



Fressingfield Primary School

Forest School  
Handbook  
Policy and Procedure  
Document

Statement of Ownership

Policy created August 2021

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Intended Audience – Staff, Volunteers and  
Parents

This document will be reviewed termly.

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## What is Forest School?

The Forest School Association

(<https://forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/> ) states that Forest School is:

“Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting. Forest School has a developmental ethos shared by thousands of trained practitioners around the world, who are constantly developing their learning styles and skills to support new and imaginative learners. Its roots reach back to the open-air culture, friluftsliv, or free air life, seen as a way of life in Scandinavia where Forest School began. It arrived in the UK in 1993 and has grown from strength to strength since then. The process helps and facilitates more than knowledge-gathering, it helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to try stuff out and take risks. Forest School inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of how a learner fits within it. Our approach to risk means that learners constantly expand on their abilities by solving real-world issues, building self-belief and resilience. We believe that risk is more than just potential for physical harm, but a more holistic thing, there are risks in everything we do, and we grow by overcoming them. Forest School therefore, helps participants to become, healthy, resilient, creative and independent learners.”

## The Forest School Ethos and Principles

The Forest School principles were reviewed and developed in 2011 into the principles that we are familiar with today. Those principles are:

- Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions
- It takes place in a woodland or natural environment
- Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes
- It aims to promote the holistic development of all involved
- Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks
- It is run by qualified Forest School practitioners

(What is Forest School? [Forest School Association] Last accessed 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021).

## Our Mission Statement

Our Forest School mission statement links closely with our school vision 'learning to bring out the best in everyone'. Forest Schools allows our children to become lifelong independent learners building on their resilience, confidence and social skills. Every child will succeed through stimulating, hands on

experiences. Our vision is for them to become environmentally aware and responsible.

## What We Offer Your Child

Our Forest School sessions will be planned and based on the individual needs and interests of the group involved. All Forest School leaders will be qualified and therefore offer a high quality learning experience. Earlier sessions will focus on safety aspects such as rules and boundaries so the group becomes confident and comfortable in their setting. Later sessions will develop skills, encourage nature connection and develop relationships within the group.

## Adult Supporters

The role of a Forest School leader is to provide an environment which allows children to meet risks and challenges which are appropriate to their age and stage of development. We will support and encourage the children to reach their full potential and develop a meaningful connection with nature. We plan flexible sessions which respond to the children's needs and interests.

## Who will be leading the Forest School sessions?

Miss Adamson and Mrs Bishop will lead the sessions and are Level 3 Forest School trained.

## Where will Forest School take place?

Forest School will take place on the school field within the woodland area at the top of the field. There is also a pond area and woodland area next to the pond where activities can also take place.

# Our Forest School Code of Conduct

## Boundaries

The children will be made aware of how far they can explore before the sessions begin. When we cannot see the children we will call “1,2,3 where are you?” and the children will reply with “1,2,3 I’m here”. This will be introduced in a game at the beginning of the sessions to establish clear boundaries.

## Toileting

Children will always use the toilet before the session starts and if they need the toilet during the session, they will be able to use the class toilets. Depending on their age, they will be accompanied by an adult and will use the toilets next to the classroom where another adult will be working. If another adult is not working in the classroom attached to the toilets, children will be accompanied by 2 adults. Children will only be accompanied by an adult who is DBS checked – this will usually be a permanent teaching assistant. Adults will not go into the toilets but wait outside in the corridor area where they can be seen by another member of staff.

## Tree Climbing

We encourage and support children who want to tree climb to do so in a safe way. We conduct dynamic risk assessments if a child asks to climb a tree. This involves looking on the ground for hazards (for example sharp objects) and checking the strength of the tree's branches. To begin with, we use the rule that you can climb up to your own height. However, as the children become more confident, they will be allowed to climb higher.

## Digging

There will be a specific area designated for digging and the children will be shown how to look after the tools. Children will be encouraged to look out for insects while digging and respect their habitats.

## Eating and Drinking

Children will be taught not to eat anything found in our woodland area. If we bring snacks outside, children will wash their hands using the outside taps before eating them.

## Rope and String Use

Children will be encouraged to use rope and string during their sessions. However, we will explain beforehand that they are not allowed to tie up other children or themselves. All rope and string will be collected at the end of the session.

## Carrying and Transport

The children will be encouraged to lift, drag or roll objects either by hand or using ropes. The children will be taught the correct way to lift heavier objects which will be modelled by an adult. If the object is too heavy, more than one person will carry the object. If the stick is longer than the child's arm, they will be encouraged to drag it behind them ensuring the end which they are holding is below their waist.

