a group outdoors. The location of the site, time of year and the group demographic will have a significant impact on what resources are needed to run a safe and enjoyable session. A list is provided on page 21 - this is not an exhaustive list but provides key points to consider when planning sessions.

Weather & Clothing

Clothing advice will be given to participants and their parents/carers prior to the visit e.g.

Winter: waterproofs/coats, fleece/jumper, hats and gloves

Summer: waterproofs, fleece, sun hat, long sleeved tops and trousers

Footwear: wellies or strong/sturdy (ideally waterproof) outdoor shoes and warm woollen or manmade fibre socks (not cotton).

Where possible, we will keep spare sets of waterproofs in case of a participant arriving without adequate protection.

Toileting

Although we will have basic toilet facilities on site we aim to

- Encourage everyone to use the toilet before coming on site.
- Our camp toilet will be located away from the play area in advance of the session and will be screened for privacy.
- Children will be encouraged to do as much as possible independently.
- Children who are not able to go to the toilet independently will be assisted by a member of staff.
- Hand washing facilities will be available.
- All toilet materials will be disposed of off site after the session ends.

Toileting kits contain:

- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes and cleaning gel
- Nappy bags
- Spare pants and jogging bottoms for younger children

Dogs & Members of the Public

Our site is open to and is accessed by the public and so there may well be other people out enjoying the woods. Most people will be happy to pass by without hindering activities, but there is the possibility of attention from a passer-by. If this event causes concern to anyone involved a member of staff will step in and assure the

member of public that if they wish to raise any issues, then they should contact a committee or staff member at a time convenient to both parties. In the unlikely event that the situation is considered to cause alarm or be dangerous staff will use a mobile phone to call the police and use the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure.

Some participants may be unused to or even afraid of dogs. If this is known to be the case for any particular participants please inform staff prior to starting sessions. If a dog appears the fearful participant can be joined by at least one member of staff. If a dog approaches the group and appears likely to cause trouble children will be advised not to run or act excitably - ideally keep arms by their sides, voices low and stay as still as possible. Staff will speak to the owner.

Signs will be mounted on footpaths close to the play site asking dog-owners to keep dogs under control and for cyclists and walkers to be aware that children are playing in the area.

Hazardous Plants & Fungi

Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the group so that all members are aware of the dangers. The sap or hairs from some plants can cause rashes and blistering when in contact with skin, or after the skin is then exposed to sunlight. Most rashes are caused by stinging nettles, though giant hogweed may also be a problem. Both of these plants are easily distinguishable and if either is seen growing on site all members of the group will be taught how to distinguish and avoid coming into contact with it.

Serious poisoning from ingestion of leaves, berries or mushrooms rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, we disallow all participants from foraging and eating anything that has not been agreed safe by a member of staff.

If a member of the group is exposed to a hazardous plant or fungi, so that they have a reaction a leader must be informed and appropriate First Aid given. If the nature of the reaction is more serious the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure must be followed.

Biting & Stinging Insects

Insect bites and stings can be common, particularly in spring and summer, and usually cause only minor irritation. In rare cases, people can have a serious allergic reaction to a bite or sting that requires immediate medical treatment - if this is the case then a leader will refer directly to the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure.

If there is prior knowledge to suggest that a participant will have an allergic reaction if bitten then staff and committee must be informed before any activities take place on site.

Parents/carers should be aware that ticks may exist around the site. Parents should be aware that some ticks are infected with a bacterium which can be transmitted to humans causing Lyme disease. Information on safe removal of ticks can be found at www.tickbitepreventionweek.org/tick-removal and on Lyme disease at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Lyme-disease/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Safe Lifting

Woodland Play Sessions activities can be physically demanding for participants and staff, for example when handling heavy objects, so it is wise to be aware of best practice. One of the greatest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly. Here are some tips:

- Think and plan where and how you are going to move an object before you lift
- Keep the load close to your waist and the heaviest side of the load next to your body
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward if possible
- Ensure a good hold on the load, hug it close to your body if possible
- Avoid bending your back, only bend at your hips or knees if possible
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways especially if bending at the back
- Keep your head up and look ahead, not down at the load once it is held securely
- Move smoothly
- Know your limits - don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage without help
- Put the load down if you need to adjust it
- Where possible, use ropes to drag objects such as trees

Lone working

There will be occasions when it may be necessary for staff to be on site alone, particularly when setting up, clearing away or on planning visits. It is not anticipated that this should cause any problems or issues. Should circumstances arise such that staff feel uncomfortable being on site alone the group will consider suitable processes and procedures.

