

Rhws Primary School Rangers Policy

2024



Section 1

Principles of Rangers



Introduction

Rangers is a unique method of outdoor learning that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of the natural environment. It focuses on the process of learning rather than the outcomes and the longer a programme runs the more beneficial it will be.

At Rangers we explore the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round and in all weathers. The sessions are held in the school's woodland area and the repeated visits to the site allows for the development of confidence as well as the consolidation and transfer of new skills learned. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves.

All sessions will allow time for social interaction, including opportunities for teamwork, individual and group reviews, informal play and socialising. Another core theme is increasing environmental awareness and knowledge, with obvious links to sustainability and global citizenship.

Principles of Rangers

1: Rangers is a long term process of regular sessions in our woodland area to support and strengthen children's well being. Planning, adapting, observation and reviewing are integral to our Rangers.

- Rangers take place regularly, every week on the same day, at the same time and with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time.

- Rangers sessions are based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. The TIS approach runs concurrently during sessions to further enhance and strengthen children's emotional development.

- The initial sessions of our Rangers programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future Ranger development.

2: Rangers takes place in our woodland/forest area in order to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

- The woodland/forest area is ideally suited to match the needs of our programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- We aim to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long term environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Rangers use natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

3: Rangers aims to promote holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent, creative and emotionally literate learners.

- Rangers aim is to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

4: Rangers offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitude and/or interests.

- Rangers use tools and fires during each session for the purpose of cooking, warmth and teaching fire safety.
- Any Rangers experience follows a risk-benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner, that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

6: Rangers uses a range of learner- centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

- The practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice is an integral part of the Rangers learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development.
- Rangers provide a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions. - Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.

Section 2

Rangers Policy



Objectives

- To ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to benefit from Forest School activities.
- To provide children with experiences that encourage an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.
- To give staff a chance to observe students in a different setting.
- To offer an opportunity to become fitter and healthier.
- For participants to learn to recognise and assess risks for themselves.
- To ensure that all sessions are safe, purposeful and appropriate, to meet the educational/emotional needs of pupils taking part.
- Opportunities for staff to learn new skills, and enjoy the benefits of Rangers too!

Risk assessments, Good Practice and Procedures, Rangers activities, rules for tools and fire etc. can all be found within the Forest School guidebook which contains everything you need to know about our Rangers sessions.

Site Management

Each activity carried out in the outdoors will have an immediate impact on the environment; some positive and some not so. We aim to keep this impact to a minimum. One of the principles of Rangers is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children will be taught respect and responsibility for the world around them.

The site within the school grounds is still under development and the students will be involved in planting trees, vegetables, laying paths, removing rubbish etc. This should help them to take more responsibility in looking after the site. This will be monitored as the area develops. The Rangers leader will complete regular inspections of the site for signs of impact and evaluate actions. Activities will be assessed for their impact on the environment and measures taken to keep their impact to a minimum.

Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas of the woodland. As trees start to grow branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries, they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored in the log store and used as firewood. During the winter months large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them.

Reducing Waste and Recycling

Rangers activities always reflect best environmental practice in order to control and reduce our direct impacts on the environment. Children are taught the importance of recycling and reducing waste and are encouraged to care for the environment for others. All litter and debris taken into the site is removed and regular litter picks are arranged to remove other refuse which is in the area. We have Park Rangers who oversee the everyday upkeep of our area.

Where possible recycled, reclaimed or natural and sustainable resources are used in our Rangers area. The site is maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora is introduced if needed. Non-native or invasive species may be removed or managed to eliminate them taking over.

Section 3

Code of Conduct



Our Forest School Code of Conduct

Entering the Rangers area

We enter the area respectfully and know that when we are at Rangers, specific expectations are in place. We explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our woodland environment. We understand that we share our area with plants and animals and that when we are in our area we are sharing the environment with them.

Boundaries

Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. When children are required to return to the fire circle, a signal is given which they are familiar with.

Lighting a fire

When lighting a fire in the Rangers area, the session leader will take control of the operation. Open fires are built within an open ground area and surrounded by a circle of seating (the fire circle). The office must be informed before any fire is lit.

