Ellwood Community Primary School



Forest School Handbook

Contents

What is Forest School?
Policies and Procedures
Confidentiality
Safeguarding
Health and safety Risk assessments
First aid
Legislation
Insurance
Lost child
Behaviour
Equal opportunities
Clothing
Responsibility for the session
Forest School Rules
A typical session
Travel
Toileting
Toolbox equipment
Fire procedure / food storage
How to introduce tools/skills
Communications
Cancelling a session
Sustainability and site management

Appendix

Risk assessment

First aid kit

Letter template

Assistants handbook

COVID-19

Ellwood Community Primary School

Forest School Handbook

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 is a specialised learning approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.

The ethos is shared by thousands of trained practitioners across the UK and beyond. Its roots reach back to early years pioneers in outdoor learning and across the sea to Scandinavia.' Forest Schools Association.

1. Forest School is a long- term process with frequent and regular sessions rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning. http://www.forestassociation.org

Our aim for Ellwood Community Primary Forest School

The sessions will take place in our designated Forest School site within the school grounds and the local Forestry Commission Woodland. All sessions will be led by the Forest School Leader, ideally Classroom Assistant and an appropriate number of helpers. Our woodland setting will provide many opportunities for children to explore, investigate and be creative while building a long term relationship with the natural world. At Forest School we will be looking for opportunities to enhance the learning and increase self-esteem. Our Forest School will endeavour to build the foundations for life-long learning.

Policies and Procedures

The following are the minimum requirements for the safe running of all Forest School activities. They are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them. The full policies can be found on the Ellwood Community School webpage: - http://www.ellwoodschool.co.uk

All members of staff and volunteer helpers have a duty to follow these policies and should be familiar with their contents. A sheet is provided in Appendix 1 of the Handbook where staff and volunteers must sign to state they have read the Handbook, including all policies and risk assessments.

Safeguarding / Accusations against adults

(Please see Ellwood Primary Safeguarding Policy for further information

Any concerns should be discussed with the Leader of the session and if necessary passed on to our Safeguarding Lead Mrs Milford.

Confidentiality

- All discussions with participants of Forest School are confidential and must not be discussed with anyone outside of the Forest School establishment unless there is a Child Protection issue.
- All parental consent forms are held by the Class teacher.
- All other documents (including observations, evaluations and PLP's) are kept secure.
- The Forest School Leader will discuss confidentiality with all adults attending the sessions and they will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. See appendix 1

Forest School is recognised to be a place where children feel particularly safe and relaxed and are therefore more likely to disclose matters concerning them. It is therefore important that:

- Children feel they can approach any adults at FS
- Volunteers will have access to Ellwood Primary Safeguarding Policy on the school website.
- All staff know to follow the correct procedure if a disclosure is made or if any information comes to light.

Health and Safety and Risk Assessment

We recognise our responsibility to keep all children and adults safe from harm whilst at Forest School. 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. Therefore we have 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 all about identifying and managing any significant chance of harm. A site risk assessment is undertaken periodically and a daily risk assessment and check is made prior to every Forest School session. In addition, an activity risk assessment 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. Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them. For completed risk assessments please see appendix 2

- Undertake Risk Assessments for all grounds and activities. These will be agreed with the Class teacher and updated when necessary and reviewed annually.

Risk/hazard	RAG (High, medium, low)	Action taken	Next step	Risk/benefit
e.g tree has fallen	medium	Area roped off	Make safe or remove.	Can it be used?

- FS leader will do a safety sweep of the site at the beginning of every day, acting on any problems.
- FS leader / Classroom assistant to be First aid trained and training is updated regularly. A First Aid kit will be taken out to each FS session, items will be replaced as used on a daily basis. Any accidents or events requiring First Aid will be recorded in the FS Accident book. Parents will be informed of an incident via Link Books or verbally.
- In adverse weather conditions the Leader will decide if any adjustments need to be made to keep everyone safe or if it is suitable to go out at all.
- In an Emergency the Leader will use a whistle to gather children together, taking them away from the site when necessary.

- We will only make fires at Forest School when the children are secure and confident in the FS environment so there will be a calm atmosphere, and only when weather conditions are suitable.
- Any accidents or incidents will be investigated as appropriately by the Leader, Class teacher and H&S Officer.
- All adults working at FS should be DBS checked. If a volunteer or visitor does not have a DBS check, they will not be left unsupervised with children. All volunteers will have read the FS Handbook and received some induction training from the FS Leader.
- The Forest Leader will have a Class list noting any pertinent medical, dietary or behavioural issues.

