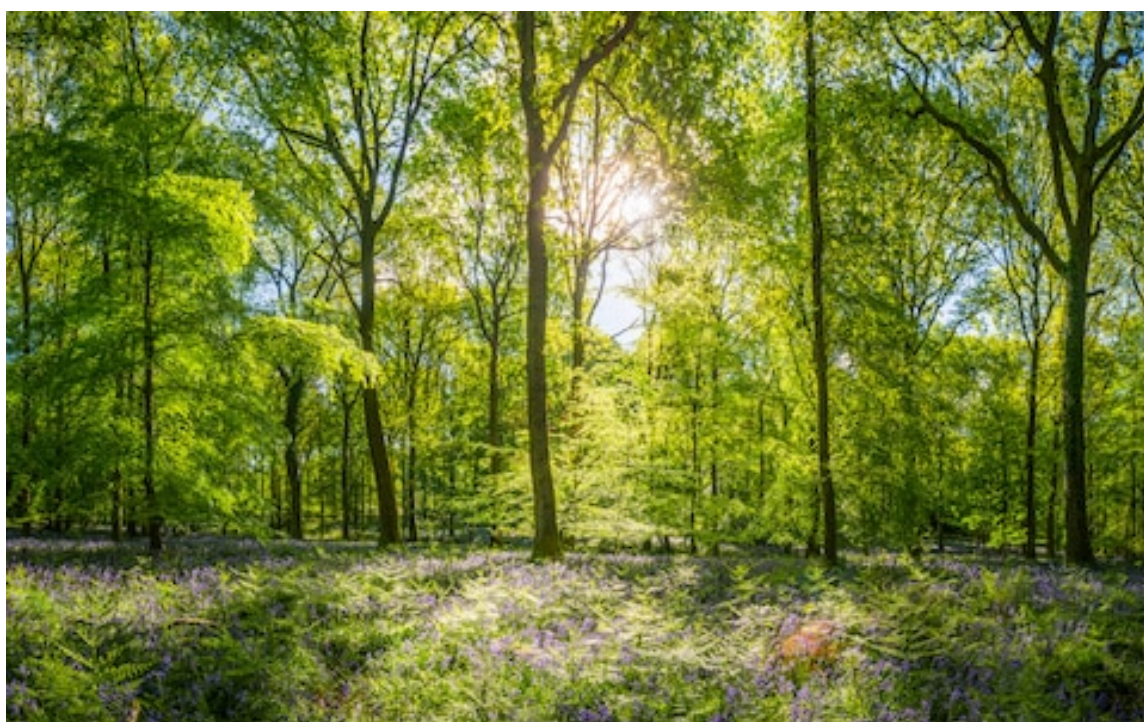


Forest Schools Handbook



love to learn

The Forest School Ethos

Forest School is a unique educational experience and that offers children the opportunity to succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a natural environment.

Children engage in challenging yet achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers. They will work with tools, learn to assess risk and develop high levels of collaboration.

As a result of Forest School sessions, children grow in confidence, self-esteem and critical thinking. They also develop a strong personal connection with the natural world.

The Forest School concept originates in Denmark, where it was found to develop in children, strong social and communication skills, the ability to work in groups effectively, high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities.

These foundations helped them to feel confident in their sense of self and also as a result, in many cases, helped raise their academic achievements.

Forest School encourages children 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
- improve their communication
- explore the world through all the senses available to them

2. What happens at Forest School

Typically, small groups of individuals (depending on child/adult ratio) take part in a programme of six weekly sessions lasting for about an hour. The sessions involve practical hands-on activities which aim to build up participants' skills, abilities and confidence week by week.

All sessions are designed and led by our trained staff, with the help and direction of our Forest School practitioner. However, Forest School strongly encourages participant-led learning, so as the weeks progress, learners are given more freedom and responsibility to explore their interests and therefore initiate and direct their own learning. Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation.

Activities can include:

- Shelter building
- Natural art
- Using knots and lashings
- Fire lighting
- Animal tracking
- Bug hunts
- Tree investigations
- Climbing and balancing
- Woodwork using tools, e.g. making musical instruments, jewelry, decorative items
- Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- Collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- Team games

Forest School develops skill in children that are transferable into other subjects, such as critical thinking, team working and effective communication. But it is important to remember that it has a value all of its own and so at FHC we deliver it with focus specifically on the life skills it offers to our children.

3. The benefits of Forest School

Forest School is suited to all ages and abilities. The aim of Forest School is to develop the child as a whole. It is particularly good at developing a positive sense of self and as a result benefits a wide range of learners. For those who find learning a challenge it often allows more practically minded children to thrive, and for those who have always succeeded academically, it can provide opportunities to fail and make mistakes. It is a brilliant leveller and can allow for different dynamics to the classroom.

Completing small achievable tasks, coupled with genuine praise from Leaders, helps to boost confidence and self-esteem.

For children at school, attitudes to learning are improved as they find that learning can be fun and enjoyable. This new positive outlook is then transferred to the classroom where they are found to be more motivated and able to concentrate better.

