

Yealand C of E Primary School

Forest School Handbook

Written 2019

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Forest School Ethos

Forest Schools is based on practice in Scandinavia that considers children's contact with nature to be extremely important. It was an idea that was developed in the 1950s and focused to teaching children about the natural world at a young age. This ethos was introduced into Britain in the 1990s and is now becoming more widespread.

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

Forest School Association & Forest Education Network

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to work as part of a team alongside grown ups problem solving; taking on challenges; enjoying and learning about the rich woodland. We hope that the children's self esteem will grow as a result of forest schools. The children will learn new skills which we hope will set them up for lifelong learning and respect for themselves, each other and the environment. During Forest School all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued.

This fully supports our Mission Statement:

INSPIRE a love of learning in God's world.

Through awe and wonder for God's world we will inspire a true love for learning, creativity, curiosity and imagination. Through independent thoughts and a passion for the lives of others we will work with our community to care and consider all, following in the teachings of Christ.

'Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith.' 1 Timothy 4:12

This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. The child is never put in a position where he/she will fail so success is attained. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

Purpose/Aims of Forest School

☒ To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.

☒ To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.

☒ To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.

☒ Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small Achievable tasks.

Forest School Rules and the Countryside Code

The children are encouraged to be involved in making decisions about their environment and safety; there are a few rules that the learners will be made aware of at the start of their involvement in Forest School sessions. Behind each rule, there is a range of learning opportunities that will encourage learners to engage with and understand these rules. They are:

RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT

This will involve learning that our actions may affect the living things around us. This may be achieved by encouraging our learners to distinguish living things from dead and agree that nothing alive should be picked or destroyed.

STAY WITHIN THE FOREST SCHOOL BOUNDARY

Boundaries will be identified during the Forest School session and participants will be guided around the site to ensure they are aware of where they are permitted to play, explore and investigate. Various activities will be arranged throughout every session to make them aware of these.

RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE

At Forest School, we aim to create a feeling of belonging and unity. We expect all individuals to respect their peers, their belongings and their creations. Many activities delivered at Forest School aims to promote team building, communication and social and emotional development. Verbal and physical abuse is not tolerated at Forest School and individuals who behave in such a way will be asked to leave the session and may be excluded from other sessions.

LOOKING EYES, LISTENING EARS

As our Forest School sessions are delivered in a woodland setting, there are numerous natural hazards. The site and all activities are risk assessed but individuals are encouraged to risk assess their surroundings and activities themselves. Using their eyes to watch where they are going and their ears to listen to safety guidelines will ensure they have a fun and safe experience at Forest School.

SNACK AND DRINK PROVISION

Only snacks and drinks provided by the Forest School Leader may be consumed on site. Wild fruits, berries, and / or fungi must not be picked or consumed at anytime. Learners will be encouraged to successfully identify such items and discuss why they should be avoided.

Session routine and procedures

Who will run the Forest School sessions?

Mrs Beswetherick is a trained level 3 Forest School Leader and will run the sessions alongside other adults who may include Mrs Gale who is a Level 2 Trained forest school practitioner, other teachers, teaching assistants from school and parent helpers, all of which who will be CRB checked.

Where will the sessions take place?

One of our parents have very kindly allowed us to use an area of woods for our forest school sessions in Yealand. This area of land is to the west of Silverdale Road, Yealand Redmayne, Carnforth. It is a short walk up Footeran Lane. Follow the road round until you see the public footpath which goes through a white gate. Follow the footpath up the hill and take the pathway through the woodland towards the left. Here is our site. The woodland is an ancient woodland and consists of a range of trees including Beech Trees and Ash trees. On the forest floor there is lots of Limestone and fauna such as Dogs mercury, garlic, Bluebells and Wooden Anenoe. The boundaries of our area will be clearly marked for the children and adults will be placed to ensure all children can be seen.

The Level 3 Forest School Practitioner will have overall responsibility for the group whilst up in the woods. All other staff and volunteers are to work under the guidance of the lead practitioner, and all have had to read and understand this handbook. This will be shown by a signature and reviewed every year or when a new member of staff starts.

How are the children kept safe?

The Forest School practitioner is trained in Outdoor first aid. Other staff are trained in first aid and will carry fully charged mobile phones. In the event of a more serious accident the school and parents will be contacted in line with the school's accident and emergency procedures.

