Activities, Creative Practice & Learning Environment Policy

Creative Makers – Witham Friary Quarry

Policy Lead: Rebecca Knee
Review Date: 01.01.2026
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1. Policy Statement

Creative Makers provides a calm, inclusive and child-centred outdoor and creative learning environment at Witham Friary Quarry, designed to support the wellbeing, confidence and development of children and young people. Activities are carefully planned to be engaging, accessible and emotionally safe, with a strong focus on creativity, practical learning and connection with nature as means of communication, regulation and personal growth.

Our provision recognises that many children attending may have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), anxiety, sensory processing differences, trauma histories or previous negative educational experiences. Therefore, our creative practice prioritises emotional safety, autonomy and flexibility alongside skill development.

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2. Aims of Our Creative Provision

Our activities are designed to:

- Support emotional regulation and wellbeing
- Develop confidence and self-esteem
- Encourage self-expression and communication
- Build independence and resilience
- Provide opportunities for success
- Support fine motor skills and coordination
- Encourage collaboration and social connection

Creativity is used as a tool for development, not simply as an outcome.

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3. Our Approach to Creative Practice

Creative Makers uses a process-led approach, meaning the emphasis is on exploration and experience rather than producing a “perfect” end result. At the quarry, this includes creative

making, outdoor play, practical problem-solving and caring for the land. This reduces pressure and anxiety and allows children to engage in ways that feel safe.

Children are given:

- Choice over materials and methods
- Flexible expectations
- Time to work at their own pace
- Support to develop ideas without fear of failure

Staff provide guidance, modelling and encouragement while respecting individual autonomy within clear safety boundaries. Children are supported to recognise manageable challenges, make choices and ask for help.

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4. Types of Activities Offered

Activities may include:

- Art, mixed media and nature-inspired drawing, painting and land art
- Textiles, hand sewing, weaving and creative work with natural or reclaimed materials
- Photography, digital storytelling and recording seasonal changes and creative projects
- Design and Technology (DT), woodworking and practical making projects using suitable tools and materials
- Nature-based creative activities, observation, wildlife identification and outdoor exploration
- Outdoor cooking and creative food preparation, including growing and preparing suitable produce
- Gardening, sowing, planting, growing, composting and caring for the land
- Supervised fire building and fire lighting in an agreed area, with safe routines for tending and extinguishing fires
- Den and shelter building, simple knots and collaborative construction with suitable materials
- Child-led outdoor play, imaginative games, movement and problem-solving on the land
- Nature walks, simple map work, seasonal observation and small habitat or conservation projects

Activities are adapted to suit age, ability, sensory needs and emotional readiness. The range offered depends on site permissions, weather, staff competence, supervision and the relevant risk assessments; inclusion in this policy does not authorise an activity without these arrangements.

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5. Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

The quarry learning environment is organised to reduce stress and support safe participation outdoors. We aim to provide:

- A calm, supportive atmosphere with quieter spaces for regulation
- Clear organisation of materials and defined areas for different activities
- Predictable routines, meeting points and understandable boundaries
- Secure storage and controlled access to tools and equipment
- Suitable working areas, rest spaces and access to appropriate weather protection
- Access to assessed outdoor creative, gardening and play spaces

The space is arranged to allow movement, regulation breaks and flexibility within supervised boundaries. Staff check the site and conditions before use. Unsafe edges, unstable ground, water where present and other restricted areas remain outside the learning space. Suitable clothing, drinking water, handwashing, toilet arrangements and emergency access must be planned for each session.

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6. Inclusion and Accessibility

We actively adapt activities to ensure participation for all children, taking account of mobility, terrain, weather and individual sensory or medical needs. Adjustments may include:

- Simplifying instructions
- Providing visual supports
- Allowing alternative methods
- Reducing sensory demands
- Offering breaks
- Providing emotional reassurance and an accessible alternative activity

Participation is encouraged but never forced. Children can observe, join gradually or take time out as needed within agreed supervision arrangements. No child is pressured to use a tool, approach a fire or undertake an outdoor challenge.

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7. Supporting Emotional Regulation Through Creativity

Creative activities are used as a tool for:

- Reducing anxiety
- Providing sensory input
- Supporting focus
- Offering a non-verbal communication method

Staff remain aware that emotional wellbeing is more important than task completion. Gardening, gentle movement, nature observation and repetitive making can offer opportunities for regulation; sensory experiences are adapted to the individual rather than assumed to be calming.

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8. Outdoor Creative Practice

Witham Friary Quarry provides opportunities for outdoor education and Forest School-inspired creative exploration, including child-led play, den building, natural crafts, teamwork and seasonal projects. Activities support wellbeing, sensory regulation and connection to the environment. Children are helped to explore within agreed boundaries and develop awareness of their own abilities and the needs of others.

All activities are supervised and risk assessed. This policy must be read alongside the Health & Safety Policy and the quarry site, activity and individual learner risk assessments. These set out detailed controls, staffing, first aid and emergency arrangements. Activities requiring specialist competence must only be led by suitably trained and competent adults.

Woodwork and tool use are introduced through demonstrations, suitable work areas and direct supervision appropriate to the child and task. Tools are checked, stored securely and used only for assessed activities. Gardening, shelter building and land-care tasks are planned so that materials, lifting and ground conditions are suitable.

Fires and outdoor cooking take place only with site permission, suitable conditions and an activity-specific assessment. A competent adult supervises throughout, with clear boundaries, appropriate fire-control resources and a safe extinguishing routine. Cooking arrangements address allergies, food storage, safe preparation, handwashing and hot equipment. Fires are fully extinguished and the area checked before departure.

Weather, ground conditions and environmental restrictions are reviewed throughout sessions. Staff adapt, postpone or stop activities when necessary. Photography and digital work follow consent, safeguarding and data-protection arrangements, and learners stay within assessed areas when taking images.

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9. Respect for Materials and Environment

Children are taught to:

- Use tools safely and follow agreed boundaries for fire, work and play
- Care for shared materials
- Respect others' work
- Tidy up with support

This supports responsibility and independence. Children are also encouraged to care for plants and wildlife, minimise disturbance, reuse materials and leave the site tidy. Land work

and gardening must stay within agreed areas and permissions; unknown plants, fungi or berries must not be eaten. Any harvesting for food requires competent identification and a specific assessment.

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10. Staff Role in Creative Sessions

Staff act as facilitators rather than directors. Their role includes:

- Creating a safe emotional environment
- Modelling curiosity and calmness
- Supporting problem-solving
- Encouraging without pressure
- Monitoring wellbeing, changing outdoor conditions and safe participation

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11. Monitoring and Adaptation

Activities are continually adapted in response to children's interests, needs and emotional presentation, as well as seasonal opportunities and conditions at the quarry. Flexibility is central to our approach. Staff use observations and learner feedback to adjust challenge, materials, access and support, and adapt or stop activities if conditions become unsuitable.

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12. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually or in response to changes in provision.

At Creative Makers, creativity is not just an activity – it is a pathway to wellbeing, confidence and connection.