

# Fairview Community Primary School



## Forest School Handbook 2025

## Introduction to Forest School

### What is Forest School?

"Forest School is a **child-centred inspirational learning process**, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting."

**Taken from the Forest School Association**

### The history of Forest School

The Forest School model originated in Scandinavia and was brought to the UK in 1993 by a group of Nursery Nurses from Bridgewater College in Somerset. These practitioners visited a Danish pre-school setting which had an open-air culture. They then created a 'Forest School' back here in the UK which focused on holistic development and child-led activities. A place that children could explore without restrictions of a classroom using tools and taking risks. This became an environment which helped build up their confidence and self-esteem.

### Forest School at Fairview Community Primary School

Forest School sessions will be carried out by me, Mrs Donovan, and I am the trained Forest School lead. I undertook my training in May 2021 and now have my OCNWMR Level 3 Forest School Leader Qualification. I am excited to share the skills I have learned with the children at Fairview. All sessions will be held on the school grounds in our Forest School area (situated behind the Year One classrooms).

#### 1. Forest School Vision Statement

##### Our Vision Statement

Forest School activities should be child-led and centred around the learners. Activities will be set up for children to try if they wish to, or they may choose to explore and try a different activity. Adults will fully support the children in their chosen activities and help the children develop their confidence during each session.

Children will be encouraged to take supported risks and be assured that thorough risk assessments have been taken out. All tools used will be age appropriate for your child's year group and adults will ensure these are used safely.

Children will learn how to respect the environment and how to care for the wildlife around us.

#### 2. Principles of Forest School

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

Principle 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.

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

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

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

Principle 6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

### **Taken from the Forest School Association**

#### 3. Forest School Rules

##### **Our Rules**

- We use our walking feet
- We always watch where we are going
- We never eat anything we find at Forest School
- We stay within the boundaries set by the adults
- We look after each other and keep each other safe
- We look after the Forest School area especially the wildlife
- We all have fun together

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities of the adults and children

Forest School Leader	<p>Sara Donovan is the Forest School Leader and is currently working towards a Level 3 Forest School Leadership qualification.</p> <p>Mrs Donovan is Paediatric First Aid Trained and Outdoor First Aid trained.</p> <p>Mrs Donovan's role is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In charge of each Forest School session.</li> <li>• Undertake thorough risk assessments relating to all aspects of Forest School.</li> <li>• Check, maintain, store tools and equipment before and after Forest School sessions.</li> <li>• Plan and prepare activities and resources for Forest School sessions.</li> <li>• Keep the first aid and welfare kit stocked and carry it to each session.</li> <li>• Carry the emergency card to each session and make all adults aware of where it is kept.</li> <li>• Ensure all children are safe during the sessions and are taking appropriate risks.</li> <li>• Monitor the appropriate upkeep of the Forest School area and inform caretakers of any maintenance needed.</li> <li>• Check the area before a session for any hazards and will ensure the area is safe for all users.</li> <li>• Model activities and supervise use of equipment and tools.</li> <li>• Establish safety rules for any use of tools and ensure tools are age appropriate for year group.</li> <li>• Communicate with parents prior to sessions and be available to answer any questions.</li> <li>• Ensuring the environment is looked after and left in the same way as found.</li> </ul>
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Other adults	<p>Other adults in attendance of Forest School sessions are employed by Fairview Community Primary School as either Teaching Assistants or Class Teachers.</p> <p>Any additional volunteers are enhanced DBS checked.</p> <p>Other adults role is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring all children are safe and taking appropriate risks alongside Forest School leader.</li> <li>• Assisting the children during their chosen activity.</li> <li>• Model activities and supervise use of equipment and tools.</li> <li>• Ensuring the environment is looked after and left in the same way as found.</li> </ul>
Children	<p>The children's role is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the environment is looked after and left in the same way as found.</li> <li>• Listen to the adults and follow the rules</li> <li>• Take appropriate risks and follow safety guidance.</li> <li>• Understand that not following the safety guidance will result in activities being stopped.</li> <li>• To have fun!</li> </ul>

## 5. Lesson plans

Each session is planned for by the Forest School leader and activities are prepared for children to choose to take part in, should they wish to do so. Lesson plans are kept by the Forest School leader.