Forest School can also:

- Develop physical abilities and help participants to stay active and healthy
- Heighten self-awareness and improve emotional and social skills
- Promote co-operative and group working
- Encourage participants to take care of themselves and others
- Foster care, appreciation and respect for wildlife and wild places
- Broaden knowledge and understanding of the natural world

4. Forest School Staff

Our Forest School is organised and run by Emma Wraighte who is a qualified Forest School Practitioner. We also have a groups of staff trained to be Forest School support staff. All sessions are supported by the class teams to ensure that there is good adult to child ratio, so that the most can be got out of sessions.

All staff and volunteers have undergone an appropriate selection process to assess their skills and suitability for working with children and have been subject to enhanced DBS checks. All sessions are staffed by a qualified first aider and all staff have access to a recommended first aid kit.

A designated First Aid contact in school is identified as part of the Risk Assessment, before each session to be of support in case emergency first aid support eg: ambulance etc is needed. This person will co-ordinate with the Forest school team and medical professionals. This person will also liaise with parents as appropriate.

5. The Forest School site

Our Forest School takes place in a small woodland 'Skelton Woods'. It is made up of mixed deciduous trees, mainly mature Oak, Ash, Sycamore and Beech. The site is managed by a conservation group with support from school. The long term sustainability assessments are undertaken by the conservation groups and these considerations are planned in to school sessions to ensure that children learn the importance of conservation and sustainability and also that they learn how to be active in this process.

As it is part of a community woodland and as such has access to the general public (included in Risk Assessment). Area checks must be completed before every session to ensure there is no debris etc that could be harmful to children.

Children taking part in Forest School will also be encouraged to minimise their impact on the site. This will include:

- Finding out about the different animals and plants that live in and amongst the trees
- Learning to respect animals' homes
- Careful observation of live animals

- Leaving lying deadwood in place
- Taking all materials and litter with them when they leave
- Ensuring that the site is left like they found it

6. Location of Woodland Site

The woodland entrance is directly opposite the school car park. Follow the path through Skelton woods and across the playing field and horse shoe field and into Horse-shoe Woods. The fires circle and classroom set up is in this space. However the full range of Skelton Woods and Horse-shoe Woods will be used in sessions as they provide a different range of opportunities.

7. Our Forest School Code of Conduct

Entering the Woodland

- We will ensure we cross the road safely- taking account of the green cross code
- We will enter the Woodland respectfully and know that when at Forest School specific expectations are in place.
- We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Woodland environment.
- We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.

Boundaries

Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently.

If you lose sight of a child shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The children have been taught to respond '1, 2, 3, I am here', or signal in other ways if non-verbal. This enables the leader to trace children who have strayed. Children who are known to need 1-1 support are given the support needed.

Lighting a fire

When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. The person in charge of the fire safety and management will wear a clear and visible symbol as a visual cue to the children, we suggest a high visual jacket. 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.

Open fires will be built within a fire Circle marked with a rope line.

At the Fire Circle

An open fire will be lit within a fire circle. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 2.0m from the fire circle. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There is no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.

Using Tools

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for.

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living tress.

Picking up and playing with stones

Stones may be picked up and transported. All staff should be aware of PICA issues and monitor these children carefully. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

Children should also be made aware that stones often form part of a habitat for living things and so much check carefully that in moving the item they are not damaging a habitat.

Digging Digging

Large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made.

Collecting wood

Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats. Sticks should not be removed from the site and there are resources available within school in the Forest School area for activities where natural resources cannot be found on the site.

Eating and Drinking

Nil by mouth policy (No lick, no pick) for anything found in the area, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption

Rope and String Use

We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

Carrying and Transporting Materials

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to 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.(Safe lifting risk assessment)

Toileting

Children are invited to use the toilets before we leave the school buildings. Children will be allowed to return to the school building with an accompanying adult or given the option of a 'bush wee' where appropriate.

The nearest toilets are to be found in the school reception area.

Leaving the Site

We work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' that we were in the wood as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters should be taken down, imported materials need to be removed. All equipment is carefully counted out and back in again, especially when using tools and tent pegs. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish will always be removed. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult.

Tree Climbing

- An adult must be present when children climb trees in the Forest School.
- The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing.
- A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches.
- Children must not be supported to climb they must be able to get up and down unaided as this is part of the Risk Assessment- it is also part of children learning to judge risk themselves
- Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. 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

8. Suggested Activities for Forest Schools

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying wildlife
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities • Tracking games
- Cooking on an open fire
- Using a Kelly Kettle
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities

9. A typical Forest School session

Each Forest School session follows a simple routine. The session starts with participants getting ready to go outside by putting on appropriate clothing – waterproof coats, trousers and wellington boots. We go through rules and routines whilst still in class and children help gather any resources we need to take out with us in our trolley.

The group then walks to the Forest School site and gathers at the meeting tree (the tree with the benching around it). The circle is central to everything that happens at Forest School. It is a focal point where the group assembles and socialises. At the start of the session, participants and Leaders sit together and talk about what they did and particularly enjoyed doing at the last session, and what they are planning to do during the current one.

Many activities take place in or around the circle, such as natural art and woodwork. Half way through or at the end of each session participants gather together to have a drink and a snack. This often includes helping to light a fire at the base of a Kelly Kettle to heat water for warm drinks. Early sessions involve participants getting to know the site and learning basic safety rules. They then move on to more complex and detailed tasks and are given more “free time” for personalised learning. At the end of each session, participants help Leaders to pack away the tools and materials they have been using and help to return the woodland to the state in which they found it.

