



FIRPARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Forest School/



Handbook

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What is Forest Schools?



Forest schools was first introduced into the UK in 1993 by a group of nursery nurses and lectures from Bridgewater College, Somerset. They had visited Denmark to watch Forest Schools sessions being run there and believed the process would benefit the children they worked with. The process was adapted and offered as a B-Tech in Forest School in 1995. This grew in popularity and in 2002 a network of practitioners held the first national conference at which a UK definition of Forest School was formulated:

'An inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland environment.'

During this conference a set of basic features were also decided upon to run Forest Schools by:

- It is run by qualified level 3 practitioners.
- It is a long-term process with regular contact with a local wooded environment (preferably over the seasons).
- It follows a child-centred pedagogy where children learn about and manage risk.
- It has a high adult: child ratio.
- Observations of the learners are key to enabling scaffolding of the learning.
- Care for the natural world is integrated.

These basic features went on to help form the Forest School principles:

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.

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.

Forest Schools aims to encourage children to:

- Develop personal and social skills
- Work through practical problems and challenges
- Use tools to create, build and manage
- Discover how they learn best
- Pursue knowledge that interests them
- Learn how to manage failure
- Build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- Develop practical skills
- Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- Regularly experience achievement and success
- Reflect on learning and experiences
- Develop their language and communication skills
- Improve physical motor skills
- Become more motivated
- Improve their concentration skill



Safeguarding Children



Firpark Primary Forest School actively recognises the role and responsibilities of the Forest School program as well as each staff member, or volunteers, in the safeguarding of children while at Forest School.

To achieve this goal three areas are taken into constant consideration;

- Prevention
 - Regular risk assessment of FS site, action taken if needed.
 - Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) being used.
 - All FS staff and volunteers appropriately checked for suitability to work with children.
- Protection
 - All staff are appropriately trained and supported.
 - Encourage open communication.
 - Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of relevant agreed procedures and follow them.
- Support
 - Appropriate support will be offered to staff, volunteers or learners in Forest school.
 - Open lines of communication to the learner's parents/carers.

Firpark Forest School will follow the schools safeguarding (child protection) policy. A copy can be found in *Appendix A of this handbook.



Risk Management



A suitable site has been identified for use by the Firpark Forest School. The site has been risk assessed by a level 3 Forest School leader using both a North Lanarkshire General Risk Assessment form, *Appendix B, and a Forest School Risk Assessment form, *Appendix C. The site is continually checked for any changes before the start of each session. Any changes to the site which present a risk are noted and an appropriate measure is taken to minimise the risk. If the risk cannot be minimised to a safe level, then this will impact the Forest School session from a change in activity to the potential cancellation of the session until the risk can be appropriately dealt with.

At Forest School an amount of risk in an activity is acceptable so long as the benefit of the activity justifies the risk. To assess this each activity at Firpark Forest School is subject to a risk/benefit assessment, *Appendix D. The risks in each activity are minimised as much as possible but in some activities, there is an inherent risk necessary to the learning and development of the learners. Learners are never forced to participate in any activity and are actively encouraged to risk assess each activity for themselves based on their own skill/confidence/ability level.

All staff at a Forest School session have read the risk assessment of the site and activity for that day. They are made aware of any potential risks and measures in place to minimise these risks. The learners are also made aware of potential risks and again are actively encouraged to risk assess their learning for themselves.



First Aid



The Forest School Leader is responsible for first aid and holds a certificate in Out Door First Aid, *Appendix E.

An Emergency Rucksack (ER) which contains the first aid kit is carried to all Forest School sessions.

In the First aid kit, there will be;

- An assortment of dressings and bandages of different sizes.
- sterile wipes.
- Adhesive tape.
- Disposable gloves.
- Safety pins.
- Saline tubes.
- Plasters

The ER will also contain the following items;

- Emergency contact procedure (laminated) (*Appendix I)
- Groups Medical Details
- Risk Assessment for Forest School Site
- Risk Assessment for Activities
- Whistle
- Thermal Blanket
- Emergency Foil Blankets
- Throw Line
- Clingfilm
- Fire Blanket
- Emergency Fire Lighting Kit
 - Lighter
 - Out Door Matches
 - Fire Lighters



Accident and Emergency Procedure



All staff, volunteers and participants, where appropriate, will be briefed on what to do in case of an emergency.

- Forest School Leader will be informed immediately.
- Forest School Leader carries out an assessment of the situation and attends to any casualties, giving first aid as necessary. Depending on the nature and extent of the injury/accident the rest of group will be gathered together in a safe area by the Forest School Assistant to complete a low risk activity while the Forest School Leader deals with the accident/emergency.
- In a minor accident, the Forest School Leader will treat using the first aid kit and decide if the injured party is safe to continue with the session. If the injured party is unable to continue then the Forest School Leader will contact a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) to arrange for them to return to school and if appropriate contact the learner's emergency contact.
- In serious cases the emergency services will be contacted by a member of the Forest Staff using the Emergency contact procedure. The SMT will then be contacted and informed of the situation. A member of the SMT will then contact and inform the injured party's emergency contact.
- An Accident/incident form, *Appendix J, will be completed and filed in Forest School Accident/incident Folder. A RIDDOR, Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, record will be created using their online system for any death, serious injury or seven-day injury. A online RIDDOR record will also be created, along with an accident/incident form, for any serious near miss incident at or in the vicinity of the Forest School site.
- Appropriate steps will be taken, if necessary, to stop a reoccurrence of the accident.