Group walking

Part of each Woodland Play Session will be the walk to and from the play site. Parents and carers will all be aware of the location of the play site.

Children will be counted at the beginning and end of the walk, and at any necessary points in between. An adult will walk at the front and the rear, with any remaining adults interspersed between children.

There may be occasions when the group will walk to alternative locations in the estate grounds such as the Walled Gardens. Mobile phone communication will be maintained at all times.

Administering medicines

The group will not dispense any medication without prior arrangement and suitable permissions. Permission will be sought from a guardian to give their child sting or bite treatments, antiseptic cream and arnica. These permissions will be included in the pro forma consent form. Guardians are also asked to provide details of allergies or relevant illnesses. No treatment will be administered against parental wishes. Sun cream should be applied by a parent/carer prior to a session.

Reporting: incidents and accidents

Any accidents that involve injury will be recorded into a first aid book. Major injuries that constitute 'reportable injuries' will be reported to the Health and Safety Executive via RIDDOR. Parents will be notified of injuries in keeping with the 'Emergency and Major Incidents' policy.

'Incidents', which include major behavioural incidents and any major negative occurrence that is not an accident, will also be recorded per playgroup procedures.

Pro forma consent

Parents/guardians will be asked to fill in an additional consent form before their child begins Woodland Play Sessions in recognition of the different location and nature of sessions. The completed consent form will give

relevant medical details of the child, consent for the child to take part in Woodland Play Sessions and permissions to administer first aid treatments and to admit the child to hospital for emergency treatment.

The form also provides emergency contact details and requests permission to take and use photographs of the child for promotional purposes and reports.

Staff will keep a copy of this form with him or her at all sessions attended by the child.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Policy

Gargunnock Playgroup work to ensure the safety of children whilst in our care. We are committed to creating an environment which is safe from abuse and any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately dealt with.

Gargunnock Playgroup's Safeguarding Policy focuses on:

- Minimising the risk of abuse taking place through good planning and best practice
- Empowering those it works with to stay safe and speak out
- Taking appropriate action when any allegations arise

Staff

All staff are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. Children will not be left unsupervised with an adult who is not a scheme member

Ratios

The National Care Standard minimum adult ratios of

- Children aged 2 years to under 3 years: 1 : 5
- Children aged 3 years to those not yet attending primary school: 1 : 10

ensure appropriate support and supervision at all times however, owing to the nature of Woodland Play Sessions we aim to work to the ratio of 1 : 4

In all cases a minimum of 3 adults should be present

Toileting

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet independently however when this is not possible only staff members will be allowed to accompany a child to the toilet or to change nappies.

Photos & Video

Permission will be requested via pro forma consent for playgroup staff to take photographs of participants for monitoring and evaluation purposes and suitable use in publications for leaflets/materials/website. Where permission is refused, we will aim to avoid photographing and videoing that child and blur out faces wherever they do appear in recorded material.

Disclosures, Recording & Reporting

Appropriate steps will be taken where concerns arise regarding the safety of a participant. Concerns will be reported to the group's Child Protection Officer and we will ensure that disclosures are responded to sensitively and appropriately, in line with current best practise.

- Any concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon immediately
- Positive action will be taken to ensure the protection of participants who are subject to any concerns
- The safety of the rest of the group will be secured before taking further action if on site – if a crime has taken place call 999 and report this to the Police
- Implicated adult(s) will be encouraged to leave the group until the disclosure is officially cleared/action taken
- All appropriate staff/managers will be informed
- Relevant information/evidence will be recorded in an appropriate and cooperative manner

- In all child/vulnerable adult protection situations, confidentiality will be maintained at all times by disclosing information only to those who need to know

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Gargunnock Playgroup is committed to equal opportunity for all and we wish to provide an environment in which people feel equally valued. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We aim to adapt activities to ensure that everyone can participate and, where possible, we will keep spare sets of waterproof clothing to ensure that bad weather is not a barrier to taking part.

Behaviour Policy

Everyone involved with Gargunnock Playgroup has a responsibility to protect their own and other group members' health, safety and well-being. They should inform staff if anybody's actions are likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others.