## Fire Circle

There will be a designated fire circle in our Forest School area. Children must be seated on logs and only 4 people will be allowed in the fire circle at a time. Children must be invited into the fire circle by an adult and must walk around the fire circle to find their seat. There will be a designated entrance and exit to the fire circle. The fire will never be left unattended until it is extinguished. When tending the fire, you have to be in the respect position and use a fire glove when feeding the fire.

## Collecting Wood

Wood can only be collected from the ground level of our woodland area. Branches may be cut from trees on occasions to make a craft item.

## Tool Use

As soon as we believe that the children are settled and they are able to follow safety instructions, the children will be able to use tools within their learning. Tools will be taught on a 1:1 or 1:2 basis depending on age and ability. Tools will only be given out for a purpose and adults will model safe and correct use, transportation and storage. All activities using tools will have detailed Risk-Benefit Assessments and all tools will have a tool procedure.

## Playing with Stones and Sticks

We encourage children to use natural resources for a variety of purposes such as artwork and games. If a child wants to throw stones or sticks for the purpose of a game or way of exploring, we use the phrase “throw into a space”. This allows us to look after ourselves, each other and our woodland. Children are reminded not to run with heavy stones or sticks.

## Leaving the Site

We always aim to leave the site in the way we've found it. This links in with our fundamental rule to look after our woodland.

## Sun Exposure in Summer Months

During summer months we understand the importance of not exposing the children to too much sunlight. Therefore, we aim to spend as much time as possible in our shaded areas. We also ask that parents supply their child with a sun hat and ensure they come into school with sun cream on. We will also ensure that children can access their water bottles during the session.

## High Winds

High winds are monitored in all seasons and risk level is assessed. If the wind is too strong, sessions will be cancelled.

## Allergies, Medication and Medical Needs

When children join the school, parents inform the school of any allergies. This information is stored in a locked filing cabinet in the school office. All staff helping with Forest School sessions will have access to the child/adult's medical needs. This information will also be used for our Forest School sessions.

Therefore, all snacks provided will meet all children's food needs. Children will also be told not to eat things that they find around our woodland area. Emergency medication will be carried in the emergency bag and put back at the end of the day. All adults will know where medication is stored during and after Forest School sessions. The Forest School leader will provide first aid/ medication when necessary.

## Unwell Children

If a child becomes unwell, we will follow the same procedure used in school.

## Volunteers

We welcome any volunteers who would like to join us at our Forest School sessions and all volunteers are valued and appreciated. Volunteers help us to keep the adult to child ratio high. We will discuss the roles and responsibilities of each adult in the group before each session. Anyone who would like to become a volunteer can let us know via the school office. Regular volunteers will have a DBS check.

## Staff and Helpers

All adults at Forest School will be aware of the Forest School Principles. The Forest School leader will be responsible for

ensuring the assistant and helpers have read and signed the handbook, and answer any questions they may have. They will make sure everyone is aware of their role and any procedures and make it clear what is expected. The FS Leaders have had Forest School First Aid training so will be responsible for all first aid. However, for minor incidents, the Forest School assistant who has first aid training will be able to deal with those if appropriate. The FSL will be responsible for the planning of sessions, but the contribution from the other adults, regarding any observations, will help with that planning.

The Forest School assistant will assist the FSL with getting equipment, materials and any preparation and setting up needed. They will be asked to observe and feed back to the FSL at the end of each session to help with future planning. The FS assistant may be asked to supervise the use of tools.

Helpers will be asked to accompany children to wash hands and generally supervise while not intervening with their play, unless they have been asked to by the children. They will be asked for any feedback at the end of the session.

All adults are there to keep the children safe and to facilitate their learning without being intrusive.

All adults and children will work together at the end of the session to make sure the site is left tidy.

## Clothing Guide and PPE

In Forest Schools, we use the well-known motto “there’s no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing”.

- **Layers** are the best way to stay warm. Please don’t worry about putting too many layers on your child as we can always remove layers but it can be very difficult for them to warm up once they’re cold.
- **Waterproof trousers** help to keep the children warm and dry but if you don’t have any, we do have some spare waterproof trousers in school. However, a **waterproof coat** is essential.
- **Trousers** are essential for protection and in colder weather, you may wish to put leggings/tights underneath trousers.
- **Warm socks** are essential in winter months, however in summer months, standard socks should be warm enough.
- **Warm hat** will be needed in colder months.

