

Surfleet Primary School

Forest School Policy



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Introduction

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.

This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. The child is never put in a position where he/she will fail so success is attained. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

What is Forest School?

Forest School England defines Forest School as:

‘- an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults, regular opportunities to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland environment.’

Pupils engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers. Pupils will work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world. The Forest School concept originates in Denmark, originally aimed at pre-school children, where it was found that children who had attended Forest School then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to

work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. These foundations helped them to raise their academic achievements.

A Forest School encourages pupils to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- discover how they learn best
- pursue knowledge that interests them
- learn how to manage failures
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- regularly experience achievement and success
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- become more motivated
- improve their concentration skills

Purpose/Aims of Forest School

By producing and adopting this policy for Forest School, we aim to give all children and practitioners a collective insight into the ethos of Forest School. Forest School builds on a pupil's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning.

The Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for pupils to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others, to learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults and develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety. The setting allows pupils to engage with the natural environment, offering a unique teaching and learning experience in an ever changing landscape.




Through regular Forest School sessions, we aim to continue to build on emotional intelligence, for the pupil to be more self-aware, to be able to identify and manage emotions independently, be emotionally resilient and to be empathic towards others. Raising their self-esteem will enable more effective learning as they take ownership of their learning, confident to have a go and learn from their mistakes. They will hopefully achieve 'economic wellbeing' and ultimately be happy, secure, fulfilled, accountable, responsible citizens contributing to the community.


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 the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the forest area around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and careful reference to our Woodland Management Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest School. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused and an alternative area will be found and risk assessed if necessary.

Activity	Impact	Mitigation
Collecting wood 	Dead wood is important to any woodland ecology as it has a multitude of uses, from homes for mini beasts to beds for fungi, so a lack of it is bad for any woodland habitat.	Limit the frequency of fires and evaluate the amount of dry, dead wood before having a fire. Collect only the minimum amount required for any given fire. Reserve specific areas for dead wood conservation.
Fires 	Changes in soil chemistry can lead to increases in PH levels, carbon, phosphorous, etc. which can be harmful to some plants, whilst other essential nutrients may be depleted.	Designate fixed locations for fires on parts of the site that aren't particularly ecologically interesting or unique. If possible, dispose of ash into patches of nettles or hedgerow.
Cooking 	Food waste may attract animals to the site or increase numbers of certain species, potentially leading to adverse changes in	Inform children of these impacts and provide a rubbish bag for food waste, which can be removed from the site at the end of the session.

	biodiversity.	
Shelter building	Damage to trees	Restrict these activities to suitable trees that will tolerate them.
Collecting Natural Materials 	Damage to plants - some plants are far more sensitive to losing their leaves or flowers than others and different seasons affect this too.	Inform groups as to which types of plants are best to pick, if any. Ensure leaves or flowers are taken from fallen parts where possible. Limit the frequency of this type of activity. Leave plants unpicked whenever picking is not necessary.

Care of flora and fauna

We are aware that we are visitors to the 'woodland' and that we have a responsibility to care for the flora and fauna that are the natural inhabitants. We will be respectful of the nests and homes of the woodland creatures – ensuring that we do not go near these if their location is known. The Forest School leader may put protective barriers around these areas. All participants will be informed of their locations. Pupils and staff will inform the Forest School leader if any are found during the session. When taking part in activities pupils will be taught to use only wood and plants that have fallen from the trees and shrubs (unless permission has been given to harvest materials). Picking

leaves or pulling branches from plants is actively discouraged. Staff will role model good practice at all times.

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 assessments carried out for Forest School are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures at Forest School are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

Surfleet Primary School Policies and Forest School

Staff attending Forest School sessions should be familiar with the following school policies:

- *Health and Safety Policy
- *First Aid policy,
- *Risk Assessment Policy and Risk Assessments particular to FS

*Asthma Policy if asthmatics are attending sessions

*Food Policy

*Safeguarding Policy

*Equality & Inclusion Policy

*Behaviour Policy

Paper copies are kept in the Forest School Coordinator's File.

Particular attention is paid to the following areas. All of the above policies are available on the Surfleet School website:

<https://www.surfleet.lincs.sch.uk/information/policies-and-procedures/>

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 held in the Forest School Coordinator's File in school. The Forest School Leader has an up-to-date certificate in First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangement. All 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 with the Forest School Leader and a mobile phone 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 open fire risk assessment.

Safeguarding

Forest School sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, on some occasions is supported by members of staff and parent volunteers. Everyone involved in FS 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. All Surfleet staff and regular volunteers have current DBS checks. Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officer 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 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

At Forest School we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Surfleet. 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 and with the Forest School Leader.

Emergency Action Plan

This EAP (Emergency Action Plan) is kept in the top of the Forest School bag at all times.