## 6. Safety and site checks- checklists

### Before the sessions

The Forest School Leader will:

- Check for litter
- Check for broken glass
- Check for dog/animal poo

Anything found will be disposed of by the adult using gloves and a bin bag

- Check trees for dead and fallen branches. Check for potential falling items too.
- Check for trip and fall hazards (branches, rocks, muddy sections)
- Check the weather conditions- if any chance of a thunder & lightning storm or extreme wind, sessions must not go ahead.

### After the sessions

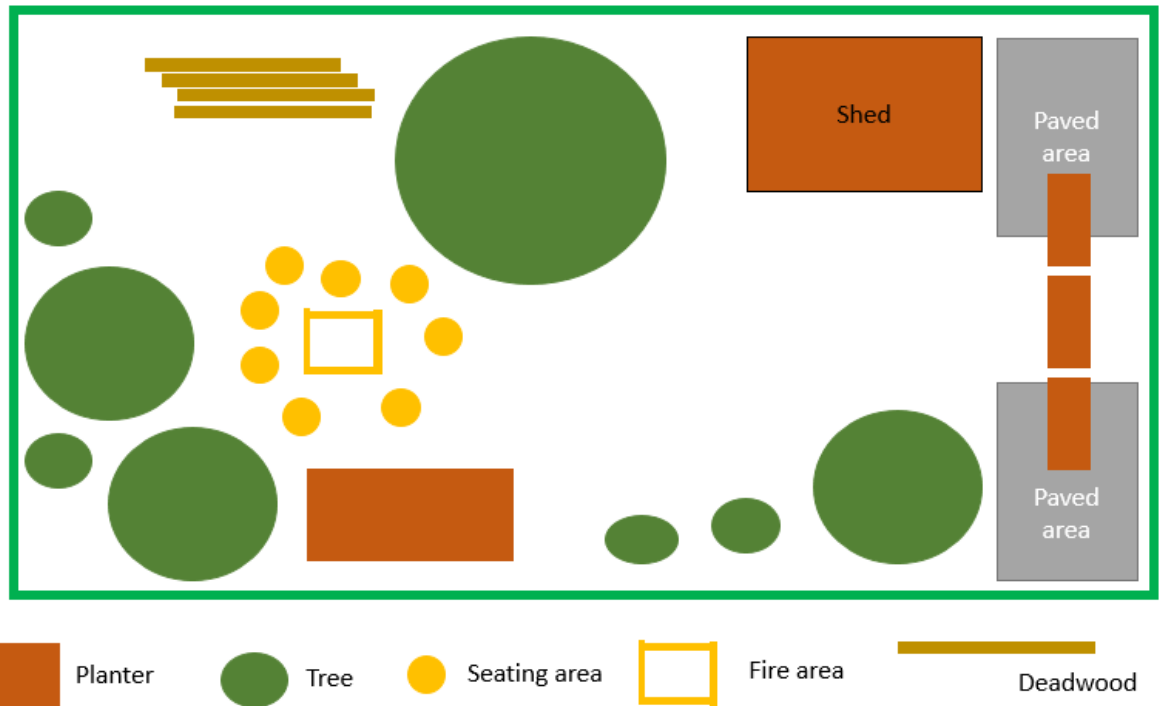
The Forest School Leader will:

- Clean any tools that have been used and store away
- Count the tools in and out to ensure nothing has been left behind
- Extinguish the fire and clean the fire pit out

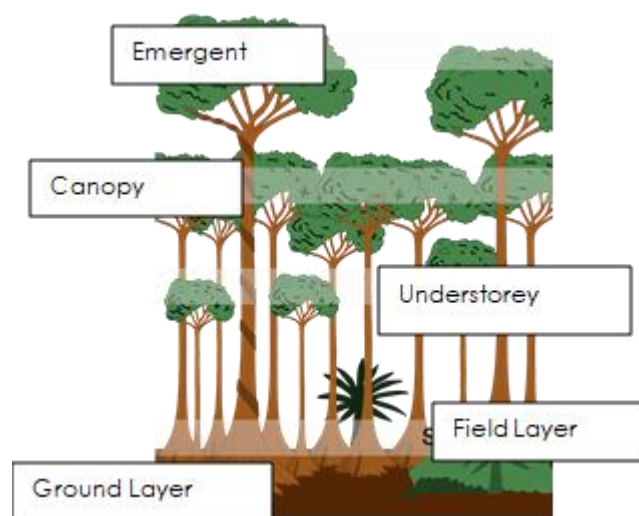
- Ensure all children and adults are accounted for

The children will:

- Ensure they take all of their belongings with them
  - Check for litter and clear up before they go
7. Environmental impact assessment