First Aid

The Forest school leader should hold an appropriate first aid certificate. This is to be renewable every 3 years.

First aid kit 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. The bag will include medication for individuals e.g inhalers.

A logbook will be kept within the emergency bag to be completed, signed and dated after an incident.

In case of and emergency or incident, the following procedure will be followed.

Minor Incident

• Pupil/adult assessed by trained outdoor first aider

• Treat as required

• Complete log book

• Inform parents/carers through link book.

Serious Incident

1. First aider will attend to any casualties with 1 other while the remaining adults take care of the rest of the group. A record to be taken of incident and monitoring of casualty.

2. Emergency services contacted if necessary. Using mobile phone dial 999. **GRID REFERENCE SO592082.** Other adult phone to update the school if possible.
School number 01594 833232. School to contact parent of casualty and bring to the log circle if possible.

3. All activities to be stopped and the rest of the children taken back to school leaving First Aider and one other adult with the casualty.

4. Complete incident report form/first aid book in emergency bag.

5. As standard practice, all incidents where the emergency services have to be called out are formally reviewed with the senior management team (SMT) and any involved adult parties in order to review our practice and provide quality assurance.

Legislation

• Ensure that all equipment involved in an accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by the police.

• Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record i.e. a log, of all facts, events, times and circumstances and retain this record until all matters are finally settled. If possible take photographs.

• Do not allow anyone to interview any party member without an independent witness being present.

• An incident report or entry in the first aid book must be completed, signed and dated (if not done on site).

• Incidents leading to admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours Tel 0845 3009923 (HSE - Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

• First aid kits must be restocked after use and a stock check carried out every 6 months.

• Any incident or near miss must be subsequently investigated by SMT and the Forest School leader to review existing policies and procedures.

Insurance. The Children Act 1989 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, place a number of legal responsibilities. Our School insurance policy will cover us for Forest School and is treated like a school trip.

Lost child

Our Forest Adventure site is part of the school grounds, and as such is secure.

- Ensure all outer boundaries of school are secure.

When we visit the adjacent woods we will:

- Ensure all children know the boundaries of the Forest Adventure site, and get to know them well.
- On any one session, the forest school leader and at least 1 other adult will be with the group at all times. Tool use will be monitored by the Leader. When lighting a fire, ratios will be dependent on group size (At least 1:3).

In the event of a lost child we will:

- Blow a whistle and gather all children round the log circle
- Ascertain when child was last seen/what they were doing/what was said
- Find out if other adults (including head teacher and school administrator) know where the child may be.
- Appoint adults to search for child. Stay calm and ensure care of remaining children.
- Use mobile to phone school to notify and ask for further assistance.
- Search for the child; contact Emergency Services when and if appropriate, as well as, parents.

If there is an incident of a missing child then we will assess how this happened and what we will do to prevent this from happening again. We would also re-assess this policy after such an event.

Behaviour

The Forest School Leader and other adults are less people of authority and more facilitator, mentor, experienced companions. High expectations of children's behaviour along with trust built up over time will encourage them to develop values and to be respectful and caring to others and their environment.

If anyone displays behaviour which puts themselves or others at risk, or goes against the ethos of Forest Adventure we will use a 'time out' area, followed by a discussion about the behaviour. If this behaviour persists then we will talk to the head teacher. It is our aim not to remove anyone from Forest Adventure; however persistent behaviour which puts others at risk will have to be considered carefully.

Equal Opportunities

We will strive to ensure all pupils have equal access to Forest Adventure. We aim to ensure no-one is discriminated against because of their race, gender, age or disability. We will include and value the contribution of all children and adults. We may need to adapt sessions

to take account of individual needs allowing us to make inclusion a thread which runs through all of the activities at Forest Adventure.

Clothing

"There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing" This is an old Scandinavian saying which is of great importance for Forest School as sessions take place in almost all weathers. It is important that all participants (children and adults) are suitably dressed for Forest School. Otherwise, they will feel uncomfortable and miserable and are unlikely to enjoy the experience!

Clothing suitable for the conditions and seasons is the responsibility of the parents. It is recommended that long sleeves and long trousers are worn throughout the year to provide protection against sunburn, bites, stings and ticks. Layers are the best idea as temperatures and conditions can change significantly during a session. Plenty of warm clothing is essential on very cold days. Wellies or strong boots are best. Waterproof jackets are essential and AND waterproof trousers if possible. The Reception children will be provided with Waterproofs to go over their uniforms. Parents need to provide named wellies. Information will be sent to parents before starting sessions.