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff (FSL or support staff) would direct the emergency services to the casualty, Anett Baxter as First Aider, would attend to the casualty until the Emergency Services arrive. The casualty would be accompanied to hospital by a member of school staff. The support staff would oversee the rest of the group are counted and prepared to return to school. The school office would be informed after dialling the Emergency Services and assistance to return back to school requested if necessary. The adult accompanying the casualty would return to school once the child was in the care of their parents/carers. In the event of an

adult needing emergency attention it must be judged whether they need to be accompanied or support may be required. Decisions taken must ensure the safety of the children within the group and accompanying adults.

In the event of the Forest School Leader needing emergency assistance it would be expected for the support staff to return the children to school and another adult would stay with the casualty.

Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school.

Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

In the event of a fire out of hand, children to be gathered using the emergency calling sound and led to the nearby assembly point as far away from the fire as possible. Emergency services and school office would be contacted.

Emergency Services 999

School Office 680373

Location of Forest School Site:

Surfleet Primary School Station Road Surfleet Lincolnshire PE11 4DB

OS grid reference TF251282

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest School site Assessment
- Forest School sessions: including Sensory Activities,
- Tool use
- Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the school office and in the Forest School Leader's File.

Safety Site 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. The safety sweep will be recorded on a safety sweep book and kept in the Forest School file.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at 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.

-Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'. (These can be found in the Forest School Leader's File).

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

- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest School Leader feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- It is not expected for any other adult attending Forest School to use tools with children, only the Forest School Leader.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag/trolley and locked away 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.

Potato peelers (to practice the action of scraping a blade away from themselves to peel vegetables etc.) - The Forest School leader will demonstrate a safe seated position and the scraping action away from the body using the dominant hand. The other hand to be placed on the stick with a protective glove. These tools can be supervised on a 1:1 basis with other adults.

Fixed blade knives (for whittling sticks) - The Forest School leader will decide if the individual pupil is ready for using this tool. The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with pupils on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the 3 point safety stance or safe seated position and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user, safely removing the sheath and holding handle with the dominant hand. The other hand manipulates the stick above the whittling area, keeping the knife work safely away from the body. The Forest School leader

demonstrates the scraping technique and closely supervises the pupil whilst using the tool. Knives must be re sheathed and returned to the secure container immediately after use. Protective glove to be worn on the hand holding the wood

Bow saw - The Forest School leader will decide if the individual pupil is ready for using this tool. The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with pupils on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the safe kneeling stance and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user. The Forest School leader will demonstrate the sawing technique with the blade cover on showing the pupils how to hold the tool safely in the knuckle grip and how to hold the wood securely on the A frame with the other hand to keep it safe from the blade. Depending on the age and ability of the pupil, the leader may take the opposite end of the bow saw to assist the pupil with the sawing motion, each taking turns to push. It may be suggested that the pupil holds the saw with both hands and another adult/pupil helps to support the wood at a safe distance. The Forest School leader closely supervises the pupil whilst using the tool. The Bow saw must be re sheathed and returned to the secure container immediately after use.

Hand drill (for drilling holes into wood for craft purposes) - The Forest School leader will decide if the individual pupil is ready for using this tool.

The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with pupils on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the 3 point safety stance and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user. The Forest School leader will demonstrate the drilling technique on an appropriate wood block

showing the children how to hold the tool safely with both hands, keeping vertical, and how to wedge the wood securely on the block. The Forest School leader closely supervises the pupil whilst using the tool. The hand drill must be returned to the secure container immediately after use.

Gimlets (for small holes) - The Forest School leader will decide if the individual pupil is ready for using this tool. The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with pupils on a 1:1 basis. The Forest School leader will demonstrate the technique on an appropriate wood block showing the pupils how to hold the tool safely, keeping vertical, and how to support the wood securely. The Forest School leader will closely supervise the pupil whilst using the tool. The gimlet must be returned to the secure container immediately after use.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School

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

Children must have a secure knowledge of fire circle safety:

Stand behind the circle

Sit down on log

You are allowed to step in the fire circle if you are invited in.

Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle

otherwise. In addition to the other resources, we will take a large container full of water.

When lighting a fire:

-Only a trained Forest School Leader Mrs Anett Baxter will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.

-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 flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.

-While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere but the fire will not be left unattended by the FSL.

-The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.

-NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

To consider the open fire risk assessment when lighting fire.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

-Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.

-All foods are stored in containers or bags.

-Only clean equipment is used.

-Everyone is 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 FS Sack

-Food will be cooked correctly.

-All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the Forest School Leader

-The Forest School Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date 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 first aid 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.

Communication

Information is sent home to parents before the start of a series of sessions. Parents are also notified by a Forest School leaflet with further details about Forest School. There is also a display board to celebrate achievement at Forest School.