The Forest School Leader will provide and be responsible for the essential equipment bag containing:

- the first aid kit
- emergency file with a copy of all risk assessments
- consent forms inc. medical details
- Register with emergency contact numbers and mobile phone
- Emergency procedure card
- Near miss, incident, bump on head forms and accident report book
- Tissues and hand wipes
- Spare gloves
- Spare clothes / waterproofs?
- Anti-bacterial hand gel

Ratios

There is a high ratio of adults to children in our forest school. The forest school leader will not be included in the ratio.

These are:

EYFS children 1:4

KS1 1:6

LKS2 1:8

UPKS2 1:10

Tool Use – 1:1 with the forest school leader.

Before each session the forest school leader will go through the following procedures:

- A thorough sweep of the site to identify, remove or restrict access to any hazards that might cause injury or illness. A site sweep form will be completed where hazards will be identified and documented.
- Boundaries will be checked
- Check Trees, bushes and other foliage is safe, including the potential for falling branches or dead wood, thorns, sticks at eye level and hazardous berries and fruits.
- Check the weather – if the weather is, or has the potential to become a risk, such as high winds or storms, the session will be cancelled.

At the end of each session the forest school leader will go through the following procedures:

- Clear everything away
- Ensure the fire is completely extinguished (if applicable) and the fire site is left safe
- Check all the tools against the tick list and store them away safely (if applicable). Knives should be logged back in and stored in a lockable container.
- Check that the site is left as it was before we got there

Toileting Considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the classroom. Any children needing the toilet during the session will be accompanied by an adult to make use of a wee tree or a portable / camping loo for solids. This will be removed and returned to school for disposal or if a dog bin is nearby put it in there.

What will the children do during Forest School sessions?

Children will be in the forest for about two to three hours each time. The session usually starts with an opening discussion around the fire circle which includes the safety rules:

RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT

STAY WITHIN THE FOREST SCHOOL BOUNDARY

RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE

LOOKING EYES, LISTENING EARS

After this the activities available are explained, and the children then choose what they would like to do. A snack and drink are included in the session. The session closes with a review and a reflection of what we have learnt, usually back at the fire circle.

Children will gradually build up to different activities. The ethos of Forest Schools is that it is very much child led so we will be observing the children very closely to enable us to plan from their needs and interests. Some of the activities may include:

Sculpture

Shelter building

Exploring the woodland

Forest floor art

Music

Collecting fire wood

Learning how to light a fire

Learning how to tie certain knots

Using basic tools under supervision to make woodland items

Using sticks for lots of different purposes

Playing team games

Cooking and eating snacks from the camp fire

Nature walks

Identifying the woodland structure and the things that live there

Essential equipment list

To maximise your child's experience in the woods it is essential that the children come dressed in clothing appropriate to the season.

SUMMER (For Warmer Weather)	WINTER (For Colder Weather)
A Waterproof Jacket 	A Warm Coat 
A short sleeved T-shirt 	Thermal Underwear 
A long sleeved T-shirt 	A long sleeved Cardigan/Jumper 
Long Trousers - Waterproof in wet weather 	Long Trousers - Waterproof in wet weather 

Closed toe shoes



Wellies



Socks



Warm Socks



A Sun Hat



A Warm Hat or Snood



Sun Cream - to be applied at home, then topped up and re-applied by staff members.



A pair of Gloves



Insect Repellent - If you feel your child needs an application, please apply at home



A warm Scarf



**"There is no such thing as bad weather,
only bad clothing!"**



Roles and responsibilities

Requirements of the Forest school leader

It is the duty of the forest school leader to:

- Provide users and staff with the relevant information relating to Forest School before sessions are implemented
- Ensure that all equipment and resources are safe to use, with the accompanying protective equipment
- Undertake a risk assessment and safety sweep before each session
- Brief the adults involved on the health and safety considerations before each session
- Come prepared with a First Aid kit and the other items listed in the essential equipment section of the handbook.