Designated Person Responsible for each Session

The Forest School Leader will have overall responsibility and at least one member of staff will hold a current First Aid certificate. Adult helpers and volunteers will be encouraged to develop a facilitative role, valuing the use of observation, modelling good practice and adapting to children's changing needs.

The Leader will:

- Have overall responsibility and planning of sessions
- Liaise with other members of the school
- Safety and risk assess, including pre-checks and ensuring adequate ratios
- Take and use medical details, first aid kit, accident book, medication and walkie talkies and mobile phone.
- Understanding of emergency procedures
- Responsibility for evaluations and reporting
- Awareness of supporting staff's needs

Classroom assistant

- Support with planning, preparation and activities
- Observations and evaluations, sharing these with the Leader
- Help with children's clothing

- Escorting children to the site

Volunteers

- Specific jobs as appropriate eg. Drinks and snacks
- Modelling good practice
- Supporting and talking to children
- Passing on observations to Leader.
- All adults attending Forest Adventure sessions should read the Forest Adventure Handbook. They are free to make any additions they feel are relevant and must sign to say they have read it on sheet at end of Handbook.

Ratio of Adults to children Offsite.
2 - 3 years - one adult to four **children**. 4 - 8 years - one adult to six **children**. 9 - 12 years - one adult to eight **children**. 13 - 18 years - one adult to ten **children**. (NSPCC recommended)

Forest School Rules.

*No picky – don't pick anything unless you are told to.
*No licky – don't eat anything or put your hands in mouth. (Lots of bacteria and bugs)
*Careful with that sticky drag stick with your hand over the end. (If it's bigger than you, you need 2. If it's bigger than 3 you need me.)
*Stay within the boundaries

A Typical Session

A typical session may look a bit like this. However, the beauty of Forest School is the variety we can provide.

1. Toilet and change (Drink if needed)	5. Outline activities or provide 'hook'
2. Wellies on and line up in pairs. Safety reminder.	6. Child choices supported by adults. Free flow
3. Walk to the log circle (See below) observe the environment, chat, collect etc	7. May look at what children have done Or finish with a game
4. At the log circle 'leave school behind' Go over the Forest School rules	8. Walk back usually in a rush! Think about what you did/learned. 9. Change. **Wash hand with soap.**

Travel Policy. When we visit the log circle we need to walk along the road.

- We will walk in pairs.
- We will wear high viz bibs.
- Forest leader will be at the front and trusted adult at the back. Other volunteers will be dotted along the line.
- When crossing the road we will use the Green Cross Code. Sometimes we will all look and listen and cross at the same time, otherwise we will stay in our pairs and cross. The Forest Leader will continue in the front and if a car comes midway the adult nearest will stand in the road.

Toileting

- Ask children to go to the toilet immediately prior to the FS session
- Make ourselves aware of any children who have specific toileting needs.
- If absolutely necessary 2 adults will take the child to a discrete and safe distance where they should go to the toilet themselves. Afterwards the adult must cover over sufficiently to make the area safe. Baby wipes are located in the First Aid bag and used ones will be placed in a nappy bag and disposed of at school.
- When FS is in the school grounds, children must ask the FS Leader permission to go to the toilet. They will need to take a friend. They must report back on their return.

Equipment to be contained in the toolbox.

The Forest Leader will maintain and check all tools and resources needed for a session. The tool box must be LOCKED due to sharp items. A Bow saw will have a guard. Other items will be needed based on what activities are being undertaken. Children will be trained.

				
1 x sharp knife	4 pairs of gloves	2 + 4 Potato peelers	2 pruning saws	Secateurs
				
1x axe	Twine	Para cord	Wet sand paper	Tarpaulin
FIRE EXTRAS 				
Fire gloves	2x fire steels	Fire banket	Cotton wool	

Fire Procedure, Food and Cooking

When planning to have a fire we will:

- Make sure school office knows we are lighting a fire
- Ensure we have a mobile phone and first aid kit
- Assess the site, especially weather conditions. Do not proceed if very windy.
- Check the ratio of adults: children. 1 member of staff who has been trained in safe fire management at a Forest School (either formally or informally from the Forest Leader) will be responsible for the fire at all times that it is lit.

Ensure correct equipment is on site: plenty of water, plunge bucket in case of burns, fire blanket, usual first aid etc. also fire making equipment- wood, newspaper, steel, gloves.