10. Equipment for Forest School

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag with them. The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment. There are of course also essential items that should be carried out for every session.

- Trolley for transportation
- Sit mats
- Set of spare clothes
- Firestriker / cotton wool / kindling Spare
- Clear plastic bags and bin liners
- Squash, hot chocolate powder and biscuits
- Wet wipes
- Plastic beakers
- Tarpaulins & tent pegs
- Plastic plates
- Penknife
- Disposable gloves
- Whistle for use in emergencies
- String and rope
- Insect repellent (summer)
- Pen and paper
- Washing up bowl & antiseptic hand wash gel
- Fire blanket and bucket Kelly kettle and safety gloves
- Facial tissues and kitchen towel
- Drinking water in jerry can with date
- Spare water in jerry can

Emergency procedure

Kit to be packed with:

- Mobile phone with emergency contact sheet
- At a glance sheet - children's medical and contact information
- Staff handbook and emergency procedures in water-proof folder
- Risk assessments
- School radio Map of forest school site with postcode and / or grid reference

*designated person in school for emergencies to be contactable via mobile/school number

First aid kit

- First aid guidance booklet
- Disposable gloves (latex free)
- Radio Safety pins
- Sterile non-medicated dressings
- Eye bandage

- Triangular bandages
- Eye wash
- Cleansing wipes
- Instant ice pack
- Space blankets x 2
- Burn cool x 4
- Cling film

*individualised First Aid such as inhalers and Epipens are to be held by the group leader

Activities equipment – this will vary from week to week, but the base kit is detailed below:

- Wood – ash, hazel, elder, willow
- Beads
- Wool, ribbon, string
- Felt pens and charcoal
- Scissors
- Paint brushes
- Wood glue
- Masking tape
- Cotton sheet
- Pots for mixing natural dyes
- Clay, wooden boards & modelling tools
- Sieves Pestle and mortar
- Bug pots, spoons, ID sheets

Tools- to be kept in tool bags on the equipment trolley

- Tool bags and tool box
- Knives x 5 in lockable box
- Bow saws 12" x 3
- Loppers x 4
- Potato peelers x 20
- Work gloves - adult's: 4 & children's: 10
- Tent pegs (blunt ended) x 20
- Rope – various sizes inc.
- Pruning saws x 1 Billhooks x 2
- Para cord spool

11. The Forest School Day

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

All supporting staff will receive a briefing at the beginning of every session- this will cover Risk Assessment consideration, First Aid and Emergency plan info as well as activities information.

Forest School is a unique educational programme run by trained Leaders. It helps children and young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in the outdoor natural environment.

Forest School provides:

- A safe, supportive and positive environment for learning and discovery.
- Session plans and risk assessments for all activities.
- Activities that link to the National Curriculum and the Coppice skills based curriculum and cater for different learning styles.
- High adult to child ratios, enabling individual one-to-one and small group work.
- Monitoring and reporting of individual children's progress and development.
- Greater involvement of parents in their children's education through the invitation to take part in a Forest School session with their children.

Responsibilities Clothing

It is our responsibility to ensure that children are appropriately dressed for Forest School sessions. Any child not wearing appropriate clothing will not be able to participate. We will provide a shelter from the elements (a Tepee) plus a spare supply of waterproof clothing for those who forget theirs, but it is still important that pupils wear clothes that are warm and that are OK to get wet and muddy.

These are: warm trousers; a long-sleeved jumper, fleece or t-shirt; a vest or t-shirt underneath; thick socks - thermal if possible or two pairs of thinner ones.

Behaviour and Discipline

It is our responsibility to support the Forest school leaders in teaching children the rules and safety precautions needed to safely access a forest school session. Modelling good practice will form a large part of this process.

It is good practice for the same member of staff to attend each of the six sessions, to maintain continuity for the children.

Safety and First Aid

The Forest School Leader (Emma Wraighte) is a qualified first aider and carries a recommended first aid kit, teacher and support staff attending the session (with relevant qualifications) will also support First Aid.

Activities are thoroughly risk assessed and all attending staff will continuously monitor the safety of the group as activities progress.

An emergency plan has been drawn up, which will be followed in the unlikely event of an accident.

All staff and volunteers have undergone an appropriate selection process to assess their skills and suitability for working with children and have been subject to enhanced DBS.

Cancellation

Forest School sessions usually take place outdoors whatever the weather. However, sessions may need to be moved to a more sheltered site within the school grounds if there are high winds. If it is not safe or practicable to move the activities on to the school site or into a classroom, then the session will be cancelled.

12. ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

- First Aid Kit (See contents list, contents review record)
- Emergency Procedures
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Devices - school radio and mobile phone.
- Clean Water
- Emergency whistle
- Emergency Life Blanket
- Accident forms
- Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled – staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)
- Appropriate Clothing
- Sharps box and gloves

Other Possible Equipment: (to be added as needs be to the trolley)

- Wet wipes, hand gel
- Sun cream (parental permission required)
- Spare Clothing
- Thermos of hot water
- Chocolate/sugary food
- Plastic bag

- Roll Mat and Blanket
- Fire blanket
- Torch
- Bucket of water
- Emergency fire kit
- Knife
- Emergency shelter
- Burns kit
- Tick remover

Clothing

No person will be permitted to go to Forest School without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold, keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes, that fits appropriately for comfort, and that meets any religious requirements.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session. In the forest it can often be cooler than expected under the shade of the trees.

Clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood.
- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers
- Warm boots (wellies can be very cold during the winter)
- Warm Socks, and a spare pair
- Gloves and Woolly hat – Cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility– sunny weather

We work on the principle that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”, but staff must be aware of how children in their class react to different weathers and how this affects their sensory processing. We do have a selection of spare clothing but this will need to be matched to the child prior to the session and checked for suitability. Ask Forest School Leader for help in prep session if you are unsure.

First Aid Kit

- Contact Cards (location using postcode and OS grid reference)
- Latex Gloves
- Bandages
- Burns gel
- Burn dressing
- Dressings
- Eye wash
- Sewing Kit
- Scissors
- Cotton wool
- Antiseptic wipes
- Medication for individual children
- Tick removers
- Sterile water
- Cling film
- Blood bag (disposal sack for medical waste)

Fire bucket Kit:

- Flame retardant gauntlet gloves
- Fire Blanket
- Bucket of water
- Fire steel & Matches
- Cotton wool, kindling & Vaseline
- Fire Line

13. Using and Storing Tools

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked area. Derek's Cupboard.

Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order. Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers, many of which are also lockable. Children must

never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group, (two arm's length and the tool length) and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool.

14. Risk assessments

Food safety and cooking procedure

Food and drink preparation and sitting together whilst eating and drinking are important parts of Forest School. This procedure has been devised using advice in Preventing Food Poisoning - Good Hygiene at Home published by the Food Standards Agency and 10 Ways to Prevent Food Poisoning on the NHS Choices website.

We will provide hand washing facilities at each session where food and/or drink is prepared and will ensure that all staff, volunteers and participants follow the Forest School food hygiene rules.

Forest School food hygiene rules Everyone involved in Forest School should be involved in food safety and follow the food hygiene rules below. If you spot a problem, please point it out to the Forest School Leader.

When involved in food and drink preparation you should:

- Wash hands before and during cooking.
- Not handle food if they are ill with stomach problems, such as diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Cover sores and cuts with a waterproof dressing.
- Avoid handling food when possible, and instead use spoons, tongs or other suitable implements.
- Tie hair back.
- Keep food that is waiting to be cooked separate from food that is ready to be eaten.
- Use separate chopping boards for preparing different foods, especially raw and ready-to-eat food.
- Prepare food on a suitable surface, e.g. chopping board, cup, saucepan and not on the ground.
- Ensure food is cooked thoroughly before serving. Food should be cooked right through and piping hot in the middle.
- Not reheat food more than once.
- Keep utensils clean and regularly wash tea towels and cloths.
- Store food in clean plastic containers with non-leaking lids.
- Take all rubbish and food scraps away with them at the end of the session to avoid attracting vermin to the site.

Food allergies and special dietary requirements: Participants are asked to state any food allergies and special dietary requirements they may have on their Parental Consent and Medical form. This information will be used to plan what food and drink to provide during sessions, ensuring that the food and drink provided is suitable for all.

Safe use of tools

General

- Keep tools in good, clean order.
- Check tools are safe to use before the start of each session.
- Carry out tool maintenance (cleaning and oiling) once a week.
- Do not use tools with damaged blades or handles or with loose bolts or fixings.
- When transporting tools do not carry more than can be held securely.
- A blunt blade is more dangerous than a sharp one.
- Count tools in and out.

Bow Saws – use for cutting wood with a diameter greater than a 2 pence piece

- Wear a glove on the non-sawing (helping) hand, not on the tool.
- Use the saw to the side of you and not in front.
- Keep your non sawing hand away from the blade when sawing.
- Saw with easy relaxed strokes using the full length of the blade. Let the blade do the work – don't force it, especially if it sticks.
- Carry with the frame at your side with the blade facing down, like carrying a handbag.
- Keep the blade covered when not in use and especially when transporting. • Ensure the item to be cut is firmly held.
- When using with children – Leader and child to kneel on floor with Leader on one side of saw and the child on the other, both in the 'respect position'. The Leader guides the saw and the child follows.

Billhooks – use for cleaving wood

- Never wear a glove on the hand holding the tool - it makes the handle hard to grip safely.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work. Stop if anyone comes too close.
- Hold billhook away from your body and cut away from yourself.
- Stop if you get tired. Loppers

Loppers – use for cutting wood with a diameter smaller than a 2 pence piece

- Always carry with blades closed (and locked if applicable).
- When not in use leave with blades closed (and locked if applicable).

- Do not exceed the cutting capacity of the tool.
- Use away from your body and keep hand not holding tool away from blades.
- Children only to use when sitting or kneeling.

Knives – use to whittle small sticks, peel bark and cut string

- 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.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work. Stop if anyone comes too close.
- Hold the knife away from your body and cut away from yourself.

Potato Peelers – use to peel bark

- Rest the wood you are peeling on the ground or on a bench and not on your leg.
- Hold the potato peeler away from your body and peel away from yourself towards the ground.
- Keep the hand not holding the tool away from sharp end of potato peeler.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work.
- Children only to use when sitting or kneeling – remind them not to move around when using the peeler.