At the Fire Circle

An open fire is always lit within a fire square. A fire circle using log sitting stools is established around the perimeter. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. No one is allowed to run past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.

Using Tools

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. (See tool use guides and risk assessments).

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees.

Picking up and playing with stones

Stones may be picked up and transported but children need to be reminded that they are not to be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

Digging

Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using lolly pop sticks, fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made. Care must be taken not to poke sticks into holes already visible in case it is an insect home.

Collecting wood

Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

Eating and Drinking

Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Rangers area, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session (e.g. blackberry picking, nettle roasting). Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water or hygiene gel to clean their hands before consumption.

Rope and String

Rope and string are very useful in a Rangers session. Children are taught to tie knots and to use the rope to help transport heavy objects. We do not allow children to wrap the rope around each other.

Carrying and Transporting Materials

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Rangers area. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.

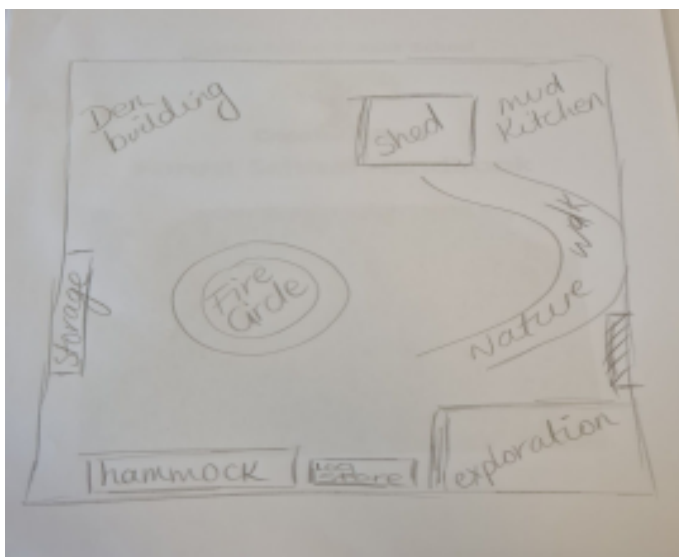
Activities

Rangers use natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation. Activities can include:

- Shelter building (in designated area)
- Natural art
- Using knots and lashings
- Fire lighting
- Wood whittling
- Animal tracking
- Bug hunting
- Tree/plant investigations
- Climbing and balancing
- Woodwork and using tools, e.g making musical instruments, jewellery, decorative items
- Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- Collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- Team games
- Studying wildlife
- Cooking

Activities at Rangers are not curriculum led but focused more towards children's well being, however, Rangers activities can be curriculum linked and span a number of subjects.

There are designated areas at Rangers which are set up for the sole purpose of a certain activity. These areas remain the same with the purpose of helping children with routine and structure. All equipment relating to each area should remain so and put back in place at the end of each session.



Section 4

Safety Procedures



Fire Safety

Fires and the use of Kelly Kettles and Dutch ovens etc, are a valuable part of Rangers. If cooking, food hygiene precautions must be adhered to. Rangers sessions aim to ensure that all children and adults taking part in sessions including fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for campfires.
- Kelly Kettles are only used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away.
- The area should be clear from overhanging branches
- The area should be clear of any tripping hazards.
- Wind direction should be taken into account and seating should be arranged out of the smoke.

Positioning of students and adults

- Seating is positioned about 1.5 metre from the fire pit. (the fire circle).
- When the fire is lit, students are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- When seated Students must sit with legs drawn in and not outstretched and they must remain seated unless given permission to move by an adult.
- When walking about the area everyone must walk outside the seating unless given permission to enter the circle by the session leader.
- Students will be taught to change seats by standing, moving behind the log they were sitting on and walking around the outside of the area.
- No one is permitted to throw anything into the fire.
- Seating in the line of the smoke should be avoided.