- **Gloves** will help to keep your child warm in colder months. Waterproof gloves would be better to keep your child warm.
- **Welly boots or walking boots** are essential in all seasons and your child will need secure, strong footwear for protection.
- **Long sleeve tops** are essential in all seasons to protect your child from insect bites, stinging nettles and thorns.
- **Sunhats and sun cream** are required in warm weather. Please put sun cream on your child before school as we cannot apply sun cream to your child.

PPE will be provided for specific activities. This will include:

- Rigger gloves for 'helping hand' when using a tool or on both hands for moving timber
- Fire proof gloves for feeding fire
- Hard hats and steel toe cap boots for tree thinning and coppicing.
- Goggles if sawing is likely to produce a lot of sawdust.  
Elastic bands for tying hair back.

## Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Our Forest School provides equal opportunities for all regardless of ethnicity, religion, disability, age, gender, attainment or background. We will adapt session so that everyone can participate and we want to create an environment where every individual feels valued. Where possible, we will keep spare waterproof and warm clothing to ensure everyone can take part throughout all weather conditions.

## Safeguarding

All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment where children can learn. All staff have the responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Alternative Safeguarding Lead. If any staff member or volunteer has a concern, it is essential to follow the steps below:

- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Accept what is being said
- Allow the child/young person to talk freely – do not interrupt or put words in the child/young person's mouth
- Only ask questions when necessary to clarify, do not investigate or ask leading questions

- Reassure the child, but don't make promises which it might not be possible to keep
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Emphasise that it was the right thing to tell someone
- Reassure them that what has happened is not their fault
- Do not criticise the perpetrator
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told
- Make a written record, which should be signed and include the time, date and your position in school
- Do not include your opinion without stating it is your opinion
- Pass the information to the DSL or alternate without delay (Mark Taylor DSL or Jeremy Leicester alternate DSL)
- Consider seeking support for yourself and discuss this with the DSL as dealing with a disclosure can be distressing.

Safeguarding forms can be found in the staff room hanging on the wall.

## Risk Management

A site risk assessment will be carried out seasonally and daily site checks will occur before each session. Furthermore, risk benefit assessments will be in place for before any new activity takes place which may require it. Our risk benefit assessments look at hazards in comparison to benefits. We compare the likelihood/severity of the associated risks and then we put

control actions in place. Our risk assessments are part of the appendix in our handbook. Miss Adamson and Mrs Bishop are responsible for ensuring the correct risk assessments are in place.

## Health and Safety

The health and safety of all of the participants in our Forest Schools is central to everything that we do. We encourage the children to take an active part in our dynamic risk assessments and use language which helps children to risk assess. We want children to take measured risks appropriate for their development and to carefully consider any repercussions of their actions.

Miss Adamson and Mrs Bishop are both Level 3 Emergency Outdoor First Aid trained and are completing their Level 3 Forest School Leader training. Either Miss Adamson or Mrs Bishop will be present at every Forest School session. Site risk assessments will be carried out seasonally and site checks will be completed before every Forest School session. Risk benefit assessments are completed for every activity which needs one and dynamic risk benefit assessments are completed throughout Forest School sessions. If any incidents occur during our Forest School sessions, the individual will be treated by a qualified first aider and accident forms will be completed in the

same way they're completed during a regular school day. The contents of the first aid kit are maintained by the Forest School leader.

Any high risk activities are completed in controlled conditions under close supervision. These activities are only available to the children when we believe that they have a good understanding of the associated risks. Children are encouraged and supported at managing risks themselves to support them to becoming lifelong learners, learning skills which they can use in real life situations.

## Emergency and First Aid

An Emergency bag will be taken with the group for each session and placed in a prominent place for all to see. This will contain a First Aid Kit, a sealed bottle of water, Accidents Forms and pen, a mobile phone, whistle, spare clothes and an Emergency Action Plan. For minor injuries the designated first aider will deal with the casualty and complete the standard accident form, a copy of which will be sent home at the end of the day. In case of a serious injury, we will follow the Emergency Action Plan – See Appendix

### **First Aid Kit Contents**

7 x Dressings – variety of sizes

- 3 x Triangular bandages
- 3 x Eye dressings
- 60 x Plasters – variety of sizes
- 30 x Sterile wipes
- 2 x Tape
- 2 x Bandages
- 3 x Finger dressings
- 2 x Burn dressings
- 1 x Skin closures (pack of 10)
- 10 x Eye washes
- 1 x Face shield
- 10 x Pairs of medical gloves
- 2 x Foil blankets
- 1 x Tough cut scissors
- 1 x Tweezer

Waste bags

If there is anyone who carries an Epi pen, we will keep that in the emergency bag.