Cancellation Procedure



There will be times Firpark Forest School must be cancelled. Some reasons for this are;

- Weather conditions create a risk that cannot be mitigated for.
- Staff absences lower the learner to staff ratio.
- The Forest School Leader cannot be there.

All people involved will be contacted as early as possible via phone call, text message or in person.



Toileting Procedure



All learners and staff will be given the opportunity to use the toilet before leaving the school for every Forest School session.

A 'Pee Tree' is identified for use should a learner or staff member require to use the toilet when on site. This will consist of a tarpaulin attached to trees for privacy. There will be toilet paper available as well as running water from a solar shower to wash their hands. Antibacterial gel will also be available for use. Should the learners require more than a pee a separate area of the site will be selected for this. A hole will be dug and tarpaulin will be erected for privacy. All toilet paper used will be placed in a plastic bag provided and taken back to the school for appropriate disposal. Should a learner or staff member have any physical needs in connection with toileting then these will be catered for appropriately. This may include returning to the school for use of the toilets before returning to the Forest School site.



Equal Opportunities Statement



Firpark Primary School actively promotes the inclusion of all children and adults into Forest School sessions, and will endeavour to ensure that the opportunities for learning, development and participation are available to everyone, irrespective of race, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation or age.

Firpark Forest School will follow the Firpark Primary School Equality and Diversity Policy. A copy of this policy can be found in *Appendix G.



Behaviour Management Policy



Firpark Forest School actively encourages positive behaviour and supports those with behaviour needs. No learner will be left out of a Forest School session based on their behaviour within the school unless, the Forest School Leader decides the behaviour poses too great a risk to the health and safety of the learner, other learners or staff. Firpark Forest School will follow the Firpark Primary School Behaviour Policy. A copy of this policy can be found in *Appendix H.



Consents/Communication with Parents



Parental/carer consent for Forest Schools participation will be obtained prior to the first Forest School session. This will include contact details/medical details and any special requirements. A copy of these will be carried to site each session. Every staff member will be made aware of any important and relevant information about participants. A copy of the consent form can be found in *Appendix F.

A Forest School Diary will be completed for each child involved in Forest School by a member of the Forest School Team. These diary entries may consist of comments on each session as well as photographs of activities undertaken.

Should any parents/carers have any concerns they are encouraged to contact The Forest School Leader via the Forest School Diary. If required they can contact the school office to arrange a chat with the Forest School Leader over the phone or in person.



Tool Use Procedures



The Forest School Leader is responsible for the safe use, safe maintenance and safe storage of all tools used at Forest School. When not in use, the tools are kept in a padlocked storage cupboard. The Forest School Leader is responsible for the key for this cupboard. A check list of all items in the cupboard is checked after each Forest School session.

A separate check list is used for items being transported to site. This list is individual to each Forest School session and is checked before leaving the Forest School site to make sure nothing is left behind. When being transported to site the smaller tools such as the knives, axes, etc. are placed in a locked tool box. The larger tools, such as the bow saw, are transported in a large zipped bag. Both these are transported under the supervision of the Forest School Leader or Assistant. All tools, where possible, have a protective cover protecting their sharp edge.

During Firpark Forest School, tool use is always overseen by the Forest School Leader or Assistant. The supervision ratio will be assessed for each activity and will depend on several factors including the age and ability level of the group.

An activity risk/benefit assessment, *Appendix D, is completed for all activities involving the use of tools. These are kept in the Firpark Forest School Activity Folder which is kept by the Forest School Leader.



Fire Procedures



Fires and the use of Kelly Kettles can be a useful part of a Forest School session but they are not mandatory and as such must serve a purpose. This may be as simple as a focal point to round a session off or made a hot drink to keep everyone warm on a cold day.

