

# Longmoor Primary School

## Forest Schools Policy

2024 - 2026



<i>Chair of Governors</i> <i>Signature: Jane Wright</i>	<i>Date: 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2024</i>
<i>Chair of Governors</i> <i>Signature: J.Wright</i>	<i>Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022</i>
<i>Chair of Governors</i> <i>Signature: J.Wright</i>	<i>Date: 8.07.20</i>

# Forest School Handbook

## Introduction

This handbook contains important information, policies and procedures relating to the running of Forest School sessions at Longmoor Primary School. The handbook will be made available to staff as well as helpers wishing to participate in Forest School sessions, prior to the activities taking place. The handbook is subject to biennial review and to immediate review if an incident indicates the need for this.

## Background of Forest School

In the early 2000s, Derbyshire County Council became aware of Forest Schools; it has been widely used in Scandinavia for years. They started investigating further into the concept. In 2004, a Derbyshire teacher became Forest School trained, by 2005, Derbyshire ran a pilot project with Archimedes Training. The pilot was a success, benefits were seen and Derbyshire planned to spread awareness of Forest Schools through the county. They provided funding to train Forest School Practitioners throughout Derbyshire and created cluster groups for them to keep in touch and develop ideas. As the understanding of Forest School spread, other establishments trained staff to become Forest School practitioners and participation grew. As of August 2012, Derbyshire had 197 settings involved, a figure that is probably much higher now. Today Derbyshire Forest Schools are excellent in providing trained practitioners with activity ideas, risk assessment, frequent cluster meetings and other opportunities to strengthen their Forest School. Longmoor Primary School began a Forest School programme in 2017.

## Our Ethos

We are very lucky at Longmoor to have a lot of green space, 4 acres in fact! We believe all children should have the opportunity to use this space through inspirational and challenging outdoor learning opportunities. Forest School intends to develop a child holistically, improving their social and emotional health, academic ability and physical strength. Children who participate in Forest Schools will be given opportunities to develop their curiosity, confidence, self-esteem, creativity, empathy, resilience, social skills, knowledge of the natural environment and ability to assess risk. Forest School programmes will be learner-led and play-centred but challenging in an exploratory, sensory, problem-solving and physical way. We hope to develop a

long-term appreciation for the outdoors amongst our children.

### Things we do

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of participants. Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations

### What to wear

We will go outside, whatever the weather and as the saying goes 'There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad preparation!' The only exception is thunder and lightning or extreme wind that makes the trees unsafe. As our sessions are active, the children should not get cold, however they will be encouraged and reminded to tell an adult if they are particularly cold or wet. It is vital that participants are dressed appropriately.

In the winter children will need;

- several layers of clothing
- warm socks
- hat
- gloves
- scarf
- waterproofs
- wellies

In the summer, children will need;

- long trousers
- jumper
- sun hat

- sun cream
- old shoes

We have spare waterproof coats, trousers and wellies in all sizes in school for participants arriving without adequate protection.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Forest School Leader will be suitably trained and able to administer first aid. They will have also undertaken current DBS checks and work for the school. Any other staff or volunteers will have been fully briefed beforehand and provided with all risk assessments, policies and procedures appropriate to the session in which they are involved. Volunteers will not be left alone with children if a current DBS has not been seen.

Children should be allowed to learn as independently as possible, often without demonstrating or suggesting. If staff are asked for support or the learner is at risk of danger, they may intervene. It is the role of the Forest School Leader to plan, deliver and evaluate Forest School sessions. They also take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are adhered to.

All staff involved in a Forest School session should sign to say they have read, understood and agree to all relevant documents to the session, including risk assessments. They will be informed of the plan in advance. They will also be asked to provide feedback on the session verbally.

Children involved in Forest School will have various opportunities to evaluate the sessions and their learning. They will also become involved in the process of developing future sessions by sharing their thoughts, ideas and interests.

### Ratios

The following minimum adult ratios will be adhered to, to ensure the safety and supervision of the children.