It will be the responsibility of the FSL to keep the First Aid Kit topped up and in date.

## Missing Child

If you believe a child may have gone missing, gather the group by calling 1,2,3 where are you, then take the register/head count. FSL and FS Assistant will search the vicinity while the third adult supervises the rest of the group in the circle. If the missing child is not found, the FSL will go into school to alert and make calls to police and parents. The other adults will accompany the rest of the group into their classroom. The Schools Lost Child Procedure will then be followed.

## Unwell Forest School Leader

If the Forest School leader becomes unwell during a session, a member of staff will inform the office and the Emergency Action Plan will be followed. All staff will be aware of the Emergency Action Plan.

## Behaviour Management

During Forest School sessions we follow our school's Behaviour Policy – Golden Rules. In addition to that we will involve the children in setting the boundaries for Forest School to give them ownership of them. However, above all we will follow the 3 principles of learning:

- Look after yourself.
- Look after each other.
- Look after the woodland.

Any child not following the principles will be reminded of them and asked why they are making certain choices. Then together we can work out, in a calm manner, how we can change their behaviour. Explain how their behaviour impacts on others and give them time to reflect. If the behaviour continues, then it may be appropriate for them to choose a different activity. Any behaviour issues will be dealt with by the Forest School Leader and fed back to their class teacher just for their information. Missing Forest School will not be used as a sanction.

## Environmental Consideration

We will aim to make minimum impact on the Forest School area. Children will be asked not to break off any living leaves/twigs/branches, unless given permission for a specific task such as making a craft item. Any shelters made will eventually be dismantled and the site left as before. Any equipment taken to Forest School should be removed at the end of the session.

## Confidentiality

During Forest School sessions we follow our school's Confidentiality policy. The FSL and FS assistant will not discuss personal information about any child. Volunteers will be told not to discuss children outside of school. Records and information for adults and children will be locked away in the school office.

## Photographs and Videos

The school already has a record of permission for photos and videos. This will be checked before any are used. Photos and videos will only be allowed to be taken on school devices. Helpers will be asked not to use their personal devices while at forest school.

## Complaints

If anyone has a complaint about Forest School, then firstly, if appropriate, talk to the Forest School Leader to see if the issue can be resolved. If this isn't possible then Mr. Leicester, Head of School or Mr. Taylor, The Head Teacher. The School's complaints procedure will be followed.

## Pond Dipping

Pond dipping will only take place with a minimum of 3 adults. The school pond will be regularly maintained and checked for stinging nettles and thistles. The depth will be kept at a maximum depth of 75cms. The pond is fully fenced and locked when not in use. There is a wooden platform with no obstructions to use when pond dipping. For more details refer to the Pond Dipping risk assessment.

## How We Keep Safe

We always follow the 'Three things to remember':

1. Look after yourself
2. Look after each other
3. Look after the woodland

## Cancellation Policy

In the event of the Forest School leader being unwell, if the session cannot be covered, parents and staff will be informed via email as soon as possible. If the weather (high winds, ice or thunderstorms) makes the Forest School session unsafe to proceed, parents and staff will be informed as soon as possible. All steps will be taken to inform parents before the school day begins.

## Insurance

The school's insurance will cover any activities during Forest School sessions on our school site.

## Daily Operating Procedure

### Before the session

FSL – register and checking staff, risk assessments

FSA – Daily site check, equipment and tool check

FSL/ FSA – Set up site together

### During the session

FSL – Oversees FS session, head count, ensure basic needs are being met, first aid

FSA – Supporting activities

FSL/FSA - Ongoing risk assessments

### After the session

FSL – Head count, evaluation for next session (discuss with FSA)

FSA – Tool check

FSL/FSA – Tidy site, return FS equipment and emergency bag

## References

Nettleworth School

<https://www.nettleworth.durham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2018/04/Forest-School-Handbook-2018.pdf> Last Accessed: 09.09.21

Nature of Learning Forest School

<https://natureoflearning.co.uk/Nature-of-learning-Forest-School-Handbook.pdf> Last Accessed: 09.09.21

Forest School Association

<https://forestschoolassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/> Last Accessed: 09.09.21