Role and responsibility of Teachers, Teaching Assistants, School staff and helpers

- Adult:child ratios must be adhered to at all times
- It is the responsibility of the group leader to make sure that when a child needs the toilet that ratios are maintained.
- Ensure that medical information and emergency contact forms are available on site and know where they are. (in the essential kit bag)
- Only use tools if the forest school leader has said that it is okay to do so and adhere to all safety rules when doing so. If unsure, check tool safety sheet/RA in handbook. Tools should only be used following the instruction of the Forest School Leader and safety rules adhered to at all times.
- Stay within the forest school boundary
- Look after the forest school site – includes not picking things, unless the forest school leader has said it is okay to do so, and looking after the environment.
- Uphold the ethos of forest schools that the children can not get things wrong
- Alert the forest school leader if anyone requires first aid, all accidents (even minor scrapes) must be recorded
- Ensure you are familiar with the forest school rules and assist learners in following them
- Report an unsafe or inappropriate behaviour immediately to the forest school leader
- Bring your own knowledge and skills to forest schools and share this with the children
- Take photographs using the school ipad
- Share any observations of the children with the leader
- Join in with reviewing sessions and snack times
- Follow the rules that are set out to the children e.g. safe use of tools, sitting around the camp fire – see risk assessment
- To have read and understood the risk assessment
- Forest Schools is intended to be child led – During the play please allow the children to play and learn as independently as possible and try to resist the temptation to demonstrate or suggest ideas! Keep your distance (except when using tools, supervising tree climbing), get involved if children invite you, but don't feel too bad if your standing and watching for most of the session.

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out for Yealand C of E Primary Schools Forest Schools are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Children's Act 1989 states it is important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DBS checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures at Yealand C of E Primary Schools Forest Schools are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

School Policies for Yealand C of E Primary School and Forest School

Staff attending Forest School sessions should be familiar with the following school policies:

*Health and Safety Policy

*Safeguarding Policy

*Behaviour Policy

Particular attention is paid to the following areas as these policies work in conjunction with our school policy but these are the following points that are applicable to Forest Schools:

Health and Safety Policy

The Forest School curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the Yealand Forest School Handbook and the Coordinator's File in school.

The Forest School Leader has an up-to-date certificate in ITC Outdoor First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangements. All staff have first aid training. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and a mobile phone is carried. The school will contact the parents. Fires are a valuable part of the Forest experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below, by a Forest School Practitioner.

Safeguarding Policy

Forest School sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by members of staff and parent volunteers.

Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.

All Yealand staff and regular volunteers have current DBS checks.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers and a Cause for Concern sheet will be filled in as soon as possible, so that our school's Safeguarding Policy can then be followed. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns should only be shared with those who need to know such as the class teacher who can then ensure the correct channels are then informed.

Behaviour Policy

At Forest School we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Yealand C of E Primary School. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the well being of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Procedures for Yealand C of E Primary School and Forest School

Staff attending Forest School sessions should be familiar with the following school procedures:

- *Confidentiality and access to information GDPR
- *Administration of Medicines (See Health and Safety Policy)
- *Accident Reporting procedures, Incidents and Near Misses
- *Emergency Procedures inc Major Incident
- *Conservation
- *Missing Child Procedure
- * Walk into site Procedure
- * Intruder Procedure
- * Tool Use Procedure
- * Lighting Fires Procedure
- *Food at Forest School

Particular attention is paid to the following areas as these procedures work in conjunction with our school policies and procedures however these are the following points that are applicable to Forest Schools:

Confidentiality and access to information - GDPR

Medical and emergency Contact Details - All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office, copies will be carried by a named lead person during each visit.

Administration of medicines procedure – See Health and Safety Policy

Accident Reporting procedures, Incidents and Near Misses

Definitions:

Accident: An unplanned, uncontrolled event, which has led to injury to people, damage to equipment or the environment or some other loss.

Near Miss: An unplanned, uncontrolled event that could have led to injury to people, damage to equipment or the environment or some other loss.

Incident: A happening, event or occurrence caused by ignoring or not adhering to set rules, boundaries or laws.

Leaders, Headteacher and site owners will maintain site and working areas to ensure that risk of accidents are as low as possible.

Leaders will have specialist first aid training for the outdoors and appropriate first aid equipment will be taken to each session.

All accidents, near misses and incidents must be recorded via EVOLVE, Lancashire and all major accidents will be reported. Blank accident/near miss/incident sheets are kept in the emergency folder in the Essential Equipment bag which is taken onto site at all times. Leaders will note all relevant information and add to the official accident book as soon as is practical back at school.

Missing Child procedure

If anybody suspects a person may be missing, they should immediately alert the Forest School Leader or another member of staff. The activity will be stopped. The Forest School Leader will appoint staff to look after the group and complete a headcount. If the fire is lit it should be extinguished and any tools collected and stored in the delegated tool use area immediately.