Activity Impact Matrix (inspired by Learning in the Leaves website [Ecological Impact of Forest Schools – Learning in the Leaves](#))



**Key for Impact Matrix**

P- Positive N- Negative	S- Short Term L- Long term	Pm- Permanent T- Temporary R- Reversible
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Activity	Area Impacted				
	Emergent	Canopy	Understorey	Field Layer	Ground Layer
Fire lighting		N, S, R Hanging branches may be burnt but should have fire away from anything on canopy level.	N, S, R Hanging branches may be burnt but should have fire away from anything on understorey level.	N, S, R Hanging branches may be burnt but should have fire away from anything on field level.	N, S, R Logs and twigs burnt in a fire pit. Ash left after extinguishing but should degrade if area cleared correctly.
Wood work			N, S, T Wood from trees may be cut, however this will grow back in time.	N, S, T Wood from trees may be cut, however this will grow back in time.	N, S, T Wood from trees may be cut, however this will grow back in time. Ground layer may be disturbed by trampling but this will be kept to a minimum.
Shelter building			N, S, T Any flora or fauna on understorey level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	N, S, T Any flora or fauna on field level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	N, S, Any flora or fauna on ground level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.
Tree climbing			N, S, T Any flora or fauna on	N, S, T Any flora or fauna on	N, S, T Any flora or fauna on ground level

			understorey level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	field level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.
Nature printing			N, S, T Any flora or fauna on understorey level may be disturbed but should regrow when the area is left.	N, S, T Any flora or fauna on field level may be disturbed but should regrow when the area is left.	N, S, T Any flora or fauna on ground level may be disturbed but should regrow when the area is left.
Moving around			N, S, R Any flora or fauna on understorey level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	N, S, R Any flora or fauna on field level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	N, S, R Any flora or fauna on ground level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.
Clearing leaf litter				N, S, R Any flora or fauna on field level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.	N, S, R Any flora or fauna on ground level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left.
Litter picking				P, S, T Any flora or fauna on field level may be disturbed but should recover	P, S, T Any flora or fauna on ground level may be disturbed but should recover when the area is left. Litter removal will be good for the

				when the area is left. Litter removal will be good for the flora and fauna at field level and will continue to be monitored and cleared.	flora and fauna at ground level and will continue to be monitored and cleared.
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### 8. Staff Ratios

There must always be the Forest School lead and at least one other adult attending each Forest School session. The sessions will have no more than 15 children at one time.

### 9. Policies

#### • Toileting policy

All children will be sent to the toilet before each session as there are no toilet facilities at the Forest School area. The nearest toilets are in Year 2. Should a child need to go to the toilet during the session, the other adult will take them. No tools will be used when the Forest School leader is on site alone with the rest of the group.

#### • Clothing policy

PPE is provided for adults and children as follows:

- Fire gloves for Forest School Lead/ Other adults in case of fire emergency
- Gardening gloves are provided for gardening activities
- Protective gloves are provided for adults/children when using saws

Parents are made aware of the requirements in the consent letter and all children are asked to come prepared to each session. Forest School sessions will go ahead in most weather conditions, so the following equipment/clothing is essential.

#### **Cold weather**

- A warm, waterproof coat
- Hat, scarf and gloves
- Wellington boots or old trainers
- Old clothes that can get muddy and wet
- Puddle suit or wet weather trousers and jacket
- Plenty of layers to keep warm

#### **Hot weather**



- Sun hat
- Sun cream (to be applied before school)
- Trousers (loose fitting)

**Children who are not wearing the appropriate clothing will not be permitted to join the session** and parents will be contacted to remind them of the requirements. For younger children (EYFS and KS1), spare clothing from school may be used if we have the correct sizing.

- **Fire Policy**

- Fires will be lit safely as part of the Forest School experience
- Fires will only be lit by the Forest School Leader
- A clear fire area will be marked out and children will be made aware of the rules around fire safety.
- A fire pit will be used to minimise risk of the fire spreading
- Fire gloves and fire blanket will be on hand at all times
- Water will be on hand should a fire become uncontrollable
- Fire will not be lit during extreme wind
- The respect position will be modelled by the Forest School Leader whenever near the fire
- No fire will ever be left unattended.
- If using a Kelly Kettle, the cork will never be in while the water is boiling
- Only adults will use the Kelly kettle.
- Fires will be extinguished fully using water and the area will be left as found.

