



Forest School Policy

Developed by: Forest Skills Leaders – Jane Benton and Grant Yardley	Spring 2016 Reviewed Spring 2018, 2020, 2022 Updated: Summer 2022
Monitoring and Evaluation: Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body	
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Purpose and Principles of Forest School

Forest school in the UK has evolved from teaching practice in Scandinavia, where there is considerable focus on learning in outdoor settings. At its heart is a holistic approach to learning which aims to allow each individual child to develop emotionally, educationally, physically, and spiritually. This development occurs through a combination of direct teaching of new skills and opportunities to take part in child-initiated tasks. Furthermore, children are provided with numerous opportunities to work alongside their peers in order to achieve. By encouraging children to take on new challenges, interact with others and persevere when something is difficult, they become confident and happy learners.

Apley Wood Primary has additional policies which will be adhered to alongside this policy during Forest School sessions within our woodland:

- *Health and Safety*
- *First Aid*
- *Asthma*
- *Mental Health and Well-Being Policy*
- *Child protection Policy*
- *Safeguarding Policy*
- *Behavior Policy*

Forest School at Apley Wood Primary School

At Apley Wood Primary School our vision is that over the next few years we will enhance the profile and provision of our Outdoor Learning to provide specialist Forest School sessions to children across the school. This will create a chance to:

- Connect with the natural world
- Deliver first hand experiences of life and growth
- Explore endless opportunities for creativity and imagination
- Improve physical, social and emotional development
- Learn to take calculated risk.

The sessions will be led by a trained Level 2 Forest Skills Leader, Mr Yardley or Mrs Benton. Mr Yardley holds an up-to-date Outdoor First Aid certificate. The Forest Skills Leader will be supported by other members of the Staff Team, (at least one of whom has a First Aid certificate).

All adults at Forest School will follow the same rules as the children and ensure that they set a good example. The Forest Skills Leader will communicate policy, risk assessments and aims of each session to all those involved at each session.

Apley Woods – Our Forest School site

The site is within our school, situated next to the main playground within easy access to the main school building. The area where Forest School will take place is not used by the rest of school and is fenced off for Forest School use only. However, time will be built into initial sessions to ensure children are aware of how to explore taking their own calculated risk.

The walk around the Forest School Site is a mix of grass, cleared woodland floor and slightly uneven ground due to tree roots. These are a low risk to the group's safety and the risk will be minimised because the group will be regularly reminded of the hazard by all adults involved.

Before each session takes place, the Forest Skills Leader ensures that a safety check is carried out. According to the time of year and weather conditions the area will require checking for dead wood and low branches and will also need assessing after extreme weather conditions such as high winds and heavy snow fall. If the Forest Skills Leader deems the site to be unsafe then Forest School will not take place until the unsafe aspect has gone, been removed, or made safe.

Inclusion

All students are encouraged to join in with Forest School sessions. The Forest Skills Leader will ensure that activities are adapted according to the groups/pupils individual needs. Any issues regarding the safety of individual pupils will be discussed with our SENCO.

Risk Assessment

The Forest Skills Leader has undertaken training which involved managing risk at Forest School. Children and adults will be taught the boundaries and general rules of the site alongside rules for safe handling of tools and fire safety before being given access and children are not given access to tools without adult supervision.

A Forest School risk assessment is written and reviewed on an annual basis; this also includes procedures relating to tools, emergencies, and fire lighting (see *Appendix*). These remain the responsibility of the Forest Skills Leader who must also communicate any risk assessments and procedures to the adults involved with the sessions.

Rules to establish with each group

1. Where the forest school boundaries are and why they are there
2. Keeping fingers out of mouths
3. If moving sticks, drag them along the ground or walk with it vertically
4. Do not eat anything you have picked up

5. Use tools under adult supervision and make sure you follow instructions how to use them
6. Tools must be returned to where they came from when not in use.
7. Practise and rehearse 'fire' safety rules around the forest school seating area for each session before having a fire.

First Aid

A first aid kit is always available at the site. A copy of the risk assessment and emergency procedures are also kept with the first aid kit. Parents are asked to complete consent forms and medical details before the first forest school session and any allergies / personal health needs are communicated to adults involved in the session by the Forest Skills Leader. This also includes any adults who have specific medical needs. Recording of minor injuries should be reported in the usual way in line with our school First Aid procedure. Serious injury will be dealt with according to the emergency procedure.

Communications with Parents and Guardians

To ensure that parents and guardians are fully informed about Forest School the following communication takes place.

Introducing Forest School Session – held after school within the first two weeks of Autumn Term before Forest School Sessions begin

Commented [YG1]: Does this need to be done for every year group?

Introducing Forest School Letter (outlines purpose, kit list etc) – sent out to parents first week of Autumn Term

Parent consent and emergency contact details – sent out to parents early Autumn term

Parent consent to photo / filming / food / drink – sent out to parents early Autumn Term

Dates for each classes sessions – sent out half-termy Autumn Term in home school communication books - includes events / activities planned over term.

Commented [YG2]: Could this be main events that we will be doing something at E.g bonfire night, bonfire with marshmallow smores. Christmas fayer – hot chocolate / marshmallow smores / other snacks ect. Then a list of activities we will be doing across the school.

Forest School Outside Display Board – changed on a regular basis to share what children have being learning and link to current theme/season.

Commented [YG3]: Outside board – with glass/Perspex doors

Invitations to Forest School Christmas and Graduation – letters sent home several weeks before date of events.

Commented [YG4]: I don't think this will work in school!

Forest School updates – photos and information about what the children have been learning to share with parents and the rest of the school community on school newsletter, Twitter and website newsfeed.

PPE – Protective Personal Equipment

In order for both adults and children to enjoy their Forest School experience appropriate clothing must be worn for the conditions of the day and the activities that will be undertaken.