KS1: 1 adult: 8 children

KS2: 1 adult: 10 children

However, suitable levels of support will be determined in advance depending on the types of activities and the needs of the children involved.

### Policies and Procedures

#### Health and Safety

Some Forest School activities are considered higher risk than usual for participants. We seek to minimise all risks by following specific procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires. Risk assessments have been carried out on other key hazards that children may come into contact with. More details of these can be found in the Forest School Risk Assessment.

### Risk/Benefit Analysis

It is important however, to consider the benefits of taking these risks. We recognise that taking risks is an important part of learning and developing. We aim to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn how to deal with risks while considering their personal safety. More information on these benefits can be found in the 'Benefits of these risks' document.

### Weather

Changing weather can create new challenges at Forest School. Children should be dressed appropriately for the season (see What to Wear). During colder months, extra precautions will be taken to ensure children and staff are safe, dry and warm.

Checks of the site will be carried out before every session to ensure the trees around the site are safe. The risk of high winds has been considered when in a woodland area. In conditions such as unsafe high winds and lightning, the session will be cancelled or will take place in open ground on the field (in the case of high wind). See 'Adverse Weather Conditions risk assessment' for more details.

### First Aid

The Forest School leader will be trained and able to administer first aid. They will take a first aid bag with them to the Forest School site. Should the first aid need to be done in school (need for water etc), the whole group must assemble, ensure the site is left in a safe state and return to school. The school's first aid risk assessment and procedures of recording will be followed once back in school. The Forest School leader will carry a mobile phone in case of emergency.

### Emergency and Serious Incident Procedure

We hope to ensure all children and staff enjoy a safe Forest School session, however all adults involved in a session must be familiar with the Emergency Procedure should we need to use it. If a child directed activity has gone beyond the constraints of a formal risk assessment, the

dynamic risk assessment flow chart will be followed to remove the child from a potential threat.

### Photos and Video

Permission for photos and videos will be requested beforehand. We will follow the school policy on photos and videos. We aim to avoid photographing or videoing children that do not have permission or blur out faces should they appear in recorded material.

### Safeguarding

We will follow the school's procedure should a safeguarding issue arise. The Forest School Leader will be made aware, in advance, of any child that this may concern. Should a concern arise at Forest School, the necessary action will be taken.

### Behaviour

All adults involved have a responsibility to protect participants' safety and well-being. We aim to promote respect and care for ourselves, others and the environment, team-work and a self-awareness of abilities and limitations.

At the start of every session, the rules and boundaries of Forest School will be discussed. Children will be encouraged to contribute to the rules. All children will be made aware of the consequences in place.

#### Behaviour expectations for adults involved in sessions

- Be a positive role model, particularly encouraging respect for others and the environment.
- Praise positive behaviour and children being kind and considerate
- Encourage children to give things a go, try to develop their resilience and self-esteem.
- Dojos will be given out for positive behaviour, in line with the School Behaviour Policy
- Children will be given one warning of a broken rule, providing the act hasn't put them in serious danger (not listening etc)
- If the child has purposefully put themselves or another in danger, they will be asked to stop the activity.
- Should the Forest School Leader feel that the behaviour is unacceptable, it is a threat to the safety of the others and appropriate warnings have been given, they will use a mobile phone to inform a member of SLT, who will remove the child from the session.

- Not attending Forest School should not be used a punishment for children misbehaving in lessons.

### Tools, Fire and Activity Guidance

#### Tool Use Procedure

Tools may be necessary in many Forest School sessions. They enable children to develop practical skills as well as confidence, resilience and risk management. Where tools are used, we aim to ensure they are used safely and with as little risk as possible (see Tool Use risk assessment for more details.) Tools may include, but are not limited to, potato peelers, loppers, bow saws and knives.