We aim to promote:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness of personal abilities and limitations
- Respect and care for oneself, other people and the natural environment Cooperation and non-violent communication

Woodland Play Sessions Agreement and Ground Rules

In the course of their first session, an agreement will be sought between the staff and participants for the conduct of the group. This will include items such as respecting oneself, each other and the environment and listening carefully to instructions when they are given. Ground rules are firmer non- negotiable rules, such as 'no violence' and will be explained along with the consequences of breaking them.

Physical Intervention

In accordance with the law, and our values, Gargunnock Playgroup does not use, or threaten to use, corporal punishment and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not administered by any person who is in contact with them. However, where necessary, physical intervention may be used in order to avert immediate danger to any person (including the child).

Behaviour expectations for adults

- Be a positive role model for participants, particularly with regards to respecting each person and the environment
- Encourage and reinforce caring and nurturing behaviour
- Be vigilant with regards to common sense safety
- Facilitate from an egalitarian and liberal approach, avoiding unnecessary rigidity or petty rules
- Avoid coercive or manipulative behaviour management, or that based on personal negative messages, as we feel these damage morale, motivation and self-esteem and are counter- productive to the ethos and objectives of forest school.

Encouraging Positive Behaviour

We want to allow the greatest potential for each participant's Woodland Play Session experience to be transformational and therefore wish to welcome each participant from an open and unbiased viewpoint with regards to their behaviour and abilities. Whilst recognising that it is useful to have previous information about participants' needs, we believe that no child is inherently 'naughty' and hope that the greater freedoms offered by woodland play session environment will allow for a more flexible interpretation of positive engagement. We will work to develop a clear set of boundaries and guidelines. Each participant will have the opportunity to voice their own feelings. Talking about how they wish to be treated and listening to the feelings of others is important as it will allow the group to work together, understand one another and ultimately become more supportive and cooperative. It will also contribute to making the woodland site a safe and enjoyable space.

De-escalation

If a situation arises in which participants are behaving in a way that threatens the safety of the group, staff will ensure that the following steps are taken:

1. Recount the facts of the incident as observed, in simple language and without judgement, and if possible mutually agree on these. Remind the participants involved of any guidelines they have not followed.
2. Listen to the involved party or parties, if necessary gently separate them from the group for this. Ask about how they feel about the incident, empathise with them to help them to express themselves and take responsibility for their feelings. Ask them to imagine how they think their behaviour has affected everyone else.
3. Talk with them to establish what their needs in the situation were and to understand how they were not being met. Discuss what their needs might be now and encourage them to consider the needs of everyone else present.
4. Help them to express any requests they might have clearly and in positive language. These can be requests of themselves, others, situations or of the environment.
5. Encourage discussion of new strategies, so that if a similar situation arises the participant(s) feel able to communicate their needs without resorting to negative behaviours.

Recording & Reporting

In all cases staff will complete an incident report form, and where necessary inform parents/carers.

Where relevant, any significant issues or incidents will be discussed with parents or carers in a private conversation, when the participant is not present

Learning and Development

The contemporary forest school movement was brought to the UK from Scandinavia in the 1990s but it is predated by many British traditions, such as the Woodcraft Folk, Scouting and Guiding. It draws inspiration from these traditions, along with various educational philosophies, including Rousseau, Froebel, Steiner and Montessori.

Our Ethos

Gargunnock Playgroup would like our Woodland Play program to foster self-esteem, independence, emotional, resilience, co-operation, personal responsibility, autonomy and motivation, as well as a deeply personal knowledge, respect and care for our environment. The approach of Gargunnock Playgroup aims to be learner-led, play-centred, holistic and experiential. When taking part in our sessions a participant is engaging with nature in wild spaces in an exploratory, sensory and physical way.

We believe it's important to create, where possible, a long-term relationship between a location and a group of participants - giving all participants a chance to get a feel for how an environment changes over time.

Participants will be encouraged to take constructive risks in order to develop skills, good judgment and to learn and develop through managing their own and others' risks. In planning activities we consider not only the risks but also the potential benefits for the learner.

Roles & Responsibilities

All staff members involved in Woodland Play Sessions are conscious that it is an exploratory experience for children. They allow children to play and learn as independently as possible, often without demonstrating or suggesting. If invited to provide support then they do, but otherwise merely observe, allowing the experience to be learner-directed.

It is the role of playgroup staff to take a lead in planning, delivering and evaluating the Woodland play programme. They also take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are adhered to. Volunteers and other adults such as committee members may help with these responsibilities where they wish to and are able and/or qualified to.