Forest School Principles and Surfleet Rules

Forest Schools have 6 key principles:

1. Forest School is a long term, repetitive learning process that uses a natural outdoor space.

It is a specific ethos of learning that focuses on processes rather than products and allows learners time and space to develop at their own rate.

Learners develop a strong sense of space through repeated contact with the natural world (ideally woodland, but not always) throughout the year and in all weathers.

2. Forest School empowers children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

The ethos encourages child-led learning and learning through play. Choice increases enjoyment, participation and motivation. Children are set up to achieve and supported to take appropriate risks through developing trust in themselves and in others.

3. Forest School promotes holistic, individualised learning and development.

It is for all ages and abilities and its ethos is fully inclusive. It is most effective in smaller than class size groups (12-16 mainstream children, fewer for those with specific needs) with a high adult to child ratio. The natural environment provides stimulus for all senses, all areas of development and all learning styles; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

4. Forest School encourages emotional growth, self-esteem, confidence and independence.

It gives learners the time and space to be themselves, find peace and

communicate with others in a safe and caring environment. Emotional literacy is actively practiced by adults and children within a Forest School.

5. Forest School is facilitated by qualified Level 3 Forest School Practitioners.

Receiving a nationally recognised Level 3 qualification in Forest School is essential for practitioners to link theory to practice and create the Forest School ethos. Training ensures practitioners provide safe, skilled and appropriate learning experiences. Practitioners build a trusting relationship and make careful observations of the group to then provide well planned, individualised support for each learner.

6. Forest School instils a deep respect and awareness for the natural world and reconnects participants to their environment.

The repetitive ethos builds a deep, instinctual connection to the natural space and reconnects all to their ancient heritage. Being in nature allows learners to observe real life, witness cause and effect and consider our roles and responsibilities towards it.

Surfleet rules:

- Keep your hands away from your mouth
- Leave things to grow
- Gather together for the calling sound
- Keep within the set boundaries

Routines and Procedures For Forest School

Preparation - The Forest School Leader Anett Baxter will do a sweep of the site prior to the weekly sessions.

A Baxter will check the Forest sack/bag contains all essential items. The Emergency Action Plan is kept in the top of the Forest sack and all Adults are aware of this. First Aid kit, inhalers, wipes are kept in the Forest sack/bag. The tool bag, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate. The FS Leader will carry the rucksack/bag to the site. Waterproofs will be taken to the classroom prior to session. Spare wellies are kept in the shed.

Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs. FS safety rules will be shared with the group. Children will put wellies on the outside the classroom door and walk in single file to the site.

During the session children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, it also caters for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. On some occasions they also learn how to light fires safely. The children learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools. This is a tightly supervised activity on a 1:1 ratio of adult to children. It is introduced gradually in small steps. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment. Back at school children will remove wellies outdoors before entering the classroom.

After the session all equipment will be cleaned and stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and folded. Flasks and water containers will be emptied and cleaned out. Tools (if taken) will be

cleaned and locked away in the FS shed. The essential equipment Forest sack/bag will be put away and any items used replaced.

Cancelling Forest School

FS may need to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds, or blizzards. Adapted classroom activities will take place instead.

Description	Mean Wind Speed	Appearance of Wind Effects		
		<i>On a Tree</i>	<i>On Land</i>	
Calm	< 1 knot < 1 km/h	Still	Smoke rises vertically	
Light Air	1 – 3 knots 1 – 5 km/h		Smoke drifts, wind vanes are still	
Light	4 – 6 knots 6 – 11 km/h	Leaves rustle	Wind felt on face, vanes begin to move	
Gentle	7 – 10 knots 12 – 19 km/h	Leaves and small twigs move	Flags flap	
Moderate	11 – 16 knots 20 – 28 km/h	Small branches move	Dust and loose paper lifted	
Fresh	17 – 21 knots 29 – 38 km/h	Small trees in leaf begin to sway	Flags fully extended	
Strong	22 – 27 knots 38 – 49 km/h	Larger branches shake	Whistling in wires, umbrellas become difficult to use	

Beaufort Wind Force Scale

Essential Equipment Needed at Forest School sessions

A rucksack/bag – The Forest Sack/bag - containing the following essential items will always accompany the group:

- EAP (Emergency Action Plan)
- Mobile phone
- Medical Care Plans
- Newspaper
- Wet wipes
- First Aid Kit
- Inhalers
- Carry bag for dirty / wet items

Clothing Requirements For Forest School

The Forest School leader will assess each activity and decide on the P.P.E needed for the activity.

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session (even adult volunteers) depending on the seasons.

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt/long sleeve top
- Waterproof trousers

-wellies/boots

Toileting considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the Classroom. There is a toilet break in the middle of the session if necessary for all children.

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

Completed: March 2018

Review date: March 2019