

Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school
Forest School
Forest School Information

This information has been taken from The Forest School Initiative Lancashire Forest School Leader Level 3 Training Handbook. Any additions are within square brackets [].

Forest School uses the outdoor environment to help all children learn. Children are encouraged to develop independence skills, improve their decision-making, and raise their self-esteem through small achievable tasks. [This links to the Heathlands Primary Academy values of: Respect, Excellence and Integrity. These are detailed below.]

Sessions of Forest School are child/learner led to accommodate individual learning styles and schemas, children/learners are encouraged to make choices, and follow their own learning. The adults' role is facilitative and enables observation and assessment of the children/learners by the qualified Forest School Leaders. Forest School has been an integral part of early years' education in Scandinavia since the 1950s. Their philosophy of the Forest School/Nature Nurseries was based upon a desire to provide young children with an education which encouraged appreciation of the wide, natural world and which would encourage responsibility for nature conservation in later life. Whilst using the outdoor environment to encourage and inspire children to grow in confidence, independence, self esteem and develop an ability to assess risks for themselves.

Teachers, learning support staff and child care workers involved with children/learners who undertake Forest School report significant improvements in independence, self esteem, social skills and concentration levels. Parents of children involved in Forest School have reported changes in independence, self-esteem and their child's social outlook.

Forest School works alongside the 'Learning Outside the Classroom' manifesto.

In Forest School sessions, the safety of children is paramount.... [See separate risk assessments for ratios dependent on activities]... The children quickly learn boundaries within which they must work. They respond to the sense of freedom and adhere to the rules laid down for their safety. They go out in all weathers... [See separate risk assessments for exceptions]... They explore and use natural materials found in the forest. Within a safe, secure environment, it is possible to encourage the children to move away from close adult interaction and to become more responsible for each other and for themselves.

Who can benefit from Forest School?

Children/learners of any age... [and ability]... can benefit from Forest School. Considerable experience has been gained in developing Forest School in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but over the past ten years, this has been extended through the Key Stages in many schools.

Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-School's Values

Respect: At Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school, we will make good choices to ensure we take care of ourselves, each other, our belongings and our environment. We know that everyone has the right to be listened to without being judged. We accept differences and treat everyone equally.

Excellence : At Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school, we never give up, even when we are faced with a challenge. We believe that through hard work and determination we can achieve the goals that we set ourselves to become the best we can.

Integrity: At Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school, we try hard to be honest and tell the truth, even when we find this difficult. This is especially important during Forest School sessions, as there can be risky situations and we all work better together and more happily if we are all being honest and helpful to one another.

Aims and Ethos

The ethos of Forest School is based on a fundamental respect for children and young people and for their capacity to maintain curiosity in the world around them. It believes in a child's right to play; the right to access the outdoors (and in particular a woodland environment); the right to assess and access risk, the right to enjoy the vibrant reality of the natural world; and the right to experience a healthy range of emotions.

It is an approach to education that makes use of the outdoor environment to create a unique learning vehicle. Forest School sessions provide increasingly diverse opportunities for children to benefit from a supportive curriculum that can help children build positive values and attitudes about themselves, about learning, and the environment in which they live.

Children are given appropriately challenging and achievable tasks that build their confidence, skills and independence, and are given the time to thoroughly explore their thoughts, feelings and relationships. This time and reflective practice develops inter and intrapersonal skills, which are well documented as being directly linked to learning skills.

At our Forest School, we hope that children will gain:

- The inspiration to be curious, fascinated, interested and inventive
- The freedom to explore different ways of 'being', feeling, behaving and interacting because
- The physical, mental and emotional space to be active and interactive
- Opportunities to experience beauty, joy, wonder and exuberance, and become 'lost in the experience'
- Rich opportunities for developing their imagination and being inventive and resourceful
- Opportunities to meet challenges and learn to handle risk
- Relief from stress and anxiety
- Opportunities to explore the school values of respect, motivation, resilience, aspiration and independence

Forest School Rules and Countryside Code

- Children are encouraged to be involved in the decisions about their environment and safety.
- Children will learn to understand and appreciate the countryside code as they learn to enjoy and respect the environment in which they are learning.
- Children will learn about issues regarding sustainability, and how their actions have consequences.
- Children will be encouraged to develop a respect for tools, and understand their potential, risks and uses.
- Clear boundaries will be set dependent upon the activities taking place in the session and children will begin to learn and understand that whilst there are risks involved in Forest School, careful steps have been taken to make them manageable. Children will be involved in setting the boundaries as and when appropriate.

Health and Safety at Work Act (HASWA)

The HASWA outlines the responsibilities of employers (in this case, the Forest School Leader), and also of adults working with the group).

Complete details of hygiene, toileting, tool safety and PPE can be found in the Forest School Handbook.

Forest School Procedures Summary

Kelly Kettle

When using a Kelly Kettle ensure you use a level non flammable surface to place the base on as the Kelly Kettle has a high centre of gravity.

The Kelly Kettle must never be left unattended when a fire is lit.
The air hole should be on the opposite side to the spout, keep the spout away from you to avoid splashes, remove the cork when the kettle is placed on the flames.
Feed the fuel through the chimney and have fire gloves nearby.
Ensure there is ample emergency water close by to douse flames.
Ensure there is a first aid box with burns kit included.

Open Fire

In the event of an emergency at the open fire there should be a good supply of water to douse flames and put out the fire.