Evaluation

Staff will request evaluation forms be completed after each term and a reflective report will be compiled and presented at the group's AGM in June.

Communication Strategy

This communication strategy explains how participants, parents, those involved with delivering the Woodland Play programme and other stakeholders are kept informed with the delivery and outcomes.

Children

Children will be asked to evaluate the programme through verbal feedback, videos, writings and drawings. These will be opportunities for them to express how they feel the programme is going and to engage with the process of developing the future sessions.

Parents/Carers

Gargunnock Playgroup will request that parents/carers read our Handbook before their child attends for their first sessions. Parents/carers of each child will be asked to complete a consent form.

Verbal feedback will be sought from parents on a regular and informal basis, and a more formal evaluation form will be requested at the end of the year.

Parents can address feedback to a committee or staff member (contact information in Appendix 6)

Parents will receive information about the outcomes of the sessions through Playgroup's website and Facebook page.

Parent Helpers

All adults must sign to a form to confirm that they have read and understood this handbook. Feedback at the end of each session will be sought from helpers.

Trustees of Gargunnock House

Staff and playgroup committee members will meet regularly to discuss and assess the impact of play sessions with Estate Trustees or their representatives to ensure that there is no disruption to other estate users.

Other Interested Persons

Following an evaluation of the sessions a case study or report may be produced and this will be shared with others who may have expressed interest.

Session Routines

Setting Up

1. Carry out a session risk assessment of site and advise/act accordingly
2. Collect necessary equipment
3. Meet and register group
4. Check phone signal

Session Opening

1. Welcome Time - Introductions of any new faces
2. Make the group aware of new hazards or medical considerations

3. Check that they are all wearing suitable clothing and footwear
4. Take the group to the location
5. Form an opening circle
6. Describe or walk the boundaries for the day
7. Engage children in the development of rules and guidelines for the day
8. Describe the day's activities

During the Session

1. Visually check all equipment before use
2. Check on pastoral needs of group
3. Conduct a head count, as needed
4. Ensure appropriate personal protective clothing is worn

Closing the Session

1. Extinguish any fires properly
2. Count any tools used into their bag
3. Remove structures
4. Check for litter etc.
5. Collect the equipment
6. Story/song time
7. Walk the group to the pick-up point
8. Bid farewell to the group
9. Thoroughly check, clean and store equipment
10. Remove toilet waste and litter

Terms and Conditions

What to Bring

“There is no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothes.” This is almost true; strong winds are probably the one real exception. We aim to go out in all seasons, so for each we need participants to dress appropriately. Our sessions are relatively active, but in winter spending hours outside can mean getting very cold if a participant isn't wearing several layers, warm socks, a hat, gloves, scarf, etc. It's also advisable always to wear long trousers and sturdy boots or wellies in all weathers in the woods. Our site is beside a burn so there is always access to water which is a huge attraction for children. Spare clothes are a must, several changes are advisable and these should be wrapped in labelled waterproof bags. A spare plastic bag is useful for staff to put wet clothes in.

We would prefer that special or valuable toys are not brought to Woodland Play Sessions as Gargunnock Playgroup cannot take responsibility for any personal property that is lost or damaged during sessions.

Feedback and Concerns

We encourage all children and carers/parents to give us regular feedback about their experience and also to talk to us about anything that is causing consternation. Feedback and concerns can be expressed verbally in person or in writing by email. We will always endeavour to be as open, honest and as straightforward as possible with carers/parents with regard to any issue; maintaining a two way flow of information can lead to resolutions before problems arise or escalate. All communications regarding formal feedback or concerns will be logged and records kept.

In the event of a concern being about our practice, we will investigate this and feed back our conclusions with 28 days.

Cancellation

In the case of extreme weather it may be necessary to cancel our Woodland Play Sessions. In such circumstances playgroup will take place as normal in the Community Centre. We will endeavour where possible to give advance notice of a cancellation however in many cases this will not be possible as decisions may have to be made at very short notice. In such circumstances we will inform the child's primary contact via text message that the session has been moved to the Community Centre.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment & Session Outline

