



Forest School



Handbook



Policies and Procedures





Contents

Page		Review date
3	Aims.	Jan 2021
4	What is Forest school	Jan 2021
5	Rules	Jan 2021
6	Staff / health and safety	Jan 2021
7	Risk	Jan 2021
8	First aid	Jan 2021
9	Emergency first aid	Jan 2021
10	Weather and clothing	Jan 2021
11	Use of PPE	Jan 2021
12	Fire Policy / Procedure	Jan 2021
13	Storm kettle – Food	Jan 2021
14	Food hygiene - Before each session	Jan 2021
15	End of each session - Cancellation policy	Jan 2021
16	Other activities – Tools policy - General	Jan 2021
17	“	Jan 2021
18	Risk	Jan 2021
19	Risk assessment	Jan 2021
20	Signatures	Jan 2021



Aims

At Bleak House Junior School we aim to offer all children the opportunity to experience the pleasure of being outdoors, to explore the beauty of nature, learn from the environment and extend their self-belief and learning.

Bleakhouse motto

The focus of our Forest Schools is to develop children's self-esteem, confidence, resilience, wellbeing and practical skills, which can then be transferred to the classroom. We aim to make learning fun and enjoyable so that children develop a positive attitude towards school and learning. To abide by the rules and standards of behaviour. To work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other. 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. In addition to Forest schools we encourage outdoor cross curricular learning throughout the year and the enjoyment of an "outdoor" classroom.

The Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for pupils to develop in many areas of self-development. The setting allows pupils to engage with the natural environment, offering a unique teaching and learning experience in an ever changing landscape.

To enable the successful operating of Forest Schools, key stakeholders (Head teacher, Governors, Parents) will be informed of the aims, objectives and outcomes in a variety of ways periodically throughout the year.

There is a woodland management plan in place, with objectives to minimise the impact of activities on the site. We aim to balance the benefits the woodland provides the children with care for the environment together with the ecological impact report.



What is Forest School?

“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.”

Forest School has 6 key principles:-

1. Forest School is a long- term process with frequent and regular sessions rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.
2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners
4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning. <http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/>



Rules

Forest School Rules

In the first Forest School session participants become involved with the setting and understanding the rules to ensure their safety, a quick review of the rules at the start of every session will reinforce everyone's safety.

It is important that the adults involved, help the children to understand the importance of the rules and support children to understand that Forest School will become too dangerous if these rules are not followed, which may mean that Forest School sessions have to end.

The Daur Tree Rules

The Celtic name for oak, daur, is the origin of the word door– the root of the oak tree was literally the doorway to the Otherworld, the realm of Fairy

- ✓ 1 whistle blow put everything down stand still wait for instruction.
- ✓ 2 whistle blows put everything down and come to me.
- ✓ Walk with in the Forest School Area.
- ✓ Use your "owl" eyes
- ✓ Keep everything out of your mouth!
- ✓ Stay within the boundary.
- ✓ Do not throw anything.
- ✓ Drag sticks behind you.
- ✓ Care for: nature the environment and each other.
- ✓ Ask an adult before you use a tool and follow the tool rules.
- ✓ Always wash hands following a session.
- ✓ Have FUN!



Staff

Forest Schools are carried out with an adult to child ratio of at least 1:6, but additional adult support will be provided when appropriate for children who have disability or SEN needs. All staff and helpers supporting the Forest School Leader are DBS checked. All Staff are first aid trained. All staff and adults involved in Forest Schools, are required to sign and date a form to show that they have read this handbook, appropriate risk assessments and understand to comply with the safety guidelines. All staff supporting Forest School will also receive formal training from the Forest School Leader.

When activities require a higher staff to child ratio for example using tools, a definitive adult to child ratio is determined, please see section on tool policies. A separate activity risk assessment will be carried out for each activity. When any hazards associated with that activity are at risk of causing harm, ratios for each activity will be determined by the type of activity, the competence of the children and the level of risk involved.

Health and Safety.

The health and safety of the children, staff and visitors is our primary concern. The following policies within this handbook are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them. Forest School is held on the school premises, within the nature area, and is attended by children from the school.

