



Lower Farm School

Inspiring excellence through learning



Forest School Handbook



Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a woodland environment. The Forest Sessions will have a positive impact on your child in the following areas:

Motivation and Concentration

A keenness to participate in exploratory learning and play activities, an ability to focus on specific tasks for extended periods of time.

Social Skills

Increased awareness of the consequences of their actions on other people and increased ability to work co-operatively.

Confidence

Increased self-confidence and self belief from being given the freedom and time and space to learn, grow and demonstrate independence.

Language and Communication

More sophisticated written and spoken language prompted by sensory experiences at Forest School

Physical Skills

Improved stamina and gross motor skills through free and easy movement, improved fine motor skills by making things.

Knowledge and Understanding

Increased respect for the environment, interest in natural surroundings, identify flora and fauna and the changing seasons.

Where will our Forest School sessions be run?

Forest School sessions will be run on our school site in our forest area behind the Astroturf. We have specially designed and cleared the area with help from a specialist Forest School Trainer and parents from our school, for the children to have access.

Who will lead the sessions?

The sessions will be lead by either Penny Hornby or Clare Abercrombie who are both Teaching Assistants within our school. They are fully trained to level 3 standard in Forest Schools and both hold and ITC first aid qualification.

Responsibilities of the Forest Schools Leaders

We Will:

- Create a safe, fun, exciting working environment for your child.
- Provide children with new activities that they are not able to experience within a classroom environment.
- Provide tools and ensure the children know how to use them safely and ensure they are stored and cleaned correctly at the end of each session.
- Complete a sweep of the area prior to each session ensuring the area is safe and free from hazards.
- Amend policies accordingly.
- Keep parents/carers informed of any changes made throughout the year.

Please contact the school office if you wish to contact us about Forest Schools.

A typical Forest School session

Children will get changed into their outdoor clothing/footwear, depending on the weather. We have a full range of waterproof clothing available so you do not have to worry about providing this. When we are ready, we will then make our way to the forest area. We will then:

- Sit under the shelter and talk about the 3 rules of Forest School and remind each other of the forest boundaries. I will raise any specific safety points for the session.
- Play a game, usually something to warm us up and re-familiarise us with the forest area.
- The weekly task. This could be anything ranging from a craft activity, a scavenger hunt, tool work or a fire.
- Reflection activity: Children can talk about what they have achieved during the session, they can look at other children's work and input what they would like to do in future sessions.
- Leave the forest area ensuring it is tidy and return to school.

Policies

Throughout the Forest School sessions, Lower Farm Primary School policies will be adhered to at all times. The following policies will also apply which relate directly to Forest School.

Forest School Site Policy

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the area and the children who are attending the sessions. The Forest School Leader will do a visual sweep of the area before the start of each session checking the safety. If at any time during the session the Forest School Leader or supporting adult notices anything that may be of harm, the following actions will take place:

- Forest School Leader will round up all of the children.
- Lead the children back in to school.
- Contact the relevant organisation if required.
- Forest School Leader to do a site sweep before returning to the area with the children.

Clothing Policy

The children are required to wear sensible clothing to protect them from the weather and the forest environment. We have all weather suits that will protect the children from the weather but we cannot guarantee that children's clothing will not get dirty.

Children should wear layers of clothing that can easily be removed in case they become too warm.

Toileting Policy

Children will be advised to visit the toilet before we go out to the forest environment. If a child needs to go to the toilet during the session, they will be allowed to go. The supporting adult may escort the child to the toilet, depending on the child's needs.

Poor Weather and Shelter Policy

Forest School sessions will take place in all kinds of weather conditions with only a few exceptions:

- In wet or cold conditions, temporary shelters will be erected to provide comfort for the children.
- In cases of extreme weather such as strong winds or very low temperatures.

Hand Tool Policy

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest Schools as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help develop their self confidence. To enable this:

- Children will only be able to use a hand tool when they have been taught by the Forest School leader how to safely handle and use one.
- All children must work within a safe working distance of 2 arms and a tool length apart from the next person.
- Tools will be checked and maintained on a regular basis by the Forest School Leader.
- All children will be required to wear safety gloves on the correct hand when using the tool.
- Running whilst holding tools is forbidden.
- Inappropriate and dangerous use of tools will result in exclusion from the Forest School group.

Fire Safety Policy

Fires and the use of a Kelly Kettle are an important part of Forest Schools and will be used in many sessions. When a session involves fire building, the fire will be contained within a fire pit bordered by logs to contain the fire. When using a Kelly kettle the fire is contained. Children will follow the safety guidelines of being at least 1.5 metres away from the fire unless they are assisting with the fire and wearing protective fire gauntlets. Correct safety equipment will be on site at all times, this will consist of:

- Water
- Fire blanket
- Fire gauntlets
- First Aid kit

Children must adhere to the strict rules of fire sessions and if any dangerous or unacceptable behaviour is displayed, they will be excluded from the group.

The Forest School will carefully extinguish the fire at the end of the session by separating the logs and dousing the wood with water to ensure the fire cannot continue to burn.

A further 3 Additional Policies that are also relevant to Forest Schools

Behaviour Policy

The children who are attending the Forest School sessions are still expected to follow the schools behaviour policy. This consistent approach will ensure that all sessions occur with no incidents, if any arise, they are dealt with using the schools usual procedures.

Safeguarding Policy

The Forest School Leader and any supporting adult will deal with any safeguarding issues that arise during a Forest School session by following the Safeguarding policy.

Anti-Bullying Policy

We treat bullying very seriously at Lower Farm School and it will not be tolerated in any part of the school, Forest School included.

Emergency Action Plan

If during a Forest School session there is an emergency, the following action will be taken:

If a child is injured:

- All children will be asked to stop what they are doing and sit in a safe area.
- The Forest School Leader will carry out first aid and monitor the casualty.
- The Forest School Leader or supporting adult will make the school aware of the incident and ask the Head teacher to contact the emergency services and parents/carers if required.
- The supporting adult or member of staff sent to area from school will take the other children back into school.
- The Forest School Leader will stay with the casualty, dealing with the injury following first aid training accordingly. Either return to school environment and wait for parents/carers or stay in forest environment, waiting for emergency services, depending on nature of the injury.

If an adult is injured:

- All children will be asked to stop what they are doing and sit in a safe area.
- The Forest School Leader will carry out first aid and monitor the casualty.
- The Forest School leader will contact the school office using mobile phone and ask the Head Teacher to contact the emergency services if required.
- The Forest School Leader will ask for a member of staff to come to forest area to collect the children.
- The Forest School Leader will stay with the casualty, dealing with the injury following first aid training accordingly. Either return to school environment and wait for parents/carers or stay in forest environment, waiting for emergency services, depending on nature of the injury.

If the Forest School Leader is injured:

- All children will be asked to stop what they are doing and sit in a safe area.
- The supporting member of staff to contact the school office using a mobile phone to ask the Head Teacher to contact the emergency services if required.
- The supporting adult to ask for a member of staff with first aid training to assist with first aid and for another member of staff to take the children back in to school.
- Supporting adult or first aid trained staff to stay with Forest School Leader until emergency services arrive.