In the event of an adult or child's clothes being on fire they should be encouraged to 'stop, drop and roll'. Also wrap them up in a fire blanket, both actions will put out the flames.

At the end of the session the fire should be extinguished with water, dampened and cooled then the ashes spread out to cool.

The hot embers should not be left unattended at any time.

Remove large logs (from a star fire) and immerse them into a bucket of water to fully extinguish, remember to use fire gauntlets to remove logs in case they are hot.

Ensure there is a first aid kit with burns kit included.

Have a fire blanket in case of emergency.

Risk Management and how it applies to Forest School

Risk Management and Risk Assessment

"Risk-Benefit management is a fundamental part of life and is a skill needed for young people's safety and well-being. Staff have a duty of care towards young people. However, this certainly does not mean 'wrapping them in cotton wool'. Therefore we have a responsibility not only to keep young people safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves". (Getting ready – Managing Risk, From Council for Learning Outside the Classroom).

Risk management is about identifying and managing any significant chance of harm.

Significance is determined by two factors:

1. The likelihood of an accident or incident happening.
2. The severity of injury or harm if it does occur.

Children are encouraged to play a part in the assessment and management of risk. At our Forest School, this helps the children to understand why we have rules, and what the experience would be like if the risk assessments and rules were not in place. This gives more value and significance to the learning which takes place in the Forest School sessions. As long as the correct control measures are in place and the children understand the reason for these control measures, then learning outside the classroom can take place effectively and enjoyably.

Toileting Arrangements

As the Forest School site is located on school property, children can use the school toilets if they need to. Children are always given the opportunity to go to the toilet before and after Forest School sessions. If, however, the need arises, they can go in pairs into school. For Key Stage 1 and Early Years children, an adult must go with the children due to the distance to cover to and from the Forest School area.

Wet wipes and hand gel are provided in the Forest School first aid kit; alongside the bucket of water, however children should follow normal hand-washing procedures in the school building.

Emergency Contact Details and Procedure

If there is an emergency, one of the adults from the Forest School area will return to the school office to use the telephone if necessary. A mobile phone will be carried at all times.

Location: The Spinney, top left end of the playing field. Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school, Andrews Close, Springwater Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH11 8HB. 01202 574452

Medical details and emergency contact information are kept in secure files in the school office.

Office Contact: Mrs Jenny Tarrant and Mrs Michelle Yannick

Additional Contact: Miss Janine Harries (Head Teacher), Mrs Jill Turner (Assistant Headteacher) or Miss Rebecca Smith (Assistant Headteacher)

Flexibility and Child-Led Learning

Although activities have been planned prior to sessions, if children wish to explore something which has just appeared (for example after a stormy night branches may have fallen, or an animal may have left something), or explore something that they haven't seen before/links with other areas of their learning etc, then provision will be made for this.

The sessions can be adapted accordingly, providing risk assessments have been carried out. This is the nature of Forest School, that the children lead the learning, and can choose to make use of the opportunities prepared for them, or they can choose to make use of the natural environment in their own way. This links to the Forest School ethos as originally set up in Scandinavian countries.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

If, during a Forest School session, a disclosure of any kind is made to the adults present, Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school's safeguarding and confidentiality policies will apply.

Photographs and videos may be taken during Forest School sessions. The Forest School practitioner will be aware of those children whose parents have requested that they not be named and/or photographed in any school documentation and will act accordingly in conjunction with Heathlands Primary Academy and Pre-school's data protection policy. A list of these children is kept at school.

Equal Opportunities

In accordance with our school policy on equal opportunities, the Forest School aims to give every child the 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. This opportunity also works alongside developing skills of resilience and independence when offered the opportunity to work on their own
- 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.

Hygiene Policy and Procedure (Food Hygiene as well as General Hygiene)

Aim

To prevent the spread of all infection, adults in the Forest School setting will ensure that all school policies relating to hygiene and the following good practices are observed without taking away the essence of 'being in the wild' for the children.

Method

- Children are encouraged to follow the hygiene practices in an independent manner.

- Children are educated about the need to follow hygiene practices such as hand washing.

Personal Hygiene

- Staff and children will have washed their hands after using the toilet.
- Individual paper towels available after washing hands and eating. They must be used and disposed of appropriately.
- Hygiene rules related to bodily fluids will be followed with particular care and all staff and volunteers are aware of how infections, including HIV infection, can be transmitted.

Cleaning and Clearing

Any spills of blood, vomit or excrement will be wiped up and flushed away down the toilet.

Rubber gloves will always be used when cleaning up spills of bodily fluids. Floors and other affected surfaces will be disinfected using anti bacterial spray used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Fabrics contaminated with bodily fluids will be thoroughly washed in hot water off-site.

Food Hygiene

Children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating. Hand gel and wet wipes are on hand for quick use, and the toilets with hand washing facilities are a 5 min walk away. Children are encouraged to get an adult to check that the food they are about to eat is suitable. If it is over/undercooked adults to advise next steps. If food falls on the floor, replace it. Do not let children eat food which has fallen on the floor. When toasting marshmallows, children should use a clean, ready-made skewer, or a stick which has had the bark removed and therefore the dirt from the outer part of the stick. Hands are not generally used for the consumption of marshmallows in this way.

Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually and changes may be implemented during the year should government policies or guidelines change or reflective practice highlights concerns.