Safety and Responsibility

- The session leader will make the decision about the ability and attitude of students with regards to who is able to light a fire.
- Fires are lit using a ferro rod or flint and steel.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to accelerate the lighting of the fire.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions include students adding wood fuel to the fire, this must be done with close 1-1 supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed (not thrown) onto the fire

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Water should always be on hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Rangers Leaders should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Leaving the fire site safe

Any site where a fire has been lit should be left safe, clean and tidy. Once the fire is extinguished any pieces of food or foil should be picked out of the fire and taken back to school with any other rubbish. Spread the ashes over a wide area. If it is a permanent fire site any wood that was collected but not burned should be stacked near the fire for next use.

Hand Tool Safety

Using small hand tools is an important part of Rangers as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Rangers Leader(s) and will be inspected before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect.

Staff to child ratio varies from tool to tool (check individual tool procedure sheets)
Tools will be kept in the Rangers area and only removed by the Ranger Leaders.

A 'Tool Talk' should be given every time a new tool is used.

Penknives must be opened and closed by Forest School staff, TAs or volunteers. Running with tools is prohibited.

Pointing with tools is prohibited.

Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed. Wood being sawn must be supported on a saw horse or a natural sawing break – hands must be kept away from the blade.

All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session.

Care of Tools

It is vital to keep tools in good working order to prolong their life. After use tools should be;

Checked for damage or worn parts.

Cleaned with a cloth or wire brush by an adult.

Dried if they get wet to avoid corrosion.

Tools used for cutting may need sharpening periodically and blades will benefit from regular oiling. Tools should be stored carefully with any protective covers replaced at all times when not in use.

Tool Talk Example - Knife

- This is a fixed blade knife.
- This is the handle, this is the cover, I take the cover off like this.
- This is the blade, this is the cutting edge.
- When I have finished with the knife I put the cover back on like this.
- I stand with the knife like this.
- I walk with the knife like this.
- I pass the knife like this.
- When I use the knife I use it two arms and a tools length away from anyone except my partner like this.
- I use the knife to cut the cord and to whittle.
- I have bare hands on the tool.
- I have a glove on my helper hand.
- When I am not using the knife I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing inwards.
- When I have finished with the knife I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided.

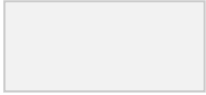
Section 5

Hand Tool Procedures



Tool	Peeler 
Purpose	Used for peeling the bark off sticks and branches, suitable for young children to use instead of a knife.
Safety equipment or design feature	The handle is designed for easier and safer grip, for left or right handed use.
Adult : Child ratio	1 : 4
Transporting	Always hold by the handle. Pass with the handle pointing towards the other person.
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance from others.
Body Stance	Sit or kneel in a comfortable position.
Method of use	Use the peeler to strip the bark off the stick always working away from the body. The hand holding the stick should always be behind the peeler. Hold the stick firmly and push the peeler down the stick away from the body taking care if there are knots in the wood.
Checking	Check blade is intact, not damaged and not blunt. Check there is no damage to the handle.

Cleaning	Wipe clean after use. Dry blade if wet.
Maintenance	Little needed,can oil the blade to prevent corrosion.
Storage	When not in use, store in a bag/pouch.

Tool	Ferro Rod 
Purpose	Used for lighting the fire and practicing fire lighting skills.
Safety equipment or design feature	The handle is designed for easier and safer grip,for left or right handed use.
Adult : Child ratio	1 : 4
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance from others.
Body Stance	Sit or kneel in a comfortable position.
Checking	Check the rod and steel are attached.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use.
Maintenance	Re attach rod and striker if apart.
Storage	When not in use, place in a pouch/tin.

Tool	 Saw
Purpose	Used for wood cutting.
Safety equipment or design feature	The handle is designed for easier and safer grip, for left or right handed use. Folding mechanism for safe storing.
Adult : Child ratio	1 : 2
Transporting	Carry whilst in folded position.
Working Space	Work with at least 2 arm's length distance from others.
Body Stance	Stand or kneel in a comfortable position. Use a support for stability.
Method of use	Slow and steady sawing motions.
Checking	Check the blade is not loose or snapped.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use.
Maintenance	Occasional oiling to maintain the blade.
Storage	When not in use keep folded and store in the tin/box.