- Talk to the children about what to expect (especially if first fire).
- Long hair to be tied back or tucked into jacket.
- Talk about smoke and what to do if the smoke blows a lot their way (initially turn head, if it continues put up hand to be moved, remind children not to walk around inside log circle under any circumstances).
- Lay fire, explaining to children what you are doing.
- Make it clear before you actually light the fire.
- If fire does not light first time, re-lay and repeat, using fire gloves where necessary.
- Keep fire stacked as required, never leave fire unattended, stack extra firewood upwind and away from fire.
- Be careful if poking the fire, this can cause ash to fly around.
- Let the fire die down, explain to the children that you will be putting it out, this will cause more smoke, then sprinkle liberally with water. Repeat and check for heat with hand. Spread out remains when cold.

When food is to be consumed or cooked at Forest School we will:

- Transport and store food in a cool bag or similar storage facility kept specifically for food.
- Food that contains:-meat, fish, dairy products, cereals, rice, pulses, vegetables etc. will be kept at or below 8 C. Raw meat and fish will be stored separately from cooked meats, cereals, dairy products etc.
- Hand-washing facilities will be provided for those preparing as well as those consuming the food.

How tools will be introduced.

- Always when the leader is confident that the child is ready.
- Children work within their 'Safety Bubble'.
- There will be a tool area and children must ask permission to enter.
- Good communication will be encouraged.
- Children teaching children will be encouraged under close supervision.

	Risk- Cuts to limbs Action – Monitor closely. First Aider ready.
	**Potato peelers** (to practice the action of scraping a blade away from themselves to peel vegetables etc.) The Forest Leader will use knowledge of the individuals to decide the ratio of adult support. Other trained adults will be able to support this activity. The Forest School leader will demonstrate a safe seated position, 'Elbow's on your knees if you please' and the scraping action away from the body using the dominate hand.' The other hand to be placed a safe distance from the peeling and wear a protective glove.
	**Fixed blade knives** (for whittling sticks) - The Forest School leader will decide if the age group/ individual child is ready for using this tool. The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with children on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the safe seated position and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user (safety bubble), safely removing the sheath and holding handle with the dominant hand. The other hand MUST wear a protective glove and manipulates the stick above the whittling area, keeping the knife work safely away from the body. The Forest School leader demonstrates the scraping technique and closely supervises the child whilst using the tool. Knives must be re-sheathed and returned to the secure container immediately after use.
	**Bow saw** - The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with children up to 3 children. Garden kneelers will mark the area where the children must kneel with a clear path for the saw away from the knee. One child can hold the stick in a gloved hand and up to 2 children can saw. Communication between them will be encouraged ('From you to me') No one is allowed into the tool area without being invited. This will ensure that all are a safe distance away. The Forest School leader will demonstrate the sawing technique with the blade cover on showing the children how to hold the tool safely. The Bow saw must be re sheathed immediately after use.

	The Forest School leader will decide if the age group/ individual child is ready for using this tool. In kneeling position 1 child uses the axe with 2 hands while another child holds the stick with a gloved hand. Good communication is encouraged. Younger children may need a third child to use a rubber mallet to hit the top of the axe while child 1 holds the axe in the correct position.
	Den building. Children will be reminded about moving sticks. 'No Pokey' meaning put your hand over the end and drag. If it's bigger than you, you need 2. If it's bigger than 3 you need ME.
	Tree Climbing. Children will be allowed to climb under supervision. They will not be helped to climb up. It is generally accepted that a child will not climb higher than they are capable. Weather conditions will be taken into account, (wet/slippery)

Communications

We will endeavour to share information about Forest School with our school community and also the wider community

We will:

- Write to parents before their children begin Forest School sessions, explaining all about Forest School with accompanying consent forms
- Consent for photographs and videos of children for monitoring, evaluation purposes and for use in leaflets/website/materials. If permission is refused, we aim to avoid photographing that child and blur out faces where necessary.
- Offer opportunities for Parent helpers and volunteers to have basic Forest School training.
- Provide photos and information on the school website

Cancellation of a session

It may be necessary to cancel a planned Forest School session due to unforeseen circumstances or events which make it impossible to run the session safely such as :

- Staff illness- which prevents adult:child ratios being met
- Severe weather conditions (strong wind, thunder and storms)
- Any situation that poses a Health and Safety risk

In this situation the children will remain in class and volunteers will be contacted.