It is covered by the Sandwell Councils School's liability Insurance, which also covers the main school. Insurance policy number: URN:103934, DfE number:333/2108 UKPRN:10044229.

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the safe running of Forest Schools therefore, has a duty of care for the children. However all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe. Before a session commences all staff involved in the sessions have access to activity plans and risk assessments associated with the activities.



Site Risk Assessment: The site risk assessment will be approved by Mr J Bates (Head teacher) and updated as and when there are any permanent or seasonal changes to the site that are not recorded on daily site assessment.

Daily site risk assessment: A daily site risk assessment (safety sweep) will be carried out before the site is used to ensure that there are no changes to the site that could cause harm.

A site risk assessment is undertaken periodically and a daily risk assessment and check is made prior to every Forest School session. In addition, an activity risk assessment will be established prior to any activity that may require it. These will include: whittling, cutting wood, shelter building, fire lighting and cooking on open fire. Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them.

Risk management and assessment: Risk-Benefit management is a fundamental part of life and is a skill needed for young people's safety and well-being. All Staff have a duty of care towards young people. However, this certainly does not mean 'wrapping them in cotton wool'. Therefore we have a responsibility not only to keep young people safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves. Risk management is all about identifying and managing any significant chance of harm.



First Aid

A small first aid kit waist bag style will be on each staff member at all times unless it will impede the adult from current activity where it could become a danger (e.g. bag becoming tangled in rope work).

In addition to this a full emergency bag is on site and can be found in The Base Camp seating area. Access to the emergency bag is permitted only to the Forest School Leader and other teaching assistants not to volunteers, visitors or children.

The Emergency Bag contains the following;

- 3 x Triangular Bandages,
- 2 x Burn Dressings
- 3 x Eye Pad Dressings
- 2 x 18cm x 18cm HSE Large Dressings
- 6 x 12cm x 12cm HSE Medium Dressings
- 2 x Adult Foil Blankets
- 9 x Gloves (pair),
- 1 x Guidance Leaflet
- 60 x Plasters, Waterproof Assorted
- 3 x adhesive wound dressing
- 30 x Cleansing Wipes
- 2 x Ice pack
- Burns kit
- Biohazard disposal bags

“Non-medical” emergency kit

- Fresh water container with fresh water
- Small tarp
- Torch
- Paper towels and tissues in plastic bag
- Soap (Milk natural soap)

The Forest School Leader will ensure the first aid and non-medical kit are adequately stocked and replenished.

Furthermore a summary of medical information relating to each child and/or specific care plans are carried by the FS leader. Any medication required for current medical conditions such as epi-pens inhalers etc. will be brought out on site and available if needed. All staff will be briefed of any specific medical information they should be aware of. The leader will also ensure a mobile phone is available in the area during each session.



Emergency First Aid Procedures: In the event of an emergency the following will happen;

1. Emergency Whistle blown 1 whistle blow.
2. Children advised of tools down by other adults in surrounding areas and to await further instructions.
3. Forest School Leader to assess situation and remove any hazards.

Minor Incident:

1. Pupil/adult assessed by trained outdoor first aider.
2. Treat as required.
3. Complete log book.
4. Inform parents/carers.

Serious Incident

1. First aider will attend to any casualties with one other adult. Remaining adults to supervise the rest of the group.
2. Emergency services to be contacted if necessary (a phone call to the school office to arrange this).
3. All activities to be cease when safe to do so, as agreed in advance, by designated adult.
4. When safe to do so the remaining group to be removed from the scene and taken back to the main school building while the incident/emergency is being dealt with.
5. Inform parents/carers/management with full information of the incident.
6. Complete incident report form.
7. As standard practice, all incidents where the emergency services have to be called out are formally reviewed with the senior management team in order to review our practice.

Administering Medicines/items to children

As we are on school grounds, the children who take regular medication will be able to do so as their normal routine. If sun cream, insect spray is required, the children will be encouraged to apply this themselves observed by an adult. A list of children who require medication and permissions can be found in the Forest School folder.



Weather and clothing At Forest School

“There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.” Forest School runs in all weathers if rain, snow or sunshine. Before entering our Forest School area, the leader will do an appropriate risk assessment of the site and the weather and make sure the pupils are correctly dressed for the session. A list of preferred clothing will be attached to the parent permission letter; any child that is not appropriately dressed will be unable to participate in that session.