Fire use at Forest School aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with fires and/or Kelly Kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Fire Considerations

- The location of the fire site will be at the discretion of the Forest School Leader who will take into consideration the weather conditions, site geography, canopy level, ground composition, group dynamic, group experience, etc.
- Fire area will be surrounded by a barrier made from wood, found on site, to stop the fire from spreading.
- There will be a designated fire warden who will oversee all areas of lighting the fire to extinguishing it.
- Fire areas will be surrounded on 3 sides by large logs used for seating. There will be no seating behind the fire warden. These logs will be placed at a safe distance of around 1.5m-2m from the fire. Learners and volunteers at Forest School will be shown the correct method of entering and exiting a fire area. (not for Kelly Kettle use)
- A fire blanket and a minimum of 10Litres of water will be positioned within easy reach of the fire warden at all times during a fire.
- A first aid kit and cling film are carried in the emergency rucksack.
- The Forest School Leader is the designated Outdoor First Aider and as such their presence is required on site if a fire is to be lit.
- All fires must be fully extinguished at the end of a Forest School session.
- This will be checked by either the Forest School Leader or Assistant.
- Ideally the fire site should be returned to the condition it was in prior to use.
- Ash from the fire will be dispersed around the Forest School site.
- Although some wood from the site will be used as fuel for the fire it is common practice to take wood to the site for use.



Cooking Procedures



Cooking on the campfire at Forest School will be supervised by a member of staff in possession of a Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate.

A Risk/Benefit activity assessment will be completed for all activities involving cooking on the campfire.

All Hair will be tied back and loose clothing secured prior to cooking on the campfire.

All normal procedures for lighting, maintaining and extinguishing a campfire will also be maintained.



Lost/Missing People Procedures



Firpark Forest Schools priority is to keep all learners and staff safe. In the event of a missing person the following emergency procedure will be implemented.

- Forest School Leader will be informed immediately.
- Rest of group will be gathered together with Forest School Assistant to complete a low risk activity while the Forest School Leader carries out a search for no more than 5 minutes.
- If person cannot be located within 5 minutes, then the police will be directly alerted by the Forest School Leader. Grid Reference for the site can be located on the Emergency Contact Procedure found in the Emergency Rucksack.
- After contacting the police, Firpark SMT will be contacted to inform them of the situation. A member of the SMT will then contact the missing person's emergency contact to inform them of the situation.
- The Incident will be recorded in the Firpark Forest Schools Accident/Incident Folder. Appropriate steps will be taken, if necessary, to stop a reoccurrence of factors leading to the incident.



Daily Operating Procedures



Pre-Session

- An initial/next step plan will be completed considering any previous learning, observations and interest points of the learners. All Forest School staff will read this plan.
- Activity Risk/Benefit forms will be completed/updated for each planned activity. All adults will read the forms relevant to the session.
- All staff will have read the latest site risk assessment.
- Forest School Leader will determine that all factors are met for the session to take place – Ratio of adults to learners, weather conditions, etc.
- The equipment required for the day will be assembled, checked on daily equipment list and prepared for transport to the site.
- Learners will register with class teacher before leaving the class to meet with Forest School Staff. They will register with the Forest School Leader before changing clothes, applying sun cream, toileting and having breakfast, if necessary.
- Any learner, staff, or volunteer specific medication will be taken to the site with the group as per the pre-agreed medical procedure for that individual dictates.

During Session

- A visual daily risk assessment will be completed by the Forest School Leader or Assistant with support from the learners if appropriate upon arrival.
- A base camp, toileting and time out areas will be set up shortly after arrival.
- A head count will be carried out upon arrival and whenever the group is brought together.
- Risks will continuously be assessed and any appropriate actions will be taken to minimise them.
- Should equipment become faulty or break during a session a member of the Forest School Team will remove this equipment from use. If possible a replacement will be provided to the learner.

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Post Session

- Equipment checked against daily list by Forest School Staff to ensure to items are missing.
- Head count taken before leaving site. A further head count will be undertaken when we arrive back at school.
- Learners change back into school uniform.

- Equipment is cleaned and maintained as required before being returned to the locked Forest School Cupboard. Where appropriate learners will assist in this.
- Learners will return to their normal school routine.
- A session evaluation will be completed by the Forest School Staff taking into account, observations, daily learning, points of interest and possible next steps.



Confidentiality



Firpark Forest School will adhere to the Data Protection Policy 1998 as laid out by North Lanarkshire council. <http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/dataprotection>

All paperwork associated with Firpark Forest Schools will be maintained by the Forest Schools Leader. All folders associated with Firpark Forest School will be kept in a locked Cupboard within the school. All pastoral or safeguarding issues will be reported to the headteacher and further action, if any is required, will be in line with school, council or national policies. All computer files containing confidential information about Firpark Forest School will be stored on the school's secure network in a password protected folder.

Firpark Forest School will follow the guidance of the school when it comes to photographing the learners at Forest School. A member of the SMT will make the Forest School Leader aware of any learners whose pictures may not be taken. This information will then be passed to all Forest School Staff who will oversee all photograph taking place at Forest Schools. This information is gathered by the school at the start of each school year and individual forms are kept in learner's personal folders in the DHT office.

All confidential information regarding learners and staff attending Firpark Forest School will be carried to site in the Emergency Rucksack.



Signature/Review Date



Jonathan Divers

Forest School Leader

Yvonne Woodward

Forest School Assistant

Anne McKenna

Forest School Assistant

Last Reviewed

17th April 2017

Review date

20th August 2017

*All Appendixes are available from the school on request.