## 10. Accident and emergency plan & procedure

The Forest School leader is First Aid trained and understands what to do in the event of minor injuries. A first aid kit is carried during all sessions and an emergency 'red card' is taken to alert other adults if an emergency takes place. Accidents are logged on the first aid log and parents will be informed if needed.

Use the red card to alert anyone of a serious emergency

- Call 999 as soon as possible
- Give as much information as possible about the patient and their location
- Who has been injured
- What their injuries are
- Do they have any medical conditions
- Where are they located
- Wait on the line until you're told to hang up

## 11. Incident reporting

Incidents will be recorded on the First Aid log and parents will be informed.

Any disclosures will be logged on CPOMs by the adult involved.

## 12. Cancellation and contingency

Sessions will be cancelled if there is a thunder/lightning storm forecast or extremely windy conditions as this is not safe. Where possible, indoor provisions will be made instead.

If the Forest School lead is absent, the session will be cancelled for that day.

### 13. Photo and video policy

Photographs and video for school and family use are a source of innocent pleasure and pride, which can enhance the self-esteem of children and young people and their families. Parents/carers are not required to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 when taking photographs for their own private use of their children at an organised event. Parents should not be stopped taking photographs for their own private use because of concerns of contravening the Data Protection Act.

However we must always be mindful of the need to safeguard the welfare of children in our school, and issues of child protection, data protection and parental consent will be given careful thought. Images may be used to harm children, for example as a preliminary to 'grooming' or by displaying them inappropriately on the Internet. This policy will apply to all forms of publications; e.g. print, film, video, DVD, on websites, on social networking sites and in the professional media.

Where another body provides services or activities separately, using the school premises, the Governing Body will ensure that the body concerned has appropriate policies and procedures in place in regard to safeguarding children.

The full Use of Videos and Photographs in Fairview Policy is available on request.

### 14. Safety Information for Forest School Tools

- Children will only use tools when supervised by an adult
- Children will only use tools that are age appropriate
- Our Forest School leader is First Aid trained
- Risk assessments are in place for all tools
- Tools will be counted in and out during each use
- Tools are cleaned and stored away after each use



**Tent Pegs**

- Use with tarpaulins and tents
- Check before use- if bent, do not use
- Store in a drawstring bag
- Tag with tape to make them more visible



### Peelers

- Use for whittling
- Make sure the blades are secure before use
- If any are broken, throw them away
- Always whittle away from yourself
- Use your knee as a grip
- Clean peelers after use
- Use your arms to know the distance away from others
- Store in a drawstring bag



### Palm drills

- Use for making holes
- Check that the drill bit is secure in the handle
- Can be tricky for the younger children
- Store in a drawstring bag

### Secateurs



- Only **adults** to use these
- Check the spring mechanism before use
- Check the safety catch works
- Clean before storing away
- Keep in a locked box

### Loppers



- Only adults to use these
- Check the mechanisms before use
- Hold the blade behind you when walking with them
- Clean before storing away
- Store on a shelf or in a locked shed



### **Folding knives**

- Check the lock works- if it doesn't, throw it away
- Trust the user before allowing them to use it
- Ensure they are locked in place before use
- Clean before storing away
- Number each knife and count in and out after use
- Keep in a locked box
- Fold and secure before storing

### **Fixed blade knives**



- Trust the user before allowing them to use it
- Use a sheath to protect the knife in storage
- Clean before storing away
- Number each knife and count in and out after use
- Keep in a locked box
- Fold and secure before storing



### **Billhook**

- Trust the user completely before allowing them to use it
- Always ask 'Are you ready' before using
- Don't wear gloves in case it slips from your hand
- Used for mallet making
- Originally used for clearing vegetation
- Check the blades are secure before use
- Clean them and dry them before storage
- Keep in a locked box



### **Axe**

- Trust the user completely before allowing them to use it
- Used for splitting wood
- Keep in a secure leather cover
- Check the head is secure
- Don't use a glove when using it in case it slips from your hand
- Keep in a locked box

### **Bowsaw**



- Trust the user completely before allowing them to use it
- To be used in pairs only
- Keep the blades covered when moving them around and when storing them
- Ensure you use the correct blade for the wood you are sawing
- Clean and dry them before storing them away
- Keep in a locked shed

### **Junior Hacksaw**



- Trust the user completely before they are allowed to use them
- Use on small sticks and twigs
- Clean and dry before storing away
- Check blade is secure before use
- Check there are no kinks in the blade before use
- Replace blades when needed
- Keep in a locked box