Items of spare clothing in the “non-medical” emergency kit. The school does have spare wellington boots and waterproofs; the Forest School Leader has the right to exclude any child they think is inappropriately dress for Forest School activities.

Winter: Vest or T-shirt, Long sleeved top, hooded top / fleece or thick jumper waterproof jacket, thick socks (thermal or two pairs of thin ones) trousers, wellington boots, hat, gloves and scarf. (More thinner layers are better than one thick layer)

Summer: Long sleeved T-shirt or top, light trousers (arms and legs must be covered in the woodland), socks, trainers, sturdy shoes or wellington boots (sandals, crocs and flip-flops are not suitable) and sun hat. Participants are also responsible for providing and applying their own sunscreen in line with the usual school practice. If insect repellent is required the usual ‘administration of medicines’ procedure will be followed.

Toileting

Children will be requested to go to the toilet before going out to start the session. If any child needs to go to the toilet during the session, they will be able to return to the main building either on their own or with another child. If in the rare occasion a child should have a toileting accident on site, then the adult and child will advise the Forest School Leader who will advise adults and children that tool use will be stopped whilst an adult leaves the site due to the ratio of staff remaining. The adult and child can return to the session when they are ready and advise the FS leader so that the session resumes.



Use of PPE

The Forest School Leader will assess each activity and decide on the P.P.E needed for the activity. However, the leader may decide that additional equipment is needed to ensure the safety of participants in line with the risk assessments.

Leaving the site

Children will respect the environment and 'Take only photos, leave only footprints' and we will aim to leave the site as we found it.

Food and drink

Drinking water will be available during the sessions. As we are on the school site, the children will be encouraged to bring their water bottle, which can be left in the designated area. All rubbish will be taken away at the end of the session and disposed of correctly (recycled if possible).

Hygiene: When on the school site, the children will have access to toilets and wash basins. Wipes will be available immediately on site when necessary: But a bucket with water and soap will be available. The children will be encouraged to wash their hands prior to drinking or eating.



Fire policy/procedure

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Children will learn why it is so important in our lives; how to respect fire; the dangers of fire; to be safe and responsible around it and will also learn about the fire triangle (oxygen, fuel and heat) and what is needed to build a small fire successfully. Fires will only be lit in the fire pit area, which will be 1 meter square with fixed surrounding and fixed seating area which is 1.5 meters away from the fire pit. It will have clear exit routes in and away from the main seating.

Before lighting a fire, the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A fire will only be lit when there is a purpose to lighting it e.g. cooking, keeping warm, heating water etc. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place.

Check with landowner for permission. (The fire brigade may need to be informed before lighting fire). The Forest School Leader will carry out risk assessment checking for overhanging trees etc. Fires will not be lit in windy or tinder dry conditions. Children will be taught the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat. Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood. Those in smoky areas will be encouraged to move to less smoky areas. Children will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment. All fires should be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of a session.

Fire Pit Rules - Never leave a fire unattended.

- We do not run around the fire pit.
- We do not walk across the fire pit to get to the other side.
- We only enter the fire pit area when instructed by the Forest School Leader.
- No loose clothing or loose hair in or near the fire pit.
- A fire blanket (or a soaked bath towel) available to extinguish the fire.
- A bucket full of fresh water (with a cup in) for treating burns.
- Watering can to extinguish the fire.



Storm / Kelly Kettles

1. Remove the plug from the storm kettle (the kettle may explode if allowed to boil with the plug still fitted).
2. Fill the kettle with water and leave the kettle UNPLUGGED.
3. Light a small fire in the base. The base is to be placed on a flat stone or slab for stability, inside the fire pit area.
4. Put the kettle on top of the fire tray (with the spout facing the middle of the fire pit this will stop boiling water from splashing out)
5. Slowly feed the fire with thin twigs until the water is boiling.
6. Lift kettle from fire using the handle holding either side. (This is to be done by adult).
7. Pour by holding the handle in one hand and pulling on the plug which is attached to the base with the other hand. (Children can do this with close adult supervision additional PPE can be used depending on children).
8. Once the fire in the fire tray has died out and the tray has started to cool the ash and embers can be tipped out (use 2 sticks to help to tip).
9. Pour water on the ash and embers and ensure that the fire is completely extinguished.