Nature of Hazard	Uncontrolled Outcome	Precautions to be taken (planning and group guidance)	Risk level L,M,H
Very cold, wet, hot or windy weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure & dehydration • Injury from falling branches • Hypo/hyperthermia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise all to wear appropriate outdoor clothing. • Leave woodland in high winds with falling branches • Area under leaning trees or loose branches to be cordoned off 	
Slippery/muddy or uneven underfoot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprain, fracture or concussion • Falling from a height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise group to wear appropriate outdoor footwear • staff to identify areas appropriate to the access needs of the group. • Advise all to walk carefully • Nobody aided in climbing higher than head-height • Brief group on slipperiness of logs 	
Poisonous or thorny plants, berries or fungi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stings, rashes & sickness • Infected wound • Damage to clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All to be briefed on contact with plants • Children instructed not to eat anything not presented by a group leader • Advise to clean hands before eating or drinking • Advise to wear appropriate clothing 	
Stinging and biting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stings leading to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief group on potential 	

insects	allergic response	for bee and wasp stings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tick bite leading to Lyme disease 	and possibility of ticks in the woodland
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about any history of allergic responses
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers aware to check skin for any bites at home and if rash, red halo, or flu type symptoms occur go to doctor
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise to keep skin covered
Litter and animal faeces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuts • Infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders to check and clear area
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise all participants to wash hands after an activity
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloves, disposal bags and wipes to be available
Animals and public present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted attention from animals • Confrontation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices up for dog owners to keep dogs under control
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all to keep and quiet still when dogs approach
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have mobiles available
Lost member of group	Exposure, panic, injury, shock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk boundaries with children
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind children to stay within boundaries
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight boundaries using marker flags
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff familiarise themselves with Lost or Missing Person Procedure
Fires	Burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only small and contained fires used
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a clear space free

- Keep a clear space free from equipment or undergrowth around the fire area
 - Have extra water available to put out fire
 - Have burns kits available
 - Have heat-proof gloves and fire blanket available
 - Safety briefing on fire
- Food preparation
- Food poisoning
 - Food allergy
- Staff trained in food hygiene
 - Knowledge of food allergies provided
 - Ensure all food stored correctly prior to serving or cooking food
 - Ensure all wash hands correctly before cooking
 - Insure all cooking equipment is clean

Appendix 2: Example Incident log sheet

We record all incidents and accidents in our Accident Book, an entry is completed for every accident, violent or aggressive incident, occasion of ill health, disease or near miss.

Details recorded include

- Incident of date and time:
- Person injured or subject of aggression:
- Whether the incident was
 - a near miss
 - an accident leading to injury
 - ill health/disease
 - a violent or aggressive incident
- Location
- What happened
- Whether anyone else was involved
- Whether anything was damaged?
- What action was been taken to prevent a recurrence?
- Name of person completing form

Appendix 3: Woodland Play Health and Personal Safety Questionnaire

To help us plan our woodland sessions and first aid provision please answer the following questions:

Is there any activity/task that your child may find difficult for health or mobility reasons?

Is your child taking any medication that a first aider or doctor would need to be aware of?

Is there any information that we may need to ensure your child's safety and well-being (e.g. fear of dogs)?

Appendix 4: Pro forma consent

I agree to (insert child's name) participating in Gargunnock Playgroups Woodland Play Sessions and give my permission for:

- The audio recording of conversation
- The use of photographs and videos in publicly-available reports and news articles for promotional and educational purposes
- The use of written research data for reports, presentations and publications.

In addition I confirm that

- I have completed a Playgroup enrolment form
- I have completed a Woodland Play Session health and safety questionnaire which provides staff with relevant information regarding my child's care
- I have provided staff with contact information for use in an emergency
- I confirm that I have read a copy of the Woodland Play Sessions Handbook of Policies and Procedures and agree to abide by the policies and procedures it contains.

Please return this form to: Jane Bain, Senior Playleader, Gargunnock Playgroup, 8 Millbrae, Gargunnock, FK8 3BB or to a playgroup committee member.

**This is the number we will use to contact you in the event of cancellation. In an emergency we will use the contact information detailed on your enrolment form.

Appendix 5 - Contacts

Senior Playleader	Jane Bain	playgroup@gargunnock.com
Playleader	Louisa Jenkins	
Chairperson	Claire Hart	clairehart01@gmail.com
Secretary	Nic Stewart	nic_hendry@hotmail.com
	Ali Tunnah	laidlaw146@btinternet.com
Treasurer	Grania Watson	graniaingleby@hotmail.com

Signed _____ Date _____

Print Name _____ Relationship to child _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Primary Telephone Contact Number ** _____

Email Contact _____