The perimeter of the site will be searched and then the inner area of the site. If the missing child is not found after the initial sweep, the group should assemble in a safe place (around the fire circle) and establish where and when they were last seen. The forest school leader and an assisting adult will continue to search the site (known hazardous areas first) whilst this is being confirmed.

If after 5 minutes the child has not been found then the Forest School Leader will alert the school office. A designated member of staff will lead the group back to school whilst extra assistance will arrive to assist with the search. The Forest School leader will keep in regular contact with the school office.

If the child is missing for more than 20 minutes the emergency services will be notified. The Forest school leader will make arrangements for the group to go back to school. A search party will be organised and the advice of the police will be followed in relation to searching for the missing child. The incident should be reported in the school diary and an incident report completed.

Walk into site procedure - Safety Sweep and checklists

The Forest School leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site. The safety sweep will be recorded on a safety sweep form and kept in the Forest School file.

Conservation procedure - Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the forest area around them. The aim is to promote respect for the woodlands and wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation. The children will have good knowledge of the woodland environment and know which plants and animals live within it.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest School. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site along with the Headteacher and owners of the site so that it does not become overused.

Intruder procedure

The Forest School site is an open site with a public footpath running through part of the area. At times the general public may be using the footpath. Before every Forest School visit all pupils will be reminded that they must stay within the boundaries and if anyone other than staff or pupils enter the area, they must not approach them. Should a member of the public approach a pupil, the pupil must return to be with staff/pupil group. If a staff member is concerned by any 'intruder' into the site, they must call all pupils and staff back to the fire circle and wait for the person to pass by.

Tool Use procedure

Tools and safe use of tools are for Forest School Leaders. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest School Leader, with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest School Leader at all times. Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.

All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest School Leaders responsibility.

All resources and equipment are checked regularly - see tool management sheet in Handbook. Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Lighting Fires procedure

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

- Children must have a secure knowledge of fire circle safety:

No one is to go near the fire pit unless supervised by an adult
Step across and sit down between the fire circle logs in the outer circle
Stand up, turn around and step over the logs
Children are not allowed to walk across the fire circle or step into the inner circle

- The agreement of Mrs Gale, Head Teacher.
- Notification to the Site Owners:
- In addition to the other resources, we will take a large container full of water.

When lighting a fire:

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner (Kirsty Beswetherick) will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the fire circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns as well as Fire first Aid kit and a Fire Blanket.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- The Forest School Leader is responsible for extinguishing the fire and leaving no trace, ensuring the Safety of our group and the Public.

Food Use at Forest School

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest School:

- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication and copies of Care Plans will be in the Essential Equipment Pack.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.
- The Forest School Leader will follow the Level 2 Food Hygiene /Outdoor Food Hygiene Certificate

Emergency Action Plan

This EAP (Emergency Action Plan) is kept in the Essential Equipment Bag at all times.

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff (TA) would direct the emergency services to the casualty, Kirsty Beswetherick, as Outdoor First Aider, would attend to the casualty until the Emergency Services arrive. The casualty would be accompanied to hospital by a member of school staff.

The Forest School Leader (Kirsty Beswetherick) or Class Teacher would oversee the rest of the group are counted and prepared to return to school.

The school office would be informed after dialling the Emergency Services and assistance to return back to school requested if necessary. The adult accompanying the casualty would return to school once the child was in the care of their parents/carers.

In the event of an adult needing emergency attention it must be judged whether they need to be accompanied or support may be required. Decisions taken must ensure the safety of the children within the group and accompanying adults.

In the event of the Outdoor First Aider needing emergency assistance it would be expected for the Class teacher to return the children to school and another adult would stay with the casualty.

Accident and incident forms would be completed back at school.

Minor injuries would be treated as they would within school and recorded via EVOLVE, Lancs and reported to parents and carers in line with school policy.

Emergency Services: 999

School Office: 01524 781360

Location of Forest School Site: To the west of Silverdale Road

Forest School Leader Phone: 07886780307 (Forest School Leader Number)

Risk Assessments for Yealand C of E Primary School and Forest School

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest School Site Assessment
- Forest School sessions: including resource collecting, ropes and string and Shelter building, Tool use, Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the Yealand C of E Primary School Handbook and in the Coordinator's File.

This Forest School Policy has been written in agreement with the Head Teacher, Staff and Governors of Yealand C of E Primary School. It will be reviewed annually.