

Sherburn Primary School

Forest School Policy



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The outdoors is a great learning resource, which can be used to complement and extend the indoor curriculum. It is a flexible and useful resource particularly suited to active learners. The outdoors provides excellent opportunities for collaborative group work, learning through questioning, potential for authentic practical work and the perfect context for engaging in cross-curricular projects.

Aims of Forest School at Sherburn Primary

We aim to give all children and practitioners a collective insight into the ethos of Forest School.

Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest school learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

- develop self-esteem
- develop self-confidence
- form positive relationships with others
- develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others
- learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults
- develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.

Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environmental changes. Appropriate clothing will be worn.

The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development, all in the guise of play.

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 woodland around them.

Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used, promoting environmental awareness and care for our environment. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported. The outdoor area will be developed and maintained to create woodland, ensuring the survival of native flora and fauna. New flora will be introduced and activities to create areas for fauna will continue this development. We will remove all litter and debris we take into the woodland and have regular litter picks to remove other refuse which is in the area. We will be caring towards our neighbours and try to minimise the amount of smoke and noise produced. Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas

of the woodland. Branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries for people entering the woodland unsupervised (without the Forest School Leader); they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored for use in dens or as fire wood.

During the winter months large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them. A hedgerow will be introduced around the edge of the woodland and maintained to encourage small wildlife to live in the woods.

Implementation

Risk assessments, good practice, Forest School activities, rules for tools and fire etc. can all be found within the Forest School Handbook which contains everything you need to know about our Forest School sessions, for example, procedures, risk assessments, environmental impacts etc. A copy of the Forest School Handbook is taken outdoors on each visit; this contains vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Planning through the seasons

An essential resource when planning for outdoor learning is the seasons. They provide an ever-changing context for a broad range of exciting hands-on experiences that can help children discover the world around them in the early year and in key stage 2 provide the perfect context for inspiring cross-curricular projects. See Appendix 2 for some ideas to help you deliver the curriculum outside and to engage children in their learning whatever the weather.

Equality and Diversity

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race or culture. Sherburn Village Primary School has a Special Educational Needs Policy and an Equality and Diversity Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

Health and Safety

Forest School sessions, by their nature, encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play. Ratios within the woodland area remain the same as indoors as we are still on the school premises, although teachers may arrange for additional adult supervision dependent on the activity. Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. Dynamic risk assessments will be in place to cover other eventualities.

The Group Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. The school has a Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy etc. to enhance aspects of health and safety.

We recognise that raising awareness of the woodland environment increases children's interest in edible berries and fruits which may be found outside. There is also the possibility that by promoting the correct ingestion of berries and/or fruit in Forest School sessions may lead to incorrect identification by children when out of school.

See appendix 1 for forest school eating policy. Also guidance is taken from School's Healthy Eating and DT Policies.

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives)
- Open Fire
- Rope and string
- Shelter building
- Collecting natural materials

First Aid

At least 1 member of staff present must be a qualified pediatric first aider and will administer the care needed and a member of staff should have access to a mobile phone. In the event of an incident ensure the safety of all other children within the group and the possible need to evacuate them indoors. Seek emergency help if needed. There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school.

If an accident occurs and results in an injury parents will be informed and accident report forms will be completed. Emergency procedures are within the Forest School Sessions handbook, which is taken into the woodland area each session. Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into woodland.

Use of Tools

Children and adults will be trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory. Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children. They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used. See individual Tool Risk Assessment for ratios, most will be on a ratio of one to one.

Use of Fires

A Forest School Leader must always be present when a fire is lit and fires must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire.

Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.

- Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log.
- Step over and sit down on the log seat.
- Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
- Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle.

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leader: will have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification, DBS enhanced disclosure and an outdoor first aid qualification.

Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs.
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into the woodland area.
- Administration of first aid and maintaining the first aid kit.
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
- Organising emergency procedures.
- Training staff in forest school skills.

Staff/ students / volunteers will:

- model good practice throughout the session
- carry out delegated roles and responsibilities
- extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions
- support children to manage their own risk
- remind children of rules and boundaries
- be aware of dangers within Forest School
- monitor levels of safety at all times
- support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or before, should any incidents arise or laws and policies change.

Gill Jones Updated Sept 2018

Review September 2020

Appendix 1

Forest School Eating Policy

- Forest School regards snack and meal times as an important part of the session/day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating.
- Before a child attends forest school, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs, including any allergies.
- All staff and volunteers are fully informed about individual children's dietary needs. Children receive only food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents' wishes. Through discussion with parents and educational establishment staff and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups, to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the session/day.
- All children must wash their hands before eating or drinking outside.

Forest School sessions will adopt a nil-by-mouth policy with the following exceptions:

- a. Break time snacks and packed lunches brought by the children may be consumed by the children whilst on Forest School activities, provided careful monitoring by all staff ensures no berries and/or fruit from the forest is consumed
- b. Hot drinks made in storm kettles for the group, from commercially available products such as hot chocolate.
- c. Drinks and foods which link directly to the topic, such as elder cordial, or bread made in school which is cooked outside with direct supervision from an adult. These will only be sourced from commercially available products.

In such cases, the Forest School Leader will be responsible for checking that no member of the group has any listed allergy to any of the products; if they have, the Forest School Leader will use their discretion as to whether a substitute product or different activity will be most appropriate.

3. Children will be taught reasons why berries and/or fruit from the woodland may not be eaten during Forest School sessions. They will be reassured that fruit from the woodland can be safe to eat, but can equally be dangerous and that adult (i.e. parent) Supervision is very important in ensuring only the correct berries are eaten.

Appendix 2



Spring

- Discovering new life - watching and measuring bulbs, growing seeds, planting fruit and vegetables
- Baby animals and their homes, birds beginning to nest, life cycles of butterflies and frogs
- Nature walks to discuss and record buds, blossom, the weather, seasonal changes, weather stations, recording temp and rainfall
- Visit to farm to see baby lambs, ducks, chicks etc.
- Listening to bird song, making bird nests, feeding the birds



Summer

- Minibeast hunt - make mystical bugs and create an island world with food, water, habitat
- Bees and honey making - pollination
- Habitats - what do plants and animals need to survive
- Pond dipping
- Food chains
- Web of life - how we are all connected - biodiversity
- Journeys, exploring and map making, identifying geographical features in the local landscape
- Tree Project - identify and find out about trees
- Summer colours and landscapes in art
- Composting looking at soil composition, wormeries