Sustainability and site management

We understand the importance of looking after our site and ensuring it is not destroyed by over-use. Therefore we will:

- Check the site as used, noting any obvious destruction eg. Erosion, broken branches, pathways wearing
- Children will be encouraged to replace natural objects like logs, when they have finished playing with them
- Discuss with children the needs and requirements of wild plants and animals and encourage a respect for their habitat

Please ensure you have signed to say you have read information in the Ellwood Community Forest School Handbook. Appendix 1

Thank You

Appendix 1

<u>Staff and Volunteers.</u> Please **date and sign below** to confirm you have read the FNS Forest School Handbook including policies, procedures, confidentiality and risk assessments

Date	Print Name	Signature

Appendix 2 See separate Risk assessment document (Landscape format)

Appendix 3

First Aid Kit Will be checked and replaced as necessary.	
Emergency details Phone	
Children's individual medication	
Gloves (Non latex)	
Triangular Bandages	
Plasters	
Blood bag (disposal sack for medical waste)	
Dressings	
Clean water	
Scissors	
Antiseptic wipes / hand sanitiser	
Tarp	
Foil blanket	
IF NEEDED	
Burn dressing	
Cling film	
Sugary food **(If diabetics)**	

Letter example.

Dear Parent/Carer, 06.09.21

Sycamore Class will be starting Forest Adventures this Wednesday (8th of Sept) for this half term. We will be doing the usual Forest School activities with a hint of World War 2 and plenty of opportunities for child initiated ideas. The first session will be onsite but if we have enough volunteers this will enable us to go into the woods!!

You will need to DRESS YOUR CHILD in suitable clothes of:

- **LONG SLEEVED** top
- **LONG** trousers to protect from scratches etc.
- Optional hats and gloves depending on weather.
- Sturdy shoes or wellies (**must have a change of foot ware to keep the school clean!!)**
- Waterproof coat and trousers if you have them.

Please come to school in your forest clothes and bring a **change of wellies or shoes** and waterproofs in a bag. It is impossible to predict the weather and amount of mud so please be prepared. Part of this is for the children to be responsible for making sensible choices.

If you would like to know more about Forest School go to

Date of Session	Tick if able to help Write the name you would like to be known by.
08.09.21	School site
15.09.21	
22.09.21	
29.09.21	
06.09.21	
13.09.21	
20.09.21	

https://www.forestschoolassociation.org

If you have any questions or would like to help please email me at g.rees@ellwood.gloucs.sch.uk. By emailing me directly I can organise more efficiently.

Thank you. Gail Rees.

Appendix 4

COVID-19

- More sessions will take place on site
- Volunteers are invited when restrictions allow.
- Wash hands before and after session with soap.
- Limit sharing of tools and resources between classes.
- Children will have designated tools and resources where possible.
- Follow the school COVID guidance.
- If offsite keep away from members of the community.

Ellwood Community Forest Adventure

Assistants Handbook

Welcome to Forest Adventure! Thank you for your help-without you it would not happen. This Handbook aims to give you an introduction to Forest Adventure and to alert you to our procedures, policies and routines.

If you think there is anything missing that would be useful, please let us know.

Introduction to our Forest Adventure

What is Forest Adventure?

Forest Adventure is based on the principles of Forest School and is an inspirational process that offers children opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a woodland environment.
Forest Adventure allows children to explore and experience the natural world through practical involvement. It encourages an understanding of and relationship with the natural environment. A high level of staff allows leaders to observe individuals and match tasks to preferred learning styles. Children will experience Forest Adventure over an extended period of time. They will learn about risk and danger and naturally become used to looking after and caring for each other.

Forest School originated in Scandinavia in the 1950's and has been an integral part of Early Years education in Denmark since the 1980's. Britain adopted this concept in the late 1990's and today it is well established throughout the country.

Our aim for Ellwood Community Forest Adventure

The sessions will take place in our designated Forest Adventure site within the school grounds and when possible around the log circle in the adjacent wood. All sessions will be led by the Class teacher. Initially, all reception children will attend Forest Adventure once a week throughout the year. Our woodland setting will provide many opportunities for children to explore investigate and be creative while building a long term relationship with the natural world. At Forest Adventure we will be looking for opportunities to enhance the learning and increase self-esteem. Our Forest Adventure will endeavour to build the foundations for life-long learning

What will I be expected to do ?

The role of the adult at Forest School sessions is:

- To enable access to the environment and activities

- To be an active listener
- To have the courage to let the pupils lead
- To understand the importance of giving pupils the time to reflect when they are outdoors
- To familiarize themselves with the planning for the session and the outcomes intended
- To observe.
- To ensure the health and safety of all participants at all times

- To take an active role in the sessions and to model appropriate skills and behaviour
- To join in with pupils activities/play when invited
- To safeguard the pupils
- To report any concerns or hazards to the Forest School leader
- To keep all observations confidential only discussing with the staff.
- To know the location of the First Aid kit
- To bring and wear suitable clothing

Please could you sign the sheet to say that you have read this document. Thank you.