Food

- Split open food and check it is cooked thoroughly before consumption.
- When cooking with a stick use green wood and remove bark before cooking using a knife and scraping action. Check plant species to ensure that the wood is not toxic.
- Don't re-heat cooked food.
- Avoid foods that need a lot of fat to cook in case of pan fire.
- Get young people to tuck in long hair and tie, roll up or fasten loose clothing.
- Inform parents/carers of planned activity and gain permission. Check client group does not suffer from food allergies or that other reasons, such as religious beliefs, do not prohibit individuals from handling or consuming certain food types.



Food hygiene

When handling and eating campfire food, hands must be cleaned by using, soap and water. If unavailable then the use antibacterial wipes or hand gel. Food should be stored appropriately before the session and transported to Forest School in a hygienic airtight container. Food containers should be taken back to be cleaned/disposed of appropriately and no litter should be left as we always aim to leave the site as we find it.

Before Each Session

Before a session takes place, the Forest School Leader will carry out a daily risk assessment of the area and will take any necessary action to ensure the site is safe before use. Before the session staff and volunteers will be briefed on the intended structure of the session and their responsibilities.

The Forest School Leader will list resources required for the session on the planning. The resources will be checked out by the Forest School Leader using the check list and all tools will be checked before use by the Forest School Leader following the tool policy procedure. All tools and resources are left in locked storage until required for a session. The Forest School Leader will provide activity risk assessments (see risk assessments) to all staff and volunteers at the session, to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of any hazards associated with an activity and the measures in place to control the risk.

After lunch registration children will change into their Forest School clothing and appropriate footwear and taken to the toilet, then brought out to the Forest School area. The beginning of the session will follow a similar pattern each time a simple starter game then to recap rules and boundaries.

What to do during the session; It is the responsibility of ALL adults to make on-going risk assessments. Regular head counts are carried out when group size is too large for simple recognition (ie bigger than 6) if there are 'any' doubts then then the 2 whistle blow used to bring all back to main site. If any child is unaccounted for then the schools missing child procedure is followed.



End of the session

Children will be encouraged by supporting adults to work together to tidy and clean up the area and prepare any equipment to be taken back to storage. A reflection session or game will take place. Equipment will be carried to the storage container where the Forest School Leader will check all equipment back in if any tools/resources are missing then go and check the area.

Children will be led to a classroom to change out of waterproofs, the children will then be escorted back to their regular classroom to prepare for "home time".

Forest School Leader then evaluates for next session; During and following a session, Forest School assistants will ensure they provide their observational notes to the Forest School Leader to enable them to plan, according to the children's needs, for the next session.

Cancellation Policy

Weather conditions; Following the Forest Schools ethos of.....'there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!'. Children will be outdoors in all weathers, however, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather; in the case of high winds above 25mph (the school site is very open on one side and on top of a hill causing winds to be extremely strong at times) or where extreme temperatures below '0' a session will be cancelled.

Shelters will be available at the Forest School site in case of inclement weather, a shelter from the elements will always be provided at the Forest School site. This will consist of one or more securely fixed tarpaulins which will provide shade in the summer months and protection from wind, rain and snow in the winter.

In normal "cold" conditions children will be appropriately dressed, sessions will be made shorter and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

Other reasons to cancel are staff ratios: A session may need to be cancelled due to staff illness or other circumstances if this is going to compromise the adult to child ratios. Unfortunately, cancellation decisions may be on the morning of the session,



the Forest School Leader will endeavour to give as much warning as possible to supporting staff and helpers. In the case of a cancellation, consultation with the class teacher will determine whether an indoor nature or skills related session (such as knot tying and crafts) is appropriate.

Other activities

Picking up and playing with sticks Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length and are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer or larger sticks may be dragged behind them. Sticks must not be thrown, or pulled from living trees and bushes.

Picking up and playing with stones- Stones may be picked up and transported but never thrown.

Digging- Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children can dig holes in the designated area (mud area) and if they leave their hole then it must be clearly marked to stop others from hurting themselves. At the end of the session all holes need to be filled in.