Tent Pegs – (when used to hollow out elder piths)

- Rest the wood you are working with on the ground or on a bench and not on your leg.
- Poke out the piths away from your body towards the ground, and not towards you.
- Keep a safe distance from other people and be aware of those around you while you work.
- Children only to use when sitting or kneeling – remind them not to move around when using the tent pegs.

Forest Schools Risk Assessment: Separate document, to be read in conjunction with this handbook

15. Fire Policy

As part of the Forest school experience it is desirable to have an open fire at times within the woodland to allow the children to enhance their learning and development with some risky activities. Encounters with risk help children to manage their coping strategies and

discover and explore the world through real experiences. This policy sets out the guidelines to follow to ensure safe practice is a thread throughout the activity.

Aim: To use fire safely as part of the Forest School experience.

Method: Fires must only be lit after a risk assessment has been carried out and they must only be within the fire circle area. This includes the use of Kelly Kettles.

- There must always be a trained adult present within the fire circle when a fire is lit or hot embers remain, never leave a fire unattended.
- Prior to the fire pit being built the soil or bedrock must have been assessed to avoid a fire being lit on a flammable surface such as peat.
- The fire should be surrounded by a 1 metre square of double logs to provide a good barrier to the fire in case a learner losing balance.
- Pegs should be used to prevent the logs being knocked-where appropriate
- Fires should not be lit close to overhanging branches or on a really windy day.

There must be an adequate supply of fire water close to the fire pit to ensure there is enough water available to extinguish the fire if it gets out of control. A fire blanket must be brought into the woodland to wrap round someone if their clothes become alight. Fire proof gauntlets should be kept at the fire area to allow adults to pick up hot items.

Before visiting the area the children should have had the opportunity to ask questions and be given information about fire safety. When at the fire circle the rules should be demonstrated for the children to see. There should be no more than 2 people, adults and children, within the fire circle next to the fire at any one time.

The best position for cooking is on one knee (the respect position) so you can move backwards easily and remain stable. Long hair should be tied back, tassels and ties tucked away and scarves removed.

Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually but may also be influenced earlier by new research and government guidelines.

Kelly Kettle

The Forest leader may use this to heat water. Never leave the bung in whilst heating water. This is only to be in place during storage so as to keep the chamber clear from forest debris or insects and mini-beasts. Once the fire is going in the Kelly Kettle base carefully add the chimney top to it by holding the handle parallel to the ground, and supported on each side by your hands. When lit, do not stand directly over, or look straight down the chimney. Never blow into the top. When pouring out the water support the base by holding the bung chain in one hand and the handle with the other. To put the fire out, pour the remaining water into the base in a circular motion starting from the outside of the pan and making your way into the middle.

When not in use all tools will be securely locked away in the tool shed. Tools should be checked and cleaned before they are put away.

Half termly the Forest Leader will ensure that each tool is thoroughly cleaned and oiled. Wear and tear will be monitored daily.

16. Health and Safety Policies & Procedures

FHC Primary School sets out clear statements of intent regarding the Whole School's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School and the School Site.

Provided below is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our Forest School sessions.

There is always a high Leader to participant ratio at Forest School. The high number of Leaders means that participants can safely experience activities like climbing trees, walking across logs blindfolded, lighting (controlled) fires and using knives that are usually considered too risky in other situations. It also means that Leaders are able to give individuals one-to-one attention when needed, and to lead small group work.

All activities are thoroughly risk assessed before the start of each session and Leaders continue to monitor the safety of the group as activities evolve.

There is always a trained first aider present at each session and a written emergency plan to follow. Participants are also involved in completing their own risk assessments throughout the sessions. This gives them ownership of the process and helps them to be aware of, and calculate, the risks involved in each activity. They are asked to state what risks and hazards they should be aware of and what steps they can take to reduce or mitigate them. For example, they are given flags to mark hazards like brambles and hidden ditches.

Pre-visit checks

- Run through the site risk assessment and amend/update as necessary. Remove all visible litter and faeces.
- Remove obvious trip hazards and mark off areas as out-of-bounds where appropriate.
- Cut any overhanging vegetation from paths and boardwalk. • Ensure risk assessments are completed for all activities.
- Erect shelter(s).
- Set up Forest School circle.
- Set up hand washing station.
- Check that the forest school rucksack contains all necessary items (see section on Forest School equipment), including all emergency procedure information, a stocked and in date first aid kit, fire blanket and dated fresh water.
- Check you have all the materials and resources needed for the activities you have planned.
- Check that all tools you are planning to use are in good working order.
- Check that your phone is in working order, has sufficient credit and is fully charged.
- Check you have a fully charged school radio.

At the start of the session

- Take register and head count.
- Remind children about physical boundaries (use visual cues when needed) and that they must stay within these. In the first sessions, and at the beginning of each session play a game to reinforce this.
- Remind children how they should behave and how to stay safe on site (see site risk assessment).
- Explain the need for, and principles of, fire safety.

Throughout the session

- Be vigilant for all hazards physical and from/for members of the public
- Remind children of how to stay safe by highlighting potential hazards (see individual activity risk assessments), reminding them of the boundaries and asking that they make an adult aware of any possible hazards that they spot.
- Carry out regular head counts at the start of activities and at break time.
- Take photos and make observations of individual children.
- Use de-escalating techniques whenever possible when dealing with behavioural issues.

