

Wisborough Green Primary School

Forest School Policy

Aims and outcomes of outdoor centred learning through Forest School and outdoor learning sessions

The key aims for Forest School are:

- To encourage an awareness and respect for the local environment, including flora and fauna, as well as showing respect for others.
- To provide opportunities and experiences that encourages appreciation of nature and its uses.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, working cooperatively in groups
- To develop self-esteem and self-confidence and independence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

A volunteers guide is available as a brief synopsis of the Forest School ethos and outlines key elements of adult and child behaviours during a session.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both children and adults involved in the sessions are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area around them. The Forest School permanent site is located on the school field near a small copse. In order to preserve the local eco-system, children are made aware of the expected behaviour regarding wildlife, respecting any habitats which they may find during sessions.

The floor layer may need to be protected during times of excessive ground water, and bark chippings may be required to maintain the integrity of the ground.

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk-benefit assessments carried out for Forest School sessions are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

Health and Safety

The Forest School curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is in the Forest School Policy folder.

The Forest School Leader has an up-to-date Outdoor First Aid certificate and is in charge of first aid arrangements. Relevant staff have first aid training. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and a radio (walkie-talkie) is carried. The school will contact the parents.

Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

Safeguarding

Everyone involved in Forest School leadership is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers and a Cause for Concern sheet will be filled in as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the class teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Equality and Inclusion

During Forest School sessions, all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

Behaviour

During Forest School sessions, we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Wisborough Green Primary School. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the well-being of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office. In the case of larger scale emergencies, the schools current emergency procedures are followed.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

Forest School Site Assessment

Forest School sessions: including Sensory Activities, Minibeasts and Shelter building

Tool use

Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the Coordinator's File, and are attached as appendices to this document.

Safety Sweep and checklists

The Forest School leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment during Forest School

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest School. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest School Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

Introduction to each tool will be by group discussion and demonstration regarding proper use.

Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest School Leader at all times.

Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Leader feels the children are ready.

Sharp tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them initially, but Forest School leaders may decide that some children are able to use these safely without direct and constant supervision. Fire steels may be used in small group situations, as long as fire procedures are followed.

Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in conjunction with other activities and reviewed on a regular basis.

All tools will be returned to the tool bag at the end of each session. This is the Forest School Leader's responsibility.

All resources and equipment are checked regularly.

Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

Children must have a secure knowledge of fire circle safety:

KS1 Children are not allowed to be within the fire circle at any time unsupervised.

KS2 Children should have a secure awareness of risk management of the fire circle, including safety equipment. They should only be within the fire circle if they have a relevant purpose to do so.

e.g. tending the fire, cooking, fire lighting etc.

In addition to the other resources, a large container full of water is nearby for controlling the fire and dealing with burns, fire gloves are available for adding/removing items from the fire, and a fire blanket is nearby.

When lighting a fire for Forest School or Outdoor Learning:

Only a competent adult will take responsibility for the fire. Children may be involved in the collection of material for burning, building and lighting of the fire, under supervision of the Forest School Leader.

The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.

Check for low overhanging trees.

Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.

The built fire should never reach higher than the knee, with flames not extending beyond 30cm of the top of the fire.

While the fire is being lit, any children not directly involved will be engaged in activities elsewhere or seated a suitable distance away from the fire.

The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.

No fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods, and will only be lit at other times when doing so for warmth or to facilitate cooking.

Campfires will follow strict guidelines from Chichester District Council to minimise environmental impact and impact on neighbours.

Any fires lit during sessions will be logged on the log sheet in the staffroom, to ensure records are kept in the event of complaints from neighbours.

Food Preparation

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating during Forest Schools:

Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink.

Alcohol cleaning soap will be available, as well as running water for washing hands.

All foods are stored in air tight containers, and any refrigerated items will be removed from cold storage no more than 15 minutes before cooking.

Only clean equipment will be used.

Everyone will be aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication and copies of Care Plans will be in the first aid room or School Office.

Food will be cooked correctly, ensuring the correct temperatures and timings are met.

All equipment and waste will be cleared away.

The role of the Forest School Leaders

The Forest School Leader will be trained to Forest School Level 3, and have an up-to-date outdoor first aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.

The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.

The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.

The leader will carry an emergency pack at all times.

The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.

The Forest School leader will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Designated Person Responsible for each Forest School session:

Overall responsibility for Forest School sessions– **Matthew Harder**

(Risk assessments, safety sweep, and essential equipment, rucksack, planning, observations and next steps for learning).

Other adults on site may include class teachers, TAs and parent helpers, but they will not be responsible for supervising the use of tools, or starting and maintaining fires, unless they have sufficient training.

Outdoor learning which follows the holistic and learner-led principles of Forest School may be run by any teachers. Teachers wanting to include tool use in their sessions must be trained by an accredited Forest School leader prior to teaching safe usage with the children.

Our Forest School Site

The site will be maintained by both Forest School Leaders and children. Zones are set out to minimise environmental impact on the site and also for safety. These zones can be found on the Site map.

Assessment

Observations and assessments may be carried out in Forest School sessions, as additional evidence for both SMSC and Curriculum Objectives.

A pupil observation form template is attached as an appendix to this policy, as well as a Skills Progression document for tool use.

Communication

Information is sent home to parents before the start of a series of sessions, and parents are kept informed about when sessions will take place. Neighbours will also be informed.

As of the academic year 2019/20 – forest school sessions will take place every afternoon for different classes.

Questions, comments or complaints can be addressed to Mr Harder, via the school office email.

Forest School Rules

These follow the same 7 key words as used throughout the school.

Respect	- equipment and living things (keeping equipment clean and undamaged/leaving living things in the state in which they were found)
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Unity	- Working together rather than against
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Positivity	- Only kind and encouraging words to be used
Empathy	- having an understanding of the living creatures and plants, and not disturbing or harming them
Creativity	- having an ethos of creativity rather than destruction
Honesty	- admitting and learning from mistakes, and not covering them up.
Perseverance	- having an attitude of resilience, even when tasks are difficult

Clothing Requirements For Forest School Sessions

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session (even adult volunteers):

Woolly hat/sunhat (Seasonal)

Gloves (Seasonal)

Jacket/waterproof coat

Fleece/sweatshirt

Waterproof trousers

Spare socks

Stout shoes/wellies/boots

If children do not have these items, they may still attend a session at the discretion of the Forest School Leader, and with permission from parents.

School waterproofs are also available from the greenhouse.

Toileting considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the Classroom. Any children needing the toilet during the session will use the changing room toilets, removing any muddy clothing before entering the school building.

This Forest School Policy has been written in agreement with the Head Teacher, Staff and Governors of Wisborough Green Primary School. It will be reviewed annually.

Appendices

1. **Risk-benefit assessments**
2. **Pupil observation form**
3. **Skills Progression document**
4. **Fire log sheet**
5. **Volunteer guidelines**
6. **Site Map**