- Tools will not be used unless the Forest School leader feels the group are able to use them appropriately; groups will be supervised closely until they are deemed competent with limited supervision.
- Knife work will always be supervised closely
- The Forest School leader will ensure all tools are fit for use before the session and only safe, working tools will be used.
- Where possible, the children will use child-sized tools.
- Before use, a 'Tool Talk' will be given for the tool, children will be asked to demonstrate this.
- Tools will be counted out and counted back in again.
- Tools will be kept in a designated safe area when not in use and not left unattended.
- All guards and casings will be replaced immediately after use.
- Walking around with tools will not be permitted.
- We will adhere to safe working distances as in the 'Tool Talk'.
- Gloves will be provided and worn by participants using tools.
- A specific tool zone will be used for those using tools.

#### Safe Lifting

Some activities can be physically demanding for participants and heavy objects may need to be handled. Where possible, we will use ropes to drag heavy objects. Participants will be briefed prior to handling heavy materials on how to pick them up appropriately to avoid injury.

- Stand with legs shoulder width apart in a stable position
- Bend at the knees, avoid bending or twisting the back

- Hold the heavy object close to your body, at the waist.
- Don't pick up objects that are too heavy, ask for help!

### Fire Procedure

Fires are also important during Forest School sessions. They build resilience in children and a great sense of achievement once it is lit! Sometimes it may be necessary to light a fire to keep participants warm or cook. Fires will only be used when appropriate to do so. We aim to ensure all building and lighting of fires is done safely with little risk to others (see Fires Risk Assessment).

- DCC Small Fires Guidance will be followed
- The importance of dead wood for fires and habitats will be discussed prior to each fire.
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood and seating participants appropriately around the fire.
- Fires will only be lit in well ventilated areas
- Children will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable equipment and materials
- A lit fire will be supervised at all times by an adult
- All children will be fully briefed before the fire about how to behave and move around a fire.
- Safety equipment will be available including fire gloves, a burns kit and water.
- All fires will be fully extinguished and all traces of the fire will be removed at the end of a session unless in a designated fire pit.

### Food Hygiene

All participants will be encouraged to wash their hands before eating outside with water and soap, which will be provided. During some session we will cook food such as popcorn on a fire. Allergies will be considered before eating.

### Environmental Impact Assessment

At Forest School, we wish to promote a positive attitude and respect towards our environment. However, our presence in the Woodland may have a negative impact, we hope to try to reduce this where possible. We will minimise waste and promote the reuse of materials. We will always leave our site as we wish to find it.



## Minimising Impacts

### Collecting Wood for Fires

We will limit the frequency of fires and evaluate the amount of dead wood available before having a fire. We will only collect the minimum amount required for the fire.

### Fires

We will designate fixed areas of fires. We will ensure all fires are fully extinguished. Fire ash will be disposed of in nettle bushes. If necessary we will use a fire pit.

### Tree Climbing, Shelter building and Swings

These may cause damage to trees, we will assess the tree prior to the activities. We will restrict these to trees that will tolerate the activity. We will alternate these trees.

### Collecting Natural Materials

We will ensure, where possible, leaves and flowers are taken from fallen parts of the plants and trees. We will limit the frequency of this type of activity. Children will be made aware of plants and trees that grow quickly rather than those that take time to grow. If leaves or flowers are taken from a plant, we will ensure this is kept to a minimum.

### Trampling

The main area of Forest School may become very muddy. Alternating the area in which we base ourselves will leave an area free to grow back. However, it has been decided that we would rather only have one muddy area. We will ensure children are wearing appropriate footwear. This area will be observed over the year and reassessed. It may become appropriate to lay bark over the area.

### Litter

The Forest School bag will contain a black bin bag which will be used for all litter. This litter will be taken back to school and put in an appropriate bin.

### Disturbance to habitats

Children will be made aware of plants and trees that house particular animals during specific seasons. They will be able to observe these areas but do not disturb. During spring, Forest School will stay clear of the butterfly farm plants.

#### Disease from other areas

On some occasions, it may be necessary to bring sticks and twigs from other areas into the Forest School site. These pieces of wood will be checked for disease prior to collecting and bringing onto the site.

The environmental impact on our site will be reassessed after carrying out each year of Forest School activities in the setting.