At the end of the session

- Carry out a final head count and escort the group back to the school.
- Count and pack up all equipment.
- Count and pack up all resources.
- Clear fire area and make safe. Remove ash and cover over the site of fire.
- Evaluate the session

STAFF-WHAT TO WEAR WHEN TAKING PART IN FOREST SCHOOL

Winter

- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Wellington boots
- Warm hat, scarf and gloves
- Warm trousers
- Long-sleeved jumper or fleece

- Long-sleeved top
- Vest or t-shirt
- Thick socks - thermal if possible or two pairs of thinner ones Summer • Waterproof coat and waterproof trousers in bag
- Walking boots, trainers or wellington boots - sandals are not suitable
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen
- Long-sleeved top or light shirt - to protect shoulders and arms
- Light trousers - shorts/skirts are not suitable

Adult Roles & Responsibilities

The Trained and Named Forest School Leader is always the person in charge of Forest school sessions. The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.

All adult helpers MUST sign and date a form to show that they have read and understood this handbook and the risk assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping. They must sign and date the form stating that they comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School (code of conduct).

The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry and take a first aid kit into the forest at every session.

The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag into the forest for every session.

The Forest School Leader (or if delegated as part of the set up- will be confident that person has)checked that the Emergency Bag contains:

- Essential survival equipment
- A contact list for each child undertaking the activities
- The School's telephone number (and location details for the emergency services)

The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range.

In the event of an emergency, The Forest Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services. If contact with the school is lost the Leader will contact the emergency services.

The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every trip into the School's Forest Site.

When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1 .There is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.

The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.

The Forest Leader is responsible in training the supporting adults and the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.

The Forest leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session. This may be deputised to one of the trained Forest School teachers on the team if necessary.

Ambulance procedure

Call the emergency service/s that you require on 999 from a landline or 112 from a mobile. Notify a member of a member of Senior Leadership to provide further support to the Forest Based staff.

Location of the nearest working landline if mobile not working / no signal is situated in the lower school PPA room.

Staff in the office are instantly available on the school radio.

Give as much information about the patient and their location as possible:

- Who has been injured
- What their injuries are
- If they have any medical conditions
- Where on the site the patient is
- The directions to the site and the patient

Then arrange for someone to stand in the Carpark outside the school office to guide the Paramedic to the site on arrival. This person to have mobile phone for contact.

Don't hang up until you are told to do so by the call taker. Try to stay calm.

Missing person procedure

The following procedure should be instigated and followed by the Forest School Leader responsible for a group in the event of any person (adult or child) going missing from the Forest School group.

- Carry out 1, 2, 3 routine. This signals that everyone should move to the Forest School circle.
- Conduct a head count to check that all other members of the group are present.
- Have two members of staff or volunteers stay with the group at the Forest School circle and await further instructions.

- Send the remaining staff and volunteers to search the immediate area for an agreed length of time (e.g. 10 minutes). Arrange for them to return to the agreed meeting place at an agreed time.
- Ensure that each of the searchers has a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life. Searchers should stay within an area they know and be aware of their own safety.
- If the missing person is not found in the agreed length of time, everyone should walk to the school. Here the rest of the group can wait in safety and comfort.
- Alert school staff to the fact that there is a missing person.
- Organise a second search party. Any staff member who knows the site can be recruited to help this second search.

Searchers should work in pairs with at least one carrying a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life. Arrange for them to search for a specified length of time (e.g. 20 minutes) and return to reception at an agreed time.

If the missing person is not found by this second search, then with SLT consent, contact the police.

The decision may be made to do this while the second search is in progress depending on circumstances. At this point, a decision will need to be made regarding the rest of the group, in consultation with the SMT. It is likely that once they have changed out of their waterproofs, it will be best for the children to return to normal lessons.

At this point, a decision will need to be made regarding the rest of the group, in consultation with the SMT. It is likely that once they have changed out of their waterproofs, it will be best for the children to return to normal lessons. Areas for search:

- All outside fields and areas.
- The school car park
- Toilets within school
- All classrooms and cloakrooms in school
- The High School next door. After the incident is over, complete a full report using the Incident Report Form.

Fire procedure

- In the event of a fire that cannot be put out quickly and safely by the Forest School Leaders, blow repeated long whistles to alert the group.
- Gather everyone together, conduct a head count and evacuate area to a safe location – Playground meeting point in case of fire.
- Alert SMT and instruct one person to call the fire brigade and give directions to the site – see location and access to Square Spinney.
- Ask a second person to telephone the emergency numbers (see emergency plan).

- Arrange for someone to stand at the entrance to the school to direct emergency services.

Campfire procedure

FHC Forest School provides opportunities for children to get closer to nature and the outdoors through a variety of activities, which include learning about fire safety and how to make fires through the use of Kelly kettles. Children may also get the opportunity to light their own fires on wooden blocks or in small metal containers. This will only take place under strict supervision, with a one to one adult to child ratio.

All Forest School Leaders are skilled and practiced in fire-building and management. Kelly kettles and small fires only will be used and lit in the centre of the Forest School circle.

All Forest School activities are rigorously risk assessed. Sessions are planned in such a way as to introduce higher risk activities to children over a period of time. This allows Leaders to get to know the children in the group and for the children to learn how to behave responsibly and to build knowledge and understanding of the activity.