Mud play- Mud play will only happen in the mud area. The Forest School Leader will prepare the area. Periodically the mud will be allowed to dry to stop an over population of harmful bacteria and micro-organisms.

Collecting wood- Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes and craft. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized.

Rope and String- Rope and string will be from a natural source and preferable not man made plastic. Children will be taught to tie knots and to use the rope to help transport heavy objects. We do not allow children to wrap the rope around each other, and all rope and string will be collected at the end of each session. If using rope for structures then all knots and structure are to be checked by Forest School Leader for safety before use.

Carrying and Transporting Materials- Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should



always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

Tree Climbing- An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for objects that could cause harm, any trip hazards clearly marked and the tree checked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m and not to climb on branches that are thinner than their own arms. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.

Tools Policy

Hand tool safety using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. Children will not be using tools until the children are ready in every way emotionally and physically. All Adults participating must receive basic training, on the safe use of tools before being allowed to use them with children. If any tools are unsafe or damaged in any way, they will be marked and moved to the designated damaged tools area, in the locked shed so they are not used. A 'Tool Talk' will be given every time a new tool is used by the Forest School Leader. Tools will only be used in a clearly marked area and on a 1:1 ratio of adult to child. Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.

General

- Children and adults will be trained in the safe use of each tool before they use it.
- Tools will be counted in and out and checked by Forest School Leader.
- Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children in a lockable container.
- They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used.
- Tool use will be on a ratio of one to one and in a roped off area.
- Any accident or near miss should be recorded and evaluated.



<p>Bow Saws – use for cutting wood with a diameter greater than a 1 inch.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make sure cover is securely on blade before removing from container.2. Carry with the frame at your side with the blade facing down.3. Wear a glove on the non-sawing (helping) hand, not on the tool.4. Stand with feet apart and use the saw to the side of you and not in front.5. Keep your non sawing hand away from the blade when sawing.6. Saw using the full length of the blade. Let the blade do the work – don't force it, especially if it sticks.
<p>Loppers – use for cutting wood with a diameter smaller than 1.5 inches</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Always carry with blades closed (and locked if applicable) by the handle nearest to the floor, facing down so the blade cannot open.2. When not in use leave with blades closed (and locked if applicable).3. Do not exceed the cutting capacity of the tool.4. Use away from your body and keep both hands on the handles.
<p>Knives – use to whittle small sticks, peel bark and cut string</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Never wear a glove on the hand holding the tool - it makes the handle hard to grip safely. Wear a safety glove on your other helper hand.2. Sit in a stable position both feet on the floor, hold the material across you lap with the part to be cut hanging over the side of your thigh and prepare to cut from the side away from yourself towards the ground "be mindful of you blood bubble".3. Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work. Stop if anyone comes too close.4. Keep hand closed around the handle of the blade in a fist grip (never put thumb on top).
<p>Potato Peelers – use to peel bark</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rest the wood you are peeling on the ground or on a bench and not on your leg. (or treat it the same as knife).2. Hold the potato peeler away from your body and peel away from yourself towards the ground.3. Keep the hand not holding the tool away from sharp end of potato peeler.



Risk Assessment

The Forest School Leader will undertake extensive risk assessments for each activity performed as part of Forest School by: Consistently applying the five-step approach to risk assessment and activities:

Step 1: Identify hazards, i.e. anything that may cause harm.

Step 2: Decide who may be harmed, and how.

Step 3: Assess the risk and take action.

Step 4: Make a record of the findings.

Step 5: Review the risk assessment.

All other policies will come under the schools policies and procedures such as:

- ❖ Safeguarding
- ❖ Anti-bullying
- ❖ Behaviour management
- ❖ Special Educational Needs and disability
- ❖ Equal Opportunities
- ❖ Dealing with disclosure
- ❖ Use of photographs and digital recording – (prior to attending Forest School parentally/ carer permission will be obtained)
- ❖ Parental/carer communication



Created by R A Clee Forest School Leader

Anyone to assist in a session of Forest School is to read this document and confirm they have understood and will abide by the guidelines set out in this document.

Print name	Date	Signature

Review date Jan 2021.