

Burford Primary School



FOREST SCHOOL PARENTS' HANDBOOK



September 2015

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Our Vision for Forest School

What is Forest School?

‘Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees’.

(Forest School Association)

At Burford Primary School, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child-centred approach.

The Forest School Principles and how they link to our setting:

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions and aims for children to visit in blocks of six to eight weeks each season. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process.
2. It takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment – we have been offered woodland in Filkins for use by the whole school. The woodland is managed by the Ernest Cook Trust.
3. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. We will offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.
5. It will be managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner; Teresa Lock is currently training for the Level 3 Award, Forest School Leader.
6. We will use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:
<http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

Forest School ethos

At Burford Primary School we are committed to the ethos of Forest School and aim to:

- Fulfil every child's potential
- Develop a love of learning that creates independent and confident learners
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community
- Promote children's self-esteem
- Encourage independence
- Promote positive behaviour to ensure the safe running of Forest School sessions
- Provide appropriate adult:child ratios
- Plan sessions that contribute towards a safe environment

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session.

These include:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick.'
- Respect for plants, trees and animals
- Staying in view of the base camp at all times
- Staying within the designated areas at all times
- Adult supervision for tree climbing

Adult Role:

All adults at Forest School model appropriate behaviour and safe practices, whilst interacting with the children and each other; boundaries are shared, promoting positive reinforcement and choices and consequences discussed. They will:

- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times
- Carry out necessary risk assessments
- Carry a first aid kit in the 'emergency rucksack' and administer first aid as required
- Create a positive learning environment, based on each child's needs
- Encourage good relationships, based on respect of each other
- Promote, honesty, politeness and kindness through example
- Use encouraging language and show appreciation of each child's contributions and effort
- Ensure fair treatment and equality for all attending, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, in line with the school's Equality Policy.

Forest School Clothing

Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy roads.

'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing'

Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating; we need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session.

In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved tee shirt
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Long socks, wellies or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Children should arrive at school in their Forest School clothes and bring school uniform, in a bag, to change into after the session.

All Forest School Kit should be named and kept in school for other activities and taken home regularly to be washed.

Forest School Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy operates in line with the whole school policy, a copy of which can found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

- No child or adult will be discriminated against on any grounds including gender, age*, background, race, religion or ability including SEND.
- Wherever possible, adjustments will be made to accommodate children with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues. This may include additional adult helpers, adapting the site if physically possible or adapting activities.
- All participants should feel that their experiences and contributions are worthwhile, so raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Forest School is a child led experience and wherever possible the children will be allowed to follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the woodland environment.

*Due to curriculum and practical reasons, the younger children in the school will initially attend Forest School on a regular basis.

Confidentiality Policy

All forest school staff and volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy.

Medical and personal information

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and kept confidentially within the school's Forest School Handbook
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only trained staff will apply first aid to children and adults attending; volunteers must make staff aware if they are approached by a child needing care
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

Photographic and Video permissions

- As part of the permission to attend Forest School sessions, parents will be asked to agree to their child being photographed or filmed for observational, training or school promotion purposes; any child without this permission will be recorded in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for this purpose
- Volunteers should only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader.
- Mobile phones should only be used for emergency purposes.

Observations

- Trained staff will be required to undertake observations and assessments of the children attending, as part of the curriculum and wellbeing scales.
- Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity; this must be in strict confidence.

Safeguarding at Forest School

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Burford Primary School's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

A summary of the policy is included below:

- Every child has the right to be kept safe from danger and learn in a safe and secure environment
- All staff involved in Forest School hold relevant DBS checks
- All Forest School staff attend regular safeguarding training
- All concerns and disclosures are confidential and will only be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and necessary agencies, if appropriate.

Burford Primary School safeguarding lead persons are Jenny Dyer (Head Teacher) and Zoe Duff (Senior Teacher).

Communication Strategy

Clear communication is essential for the smooth running of Forest School. Children and adults need to listen carefully to rules, boundaries and instructions, linked to safety procedures and activities. There will always be time for questions or comments from children and adults.

- All adults attending will have received a copy of the Emergency Action Plan which will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook, in the 'emergency rucksack'.
- Any staff or volunteers attending Forest School must meet prior to leaving school to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a mobile phone for emergency use
- Our current site is managed by the Ernest Cook Educational Trust which has responsibility for keeping the site safe and maintained on a long term basis.
- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website
- Parents will receive general information letters before sessions begin, a permission slip and details of transport costs
- There will be a parents' meeting and/or opportunity for an informal chat with the Forest School Leader before sessions begin
- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the visit; rules will be discussed and practised in the classroom setting.

The Forest School Leader will be responsible for communicating between the Trust and School.

If no representative from the Trust is present at a session, then the Forest School Leader will be responsible for visiting the site before the children arrive to risk assess the area.

Contact Numbers

Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the school office at the earliest opportunity. Any changes of contact number will be given to the School Office.

Transport and travel arrangements for Forest School

Our current site is located approximately seven miles from the school premises. We will travel there by coach supplied by a local company.

Forest School visits will be completed in accordance with Burford Primary School's policies and procedures for school trips, including checked designated school transport providers.

Staffing to child ratios are as follows:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – 1:6
- Key Stage One – 1:8
- Key stage Two – 1:15

There must always be a minimum of three adults on site and the Forest School Leader should be supernumerary; adults can be made up of staff and volunteers.

A second approved vehicle should ideally be available to transport an injured child or adult, rather than wait for the coach to be returned. Any drivers should have the relevant Insurance clearance from the school and two adults must accompany any child.

Assessment and Reporting Arrangements for Forest School Sessions

During Forest School sessions, children will be observed and assessed in an unobtrusive way as within the classroom. Evidence will be gathered using photographs, videos, written observations and through our electronic observation tool '2simple'. All staff involved in Forest school will be responsible for gathering evidence; volunteers would be asked to feedback to the Forest School Leader.

Information gathered will be used to plan activities and next steps for the children, particularly within the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Observations will also be shared with parents.

Forest School Hygiene Policy

Toileting:

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school
- A designated area will be set aside for each session
- An adult, with the relevant DBS checks, will accompany the children to the area
- Wet wipes will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning
- A trowel will be carried in the Forest School Emergency Rucksack
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will be changed in accordance with the Schools Personal Care Policy

Hand Washing:

- Whenever possible, soap and water will be used for handwashing at snack time
- Disposable paper towels will be used for drying and bagged for disposal
- Anti-bacterial wipes will be available throughout the session

Snack time or cooking:

- During snack time or cooking activities, food hygiene regulations will be adhered
- Children will wash and dry hands and sit on the base camp benches when consuming any food or drink
- Drinking water will be supplied.

Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School

General rules for tool use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- All tools should be signed out when in use
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

Knives:

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by an adult, preferably the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area
- Knives should be used away from the body
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Guard is in place when not in use
- Use in a designated area away from others
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand
- Use a saw-horse where possible with the bow saw.

Loppers:

- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Use in a designated area, away from others
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use
- Loppers must only be used above the ground if possible.

Fire:

- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.

Ropes and Knots:

- All equipment to be regularly checked for fraying etc.
- Children should not wrap rope around their bodies
- Children should be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots
- If tying between trees, the rope should be able to be seen and not cause a trip hazard.