Boundary setting

In the first Forest School session, both physical and behavioural boundaries are agreed with the children. At each subsequent session, these boundaries are revisited and reinforced.

Developing routines – Sessions 1 and 2

- When they arrive at the Forest School site, children are shown how to sit round the Forest School circle (step over sit mats/tree stumps and sit down).
- The need for, and principles of, fire safety are explained. This will include the rule that when Kelly kettles or a fire are being used in the centre of the circle, only one child at a time is permitted to approach the Kelly kettle or fire, on instruction from the Forest School Leader.
- The children are shown how to move around the circle (step out of circle and walk around outside).
- For young children (Foundation and KS1), a game is then played to reinforce this – Leaders call out different statements that will relate to certain children in the group. E.g. “Everyone who has brown hair step outside and move around the circle” and so on.

In subsequent sessions, children will be asked to recall how they should behave at the Forest School circle.

Depending on the behaviour and ability of the group, the use of Kelly kettles and/or lit fires will usually be introduced in much later sessions.

Engendering responsibility

Through practicing these established routines, the children at Forest School will be able to enforce/remind others how to behave. Peers expect responsible behaviour and to a degree

will be self-policing. Forest School Leaders' daily campfire and use of kelly kettle and camp fire procedures To ensure that everyone stays safe on site and that risk is managed effectively, Forest School Leaders will follow a daily campfire and kelly kettle procedure.

Forest School Leaders will:

- Keep igniters in a safe location.
- Ensure there is a supply of water/soil/sand to douse the fire.
- Always carry a fire blanket.
- Ascertain the location and size of the fire to be built and plan accordingly including fuel stocks.
- Carry out a pre-visit site check and risk assess the site and the activity.
- Be prepared to abandon the activity in the event of unforeseen circumstances rendering the activity unsafe and have another activity on standby.
- Alert the fire brigade in advance if necessary to avoid false alarm and misidentification of Forest School fires as being uncontrolled.
- Douse fires at completion and check them after 30 minutes to ensure that they have not spread.

When lighting fires, Forest School Leaders will:

- Not wear loose clothing and tie long hair back, and ensure that children have their hair tied back and also have no loose clothing.
- Wear gloves.
- Allow only one child at a time to help with fire construction / approach the fire.
- Try to keep away from the smoke.
- Put out the fire with water when finished.

When using kelly kettles, Forest School Leaders will:

- Only light a fire in the tray of the kelly kettle in the centre of the Forest School circle.
- Kneel on one knee for ease of moving backwards.
- Never place the kettle on the fire without containing water.
- Only fill the kettle with water when cool.
- Place the tray of the kettle on a flat surface.
- Remove the cork before putting the kettle on the fire.
- Keep the spout on the opposite side to themselves and others.
- Remove the kettle from fire when the water starts to boil.
- Remove the kettle from the fire with the handle held vertically, using the chain to support it in an upright position.

Toilet and shelter facilities at Forest School

Toilet facilities

There are no toilets at the Forest School site. Children attending Forest School sessions will be informed in advance of the situation, and all children will be asked to go to the toilet before they leave school. Children who need the toilet. Will go in pairs back into the accessible toilet in school. An assisting adult will accompany all children.

Shelter

Shelter 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

17. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School

Everyone at FHC has a responsibility in relation to child protection.

We are committed to:

- taking all reasonable measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child and young person (pupil) in our care
- the practice of safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children and young people
- protecting each pupil from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another pupil

Our aims:

- to raise awareness of individual responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse
- to provide a systematic means of monitoring, recording and reporting of concerns and cases
- to provide guidance on recognising and dealing with suspected child abuse
- to provide a framework for inter-agency communication and effective liaison
- to ensure that any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay
- to ensure that safe recruitment procedures are operated
- to design and operate procedures which promote this policy and which, so far as possible, ensure that teachers and others who are innocent are not prejudiced by false allegations
- to contribute to the operation of appropriate health and safety procedures
- to have regard to and be consistent with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and guidance. In addition, adults working within Forest School need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is

encouraged, they may be moved to disclose information which they might have otherwise kept to themselves.

Any volunteer, or member of staff, who finds that a child is telling them something that concerns them should follow the course of action set out below in simple steps:

- Listen to the pupil but ask NO leading questions.
- Allow the child to lead the discussion but do not press for details.
- Keep calm and offer reassurance. Accept what the child says without challenge.
- Make NO promises. You cannot 'keep a secret'. You should make it understood that there are limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure.
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the one of the deputy DSL's.
- Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation, including the date, the time, the place the conversation occurred in and the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence.
- Record on CPOMs or if unable to make a written record, keep the record secure and hand it to the DSL as soon as practicably possible

18. Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

The FHC ethos emphasises the value placed on the individuality of all our children. We are committed to giving each child every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, attainment, age, disability, gender or background. We actively seek to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude individual children or groups of children. We aim to provide all our children with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement.

We will:

- Ensure equality of access for all children
 - Employ a range of styles, including collaborative learning, so that children can value working together
 - Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
 - Take account of the performance of all children when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets
 - Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of children. Our teachers ensure that our children:
 - feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
 - appreciate and value the differences in others
 - take responsibility for their own actions
 - participate safely, in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs
 - are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success
 - use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping
 - have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
 - have challenging targets that enable them to succeed
 - are encouraged to participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Forest School does mean Forest School FOR ALL. We do have a stock of extra all weather clothing but ask that both parents and children think about the usefulness of their clothing

for outdoor activities, and to be aware that they are likely to take home muddy and wet clothes after a Forest School session.

