

Padiham Green Church of England Primary School

St Anne's Street, Padiham, Lancashire, BB12 7AX
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FOREST SCHOOL POLICY 2020 / 2021

Introduction

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. 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 and 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.

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 wild area around them. The aim is to promote respect for wildlife, which will be achieved through detailed session plans, evaluation and careful reference to our Woodland Management Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site.

Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of our Forest School Sessions. 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 Practitioner will monitor the site so that it does not become overused and an alternative area will be found and risk assessed if necessary.

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 Forest School are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures at Forest School are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

Padiham Green School and Forest School Policies

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

Health and Safety; First Aid; Risk Assessment Policy and Risk Assessments particular to Forest Schools; Asthma Policy; Food; Safeguarding; Equality and Inclusion; and Behaviour.

Copies of all policies are available on our school website and paper copies are included in the back of the Forest School File, held in school.

Particular attention is paid to the following areas:

Health and Safety

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 Forest School 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 arrangement. 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 School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below.

Safeguarding

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 Padiham Green 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 an entry will be made on CPOMS 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.

Equality and Inclusion

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.

Behaviour

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

Medical and Emergency Contact Details

All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office.

Emergency Action Plan

This EAP (Emergency Action Plan) is kept in the Forest School Leaders file in school at all times.

In the event of an emergency and a child needs to be taken to hospital a member of staff would direct the emergency services to the casualty. The Forest School Leader, Rebecca McLoughlin, as ITC 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 Class teacher or Teaching Assistant 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 Forest School Leader needing emergency assistance it would be expected for the Class teacher or teaching assistant to return the children to school and another adult would stay with the casualty. The accident book and incident forms would be completed back in school.

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

Emergency Services: 999

Location of Forest School Site: Padiham Green C of E Primary School, St. Anne's Street, Padiham, Lancashire, BB12 7AX.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

Forest School Site Assessment

Forest School sessions and activities

Tool use

Campfire Activities

These Risk Assessments can be found in the Forest School Handbook and in the Forest School Leader's File.

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.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and Equipment at Forest School

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

Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'. (These can be found in the Forest School File).

Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest School Leader and staff at all times.

Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest School Leader feels the children are ready.

All tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them.

Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest School activities and reviewed on a regular basis.

It is not expected for any other adult attending Forest School to use tools with children, only the Forest School Leader.

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.

Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest School

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place: Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety:

Stand behind the log.

Step over and sit down on log.

Stand up, turn around and step over log.

Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle.

Fires can only take place with the knowledge and agreement of Mr Dixon, Head Teacher.

When lighting a fire:

Only a trained Forest School Practitioner (Rebecca McLoughlin) will take responsibility for the fire. This will be her sole responsibility for the session. She 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 log circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.

Check for low overhanging trees.

Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.

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.

NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.

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 airtight 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 Forest School Leader's File in the rucksack.

Food will be cooked correctly.

All equipment and waste is cleared away.

The role of the Forest School Leader

The Forest School Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date ITC Outdoor First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.

The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.

The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.

The leader will ensure the emergency pack is at the base camp of Forest School for each session.

The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.

The Forest School leader will ensure accidents are logged in the school first aid folder. The class teacher will keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Forest School Rules

Keep your hands away from your mouth

Leave things to grow

Keep within the set boundaries

Routines and Procedures for Forest School

Preparation - The Forest School Leader (Rebecca McLoughlin) will do a sweep of the site prior to the weekly sessions.

The Forest School Leader will check the rucksack contains all essential items. The Emergency Action Plan is kept in the top of the rucksack and all adults are aware of this. First Aid kit, inhalers and wipes are kept

next to the rucksack which is left by basecamp. The tool bag, water containers and other equipment will be taken as appropriate. The Forest School Leader will carry the rucksack to the site.

Waterproofs will be ready for the children prior to session, if they are required. Spare wellies are kept in the underground.

Prior to the session children will be toileted, put on their waterproofs (if necessary). Forest School safety rules will be shared with the group at the start of each session. Children will put wellies on the outside the classroom door and walk in pairs to the site.

During the session

Children participate in a variety of activities which are totally inclusive, thus catering for all ability levels. They are taught a variety of woodland skills through practical hands on activities. They also learn how to light fires safely. The children learn the care and safe use of a wide range of tools. This is a tightly supervised activity on a 1:1 ratio of adult to children. It is introduced gradually in small steps. Children are encouraged to listen attentively to instructions and to take responsibility for their actions. This is achieved by games that also encourage respect for the environment.

Back at school children will remove wellies outdoors or standing on sheeting (if very wet), before entering the classroom.

After the session

Equipment will be washed and stored as appropriate. Waterproofs will be dried and hung on rails. Flasks, water containers and cups will be emptied and cleaned out. Tools (if taken) will be cleaned and locked away in the underground. The rucksack and essential equipment will be put away and any items used replaced.

Cancelling Forest School

Forest School may need to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, e.g. high winds, or blizzards. Adapted classroom activities will take place instead.

Forest School may not be able to go ahead if there are not enough adults to accompany us. If no replacement adult can be found then the session will be cancelled. The session will also be cancelled if the Forest School Leader is unable to attend. Campfires cannot take place without the Qualified Forest School Leader; Rebecca McLoughlin.

Essential Equipment Needed at Forest School Sessions

A rucksack, containing the following essential items will always accompany the group:

EAP (Emergency Action Plan)

Mobile phone kept with Forest School Leader and Class Teacher

Medical Care Plans

Wet wipes

First Aid Kit

Inhalers

Clothing Requirements for Forest School

The following clothing requirements are for everyone attending a Forest School session (even adult volunteers).

Woolly hat/sunhat

Gloves

Jacket/waterproof coat

Fleece/sweatshirt

Waterproof trousers

Spare socks

Walking boots/wellies/boots

Toileting considerations

All children will visit the toilet before leaving the Classroom. Any children needing the toilet during the session will use the nearest school toilet in the Dance Studio. KS2 children can go unattended, KS1 and EYFS must be accompanied by an adult.

COVID-19 Addendum

In addition to the above, the Forest School Leader will ensure the equipment is cleaned thoroughly before and after use.

Pupils shall be reminded to wash their hands before and after each Forest School session.

Only one year group (bubble) will use the Forest School area and equipment at any one time, accompanied only by the Forest School Leader and staff from that year group. Staff will observe social distance as far as possible during Forest School sessions.

Where the Forest School Leader believes they have had close contact with a pupil or member of staff outside of their year group (bubble), they will list any contact on a school contact form to be submitted to the school Bursar.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Policy reviewed: September 2020

Next review: Autumn 2021

Subject Leader: Rebecca McLoughlin

Chair of Governors: Debbie Barsby