Parents are informed of the fact that during wet weather, waterproof trousers and coats with hoods must be worn. Wellies or other waterproof footwear is also required. During dry, sunny weather children must wear sun cream and hats. Parents are also informed that sandals are not appropriate during Forest School and either trainers or other fully enclosed shoes are suitable when it is dry and sunny. During colder times parents are given information which explains children need to wear at least 4 layers of clothing, several pairs of socks, hats, gloves and scarves.

If children and adults are involved in using tools then adults must ensure that any protective clothing is worn as appropriate to the tool being use.

Tools and Equipment

Pupils are to be trained in the safe use of tools before using them. It is the responsibility of the Forest Skills Leader to ensure that:

1. Tools are cleaned and stored appropriately after being used
2. The tool bag contains an inventory of equipment currently held
3. When not in use tools are stored securely
4. Damaged and broken tools are not used
5. Tools are counted out and counted back in at the end of each session

Food and Drink

Pupils either take a snack from home or free fruit from school (EYFS & KS1). Pupils also take their own personal water bottles down to the site to drink at snack time during Spring/Autumn/Summer sessions – Winter sessions are generally shorter and colder so usually children do not take their water bottles on these occasions. The Forest Skills Leader and supporting adults ensure that children either wash their hands or are given some anti-bacterial gel before eating. Any allergies / intolerances are recorded when parents sign consent form. It is the responsibility of the Forest Skills Leader to ensure these are communicated to all adults at the session.

Appendix

1. Emergency Procedures
2. Fire Lighting procedure

Appendix 1

1. Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency the Forest Skills Leader will:

1. Assess the situation as quickly and calmly as possible. Decisions made will reflect the scenario involved (see examples below).
2. Ensure that the group and adults are safe and instruct other adults to look after children and each other as appropriate and appoint roles to adults as necessary.
3. Find out the names of any casualties and contact emergency services if necessary / carry out immediate first aid alongside school first aider.
4. As appropriate (ie serious injuries / head injuries) inform the school of the name of the casualty, details of their injuries and action taken so far. Either the Head Teacher, Office Staff or Forest Skills Leader will notify parents / guardians / next of kin of any casualties.
5. On returning to school the Forest Skills Leader will complete an accident report as per school procedure (see relevant policies listed above) as soon as possible.

Examples of Possible Scenarios: Minor / Major Injures

1. Make sure the rest of the group is safe
2. Where relevant remove the danger or remove the casualty from danger
3. Qualified First Aider follow ABC procedure and call emergency services if necessary. Carry out First Aid procedures relevant to casualty's injuries.
4. Contact parent/guardian as appropriate.
5. Contact school as appropriate

6. Follow up to parents using school first aid reporting format as appropriate.

Lost or missing child

Commented [YG5]: Do we need this?

1. Always ensure regular headcounts take place.
2. Assemble rest of children and ensure they are safe.
3. If a child / adult is missing Forest Skills leader will first issue instructions and use 1, 2, 3 where are you and search immediate area.
4. If not located, Forest Skills leader will contact school who can then contact police / parent/guardian/next of kin as appropriate.

Serious accident

1. Follow First Aid procedure outlined above.
2. Ensure 2 adults stay with casualty, but ensure rest of group are removed from the situation and are safe.
3. Contact school to call parent/guardian/next of kin ASAP or police if a member of the general public.

Severe Behaviour issues

1. Trained members of school staff to use de-escalation strategies as per school Behaviour Policy as first option then follow procedures outlined in School Restraint Policy if appropriate.
2. Remove other children from area of risk if appropriate
3. Debrief child after calm down period
4. Log incident as per school policy
5. School staff to inform parents/guardian as appropriate following guidance in school policy

Appendix 2

Fire Lighting Procedure

Fire Site:

As stated in the Forest School Policy children will regularly practise safe working procedures around the fire area. Games and adult supervision ensure children are instructed that there is to be no walking within this area at any time. Within this circle there is a fire area marked out and no one goes within this area. The fire is contained within an inner circle. A fire will not be made and lit until the Forest Skills Leader is confident that children can follow the safety procedures in place. These will be reinforced each session by all adults.

Lighting a Fire:

Once lit an adult will remain in the fire area at all times. Fires should not be left unsupervised. Tinder or small kindling is used to start the fire – for example dry leaves, cotton wool or newspaper.

Children will be told what size and type of wood to collect and gather small amounts for the fire. The wood collected is taken to an area close to the circle but must only be put onto the fire by adults.

A fire steel or matches will be used to light the fire; they must be kept in a secure place, away from children in the group.

A bucket or container of water should be at hand for emergencies and for extinguishing the fire at the end of the session. The area where the fire was will be soaked to ensure that no embers remain.

Cooking over a Camp Fire:

Sticks will be whittled to allow cooking over a fire. Children will be instructed about the use of sticks during sessions, especially those which have been in a fire. To ensure a safe and manageable distance a child will kneel down outside the logs denoting the edge of the fire and sticks should be long enough for the child not to stretch across the area. A ratio of two children per adult should be followed whilst cooking. Two pairs can be supervised at the same time by two leaders at either side of a fire. Any food intolerance/special diets/religious observances will be taken into account when cooking.

Emergency procedure:

1. In case of the fire going out of control or a fire being detected in the site the person who detects will calmly notify Forest Skills leader. If it is safe to do so (ie very small) this will be extinguished using water as outlined above. If not the following steps must be taken.
2. Forest Skills Leader will blow whistle and escort all children and adults to the emergency meeting point as outlined in the site information.

3. Forest Skills Leader will conduct a register and head count to ensure all adults/children are present.
4. Forest Skills Leader will ring emergency services and ensure all adults children stay in the group.