We encourage a level of risk-taking, always under close adult supervision, and actively foster friendships and collaboration between all children and adults. Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment, even when this appears to be of a transitory nature.

The Forest environment is an environment to which we are all entitled and we strongly believe that the experiences we will have there will linger in the memory for years to come.

Children with medical needs or disabilities will be helped so that they can take part fully in each Forest School session. Those children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need one to one supervision, but their entitlement to participate in Forest School remains the same.

19. Risk Assessment Guidelines

A SITE risk assessment is undertaken each week and a DAILY risk assessment and check is made prior to every Forest School session.

In addition, a dynamic risk assessment for specific activities will be established prior to any activity that may require it.

These will include: whittling, cutting wood, shelter building, fire lighting and cooking on an open fire, and palm drilling.

Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them.

The risk assessment process is detailed below:

- We look for potential hazards.
- We decide who might be at risk of harm.
- We think about how harm may occur and the worst outcome that we could face.
- We evaluate the current level of risk.
- We decide on a course of action or set of precautions that will be put in place to minimise the potential risk.
- We then re-evaluate the level of risk once our course of action and precautions have been put in place.
- We create a risk assessment and collate them in the Forest School file.
- We inform all adults with accompanying the group and require them to sign each relevant risk assessment to show that they have read and understood the assessments
- We regularly monitor and review each risk assessment, half termly and as an action is needed.

20. Poor Weather Procedures

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunder storms, or during periods of extreme cold. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions. The Forest School Leader will make the decision to continue with Forest school or postpone due to bad weather. When it is wet a shelter will be built immediately by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area that is available from the start that can be used.

Supporting Documents:

Forest School Accidents

ACCIDENT REPORT FORM –

This form should be completed if anyone is harmed as the result of an accident during a Forest School session. The incident will also be carefully documented on our CPOMS system.

This document will form the basis of a report should a claim be made, so try to be accurate and complete the whole form.

If you would like to add any further information to clarify the incident, please use the reverse of the sheet.

Name/s of Forest School Leader/s _____

Name of injured person/s _____

Address of injured person/s _____

DOB of injured person/s _____

Where did the accident take place? _____

Date and time of accident _____

Who else was present? _____

What happened? _____

What action was taken _____

Whom did you notify and when _____

Follow up/further action required _____

Please delete as appropriate: Further information is/is not supplied overleaf

Signed _____ Date _____

Please give this to the school office to allow them to complete the Leeds accident return form and upload onto CPOMS

23. Letter To Parents: Forest School at FHC



Dear Parents,

We are now in a position to run a Forest School within the school grounds and using the local woodland spaces.

It is planned that all children should have a 'Forest School' block once a year (a half terms worth of sessions sessions) during their time at FHC.

We will be using Skelton Woods and Horse Shoe Woods for our woodland based learning and may also use our school site for skills based sessions.

The Leaders Forest School is Emma Wraighte. Sessions will be supported Deputy Forest School Leaders and by class teams.

Please read the following important information and if you have any questions please see your child's class teacher.

Information about Forest School Forest School is run by trained Leaders and aims to build up children's skills, abilities and confidence week by week through practical hands-on activities in the outdoors. It gives them the chance to explore, learn and discover at their own pace in a safe and supportive space.

Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation. Activities can include:

- Woodwork using tools, e.g. making musical instruments, jewellery, decorative items
- Natural art
- Fire lighting
- Using knots and lashings
- Shelter building
- Bug hunts There are many benefits to Forest School.

The practice of forest schools allows children to:

- Develop physical abilities and help participants to stay active and healthy.
- Heighten self-awareness and improve emotional and social skills.
- Promote co-operative and group working.

- Encourage children to take care of themselves and others.
- Foster care, appreciation and respect for wildlife and wild places.
- Broaden knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

Safety at Forest School

There is always a high adult to participant ratio at Forest School. All activities are thoroughly risk assessed before the start of each session and Leaders continue to monitor the safety of the group as activities progress. There is always a trained first aider present at each session and a written emergency plan to follow.

Who will be running the Forest School sessions?

Sessions will be overseen by Forest School leader Emma Wraighte or one of the Deputy Forest School Leaders, supported by the class team.

What your child needs to wear for Forest School

The Forest School sessions will take place entirely outside in the wood whatever the weather. We will provide a shelter from the elements, but it is still important that your child wears clothes that are waterproof and warm and that are OK to get wet and muddy.

Your child should wear:

- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Wellington boots (or sturdy walking boots)
- Comfortable long trousers
- Comfortable, warm long sleeved top or fleece
- Long sleeved T-shirt.
- Thick socks if the weather's cold – or two pairs of normal ones

24. Supporting teacher/Helper Agreement

I have read and understood all that is stated in this handbook and had the opportunity to have any questions answered about its contents or my role.

I understand that the Forest Leader is in charge of the activities within the session, and have read the relevant risk assessment for the activities to take place during my session.

I have provided my medical and emergency details to the Forest leader.

I agree through my conduct and support of the children, I will promote best practice and safety during Forest School Sessions.

Signed _____ Dated _____