

Westhouses Primary School
Forest Schools policy



Revision History

REVISION	DATE	NAME	DESCRIPTION
1.0	26.04.2022	Martin Weston	
1.1	25.04.2025	Juliette Whitby	

Approval History

REVISION	APPROVAL DATE	APPROVED BY	SIGNED
1.0	28.04.2022	Simon Taylor	
1.1	25.04.2025	Simon Taylor	

Westhouses Primary School

Forest School Policy 2025

Our Vision:

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.

Intent of Forest School:

To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.

To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.

To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.

Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

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 wild area around them. Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest schools. 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 or collect things which are in abundance and leave the area as we found it when we leave.

Implementation:

All children will be given the opportunity to take part in a Forest School session each academic year, for at least one half term. Sessions are led by a Level 3 trained practitioner, with support of the Class Teacher. The Forest School leader is responsible for the planning and leading of the session, ensuring that it follows and builds upon the agreed progression of skills document.

Safety 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.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and equipment at Forest schools

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest schools. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest schools Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'.
- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest schools Leaders at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest schools Leader feels the children are ready and in-line with progression documentation.
- All tools will be used in small groups to ensure close monitoring of use
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest schools activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest schools Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced. Equipment will be disposed of carefully to prevent injury.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest Schools

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

- Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:
- Stand behind the log
- Step over and sit down on log
- Stand up, turn around and step over log
- Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle

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

When lighting a fire:

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner 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.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

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

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The Forest School Leader will follow the Effective Group Management Procedures outlined in the school's Teaching, Learning and Behaviour Policy.

The role of the Forest Schools Leaders:

- The Forest schools 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 pack at all times if off site.
- 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 (which should then be filled into the School Accident Log) and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Forest Schools Rules:

- Keep your hands away from your mouth
- Leave things to grow
- Keep within the set boundaries
- Follow the agreed rules: when the whistle sounds, return to the agreed base of the lesson.

Preparation:

The Forest schools Leader will do a sweep of the site prior to the weekly sessions. First Aid kit, inhalers, wipes will be available. When required, the tool container, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate to the designated area of the lesson. The Designated Leader will collect and return materials, checking that all objects are in working order and replaced at the end of the session. Pupils will be asked to wear appropriate clothing for the session (waterproofs etc.). Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs. FS safety rules will be shared with the group - at the first session, these will be established and reviewed there after. Children will put wellies on the outside the classroom door and walk to the site.

Clothing:

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session:

Woolly hat/sunhat and gloves
 Jacket/waterproof coat
 Fleece/sweatshirt
 Waterproof or change of trousers
 Spare socks
 Stout shoes/wellies/boots

During the Session:

During the session children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels.

They are taught a variety of woodland, gardening and practical skills through varied activities. They will 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. 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 out doors before entering the classroom.

After the session:

After the session equipment will be washed and stored as appropriate.
Children will be given the chance to change out of their waterproof clothing.
Flasks and water containers will be emptied and cleaned out.
Tools (if taken) will be cleaned and locked away in the resources area.

Cancelled Sessions:

Cancelling Forest schools FS may need to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds, or blizzards. Adapted classroom activities will take place instead. Forest schools may not be able to go ahead if there are not enough adults to accompany us. If no replacement adult can be found then the session will be cancelled. The session may also be cancelled if the Forest schools leader is unable to attend. Campfires **must not** take place without a Qualified Forest School Leader.

Impact

Forest School Leader and Class Teachers will assess pupils skills throughout the sessions, identifying those who require additional support to meet expectations and those who are required to be challenged further to develop their skills. These amendments will be made in conjunction with the Forest School leader and progression documentation.

Children will be given the opportunity to showcase their learning at the end of their sessions. During this time, children will be given the opportunity to provide feedback through discussion, pupil interviews and questionnaires. Sessions and planning will then be adapted and amended for future cycles.

Learning will continue to progress for all children, using the progression document and agreed and of year group expectations.