

Bell Farm School Forest School Policy



Introduction

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

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

Aims

- To provide children with experiences that encourage 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 natural area around them.

The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through session plans and evaluations. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

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

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out

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

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

Bell Farm School Policies and Forest School

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

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid policy
- Risk Assessment Policy and Risk Assessments particular to Forest Schools
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality & Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Particular attention is paid to the following areas:

Health and Safety

The Forest School ethos supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the Forest School folder at school.

All Forest School Leaders have an up-to-date certificate in ITC 16 Hours Forest School First Aid and are in charge of first aid arrangement. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and a mobile phone is carried. The school will contact the parents.

Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

Safeguarding

Forest School sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by members of staff and parent volunteers.

Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.

All Bell Farm staff and regular volunteers have current CRB checks.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers and a Cause for Concern sheet will be filled in as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the class teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Equality and Inclusion

During Forest School sessions, all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

Behaviour

During Forest School we operate within the Bell Farm Behaviour Policy. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the wellbeing of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office

Emergency Action Plan

This EAP (Emergency Action Plan) is kept in the top of the Happy Sack at all times.

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff would direct the emergency services to the casualty, an ITC First Aider would attend to the casualty until the Emergency Services arrive. The casualty would be accompanied to hospital by a member of school staff. The Class teacher or Forest School Leader would oversee the rest of the group are counted and prepared to return to school.

The school office would be informed after dialling the Emergency Services and assistance to return back to school requested if necessary. The adult accompanying the casualty would return to school once the child was in the care of their parents/carers.

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

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

Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school. Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

Emergency Services:	999
School Office:	01932 224009
Chloe Hopkins Forest School Practitioner:	
Laura Walker Forest School Practitioner:	
Jane Bruce Forest School Practitioner:	
Jennie Stevenson Forest School Practitioner:	
Emma Seabrook Forest School Practitioner:	
Dan Fellowes: Forest School Practitioner:	
Lucy Chamberlain: Forest School Practitioner:	
Anne Cooper: Headteacher:	

Location of Forest School Site:
Bell Farm School, Hersham Road, Walton on Thames, KT125NB

Whiteley Village, Walton on Thames, Surrey, KT124EH

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest School Site
- Whiteley Village Site
- Tool use
- Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the Forest School File in the School Office.

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. The safety sweep will be recorded on a safety sweep form and kept in the Happy Sack.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment during Forest School

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

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'. (These can be found in the Forest School File).
- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest School Leaders at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest School Team feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:2 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- It is not expected for any other adult who has not completed Forest School training attending Forest School to use tools with children, only the Forest School Team.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest School Team responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School:

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:
Children must have a secure knowledge of fire circle boundary 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

The agreement of Anne Cooper, Head Teacher.

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

When lighting a fire:

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioners 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 with the children's help.
- 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 fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- Protective gloves are to be worn when stoking and starting the fire or using a Kelly kettle.

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

- Everyone should sanitise their hands before handling food and drink.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication and copies of Care Plans will be in the Happy Sack
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the Forest School Team

- The team are all trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioners, holding an up to date ITC Outdoor First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School team have the safety of the children uppermost at all times. They will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The team will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.
- The team will carry an emergency pack at all times "Happy Sack".
- The team are responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The Forest School team will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, e.g., trips, falls, stings, etc.

Designated Person Responsibility for each Forest School session

Overall responsibility for the session lies with a member of the forest school team as these are the only persons with Level 3 Practitioner Training:

(Risk assessments, safety sweep, and essential equipment, rucksack, planning, observations and next steps for learning).

Chloe Colley

Laura Walker

Jane Bruce

Jennie Stevenson

Emma Seabrook

Dan Fellowes

Lucy Chamberlain

Other members of staff and DBS checked parents can assist during the Forest School sessions but cannot be responsible during tool or fire use.

Forest School Rules

- Keep your hands away from your mouth
- Leave things to grow
- Keep within the set boundaries

Routines and Procedures For Forest School Sessions

Preparation – A member of the Forest School team will do a sweep of the site prior to the weekly sessions and will check the Happy sack contains all essential items. The Emergency Action Plan is kept in the top of the Happy sack and all Adults are aware of this. First Aid kit, inhalers, wipes and spare hats and gloves (children's and adults) are kept in the Happy sack. The tool bag, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate. A member of the Forest School team will carry the rucksack to the site. Waterproofs will be taken to the classroom prior to session.

Prior to the session children will use the toilet and put on their waterproofs. Forest School safety rules will be shared with the group. Children will put wellies on the outside the classroom door and walk in pairs to the site.

During the session children participate in a variety of activities which are inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. They also learn how to light fires safely. The children learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools. This is a tightly supervised activity on a 1:2 ratio of adult to children. It is introduced gradually in small steps. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment.

Back at school children will remove wellies out doors or standing on sheeting (if very wet), before entering the classroom.

After the session Equipment will be washed and stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and hung on rails. Flasks and water containers will be emptied and cleaned out. Tools (if taken) will be cleaned and locked away. The essential equipment Happy Sack will be put away and any items used replaced.

Cancelling Forest School

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

Forest School sessions at Whiteley Village 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 School Team are unable to attend.

Essential Equipment Needed during Forest School Session

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

- EAP (Emergency Action Plan)
- Mobile phone
- Medical Care Plans
- Newspaper
- Matches (Campfire sessions only)
- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- Sun cream

- First Aid Kit
- Inhalers
- Carry bag for dirty / wet items
- Spare hat & gloves for children and adults

We would also take a ground sheet and string to erect a shelter as needed.

Clothing Requirements For Forest School

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

- Woolly hat/sunhat
- Gloves
- Jacket/waterproof coat
- Fleece/sweatshirt
- Waterproof trousers
- Spare socks
- Stout shoes/wellies/boots