

Blackwood Primary School and Nursery Class



Forest School Handbook

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What is Forest School and who is responsible?

History of Forest School

British Forest Schools have been developed and adapted from the original concept implemented in Sweden in the 1950s and developed throughout other Scandinavian and European Countries. The Forest Schools concept established in Denmark for pre-school children (under seven years) in the 1980s stemmed from their *småbørnspædagogik*, or Early Years Education, and was visited by nursery nurses from Somerset in the mid 1990s. Other representatives from Early Years professional bodies across the UK also visited independently to observe and learn about the practises.

Denmark has a similar climate to that of the UK. Over the last decades this particular approach to outdoor play and learning has been increasingly recognised as having a hugely positive impact on the holistic development of children.

The Forest School Training Company was originally set up by Gordon Woodall (one of the pioneers of Forest School in the UK) and Simon Shakespeare (an established Forest School leader and experienced trainer and permaculture designer) to respond to the growing demand for Forest School training throughout the UK.

In 2005, Gordon decided to dedicate himself full-time to running his outdoor learning centre in Somerset and so FSTC was taken over by Simon and his wife Marijke. Since then they have strived to deliver an increasingly contemporary and relevant training package which aims to continue to inspire future Forest School leaders with the original ethos of genuine, child-centred learning in the outdoors.



United Nations on the Rights of the Child

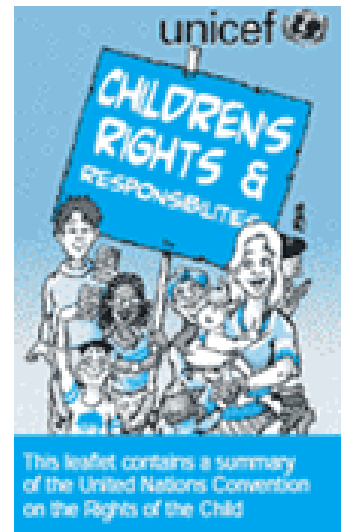
The United Nations on the Rights of the child came into being in 1989. The convention is significant in several ways. Firstly, because it asserts that children do have rights; secondly, because it attempts to list these rights; thirdly because it asserts the obligation of all governments to enforce them; and finally, because it is based on a definitive image of childhood entitlement for all. This image is described in the following quote from the declaration adopted by the World Summit for Children that took place after the United Nations' passing of the Convention:

'The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable and dependent. They are also curious, active and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace, of playing, learning and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and cooperation. Their lives should be mature, as they broaden their perspective and gain new experiences.'

Article 31 of the UNCRC is as follows:-

Every child has the right to relax, play and join in a wide range of cultural and artistic activity.

This article is put in place in order for children to have free, personally led play that encourages them to engage with the world around them and express themselves as is relevant to them. This may be in an artistic way... part of the ethos of Forest School.



Staff and Adult Information



There are currently three members of staff at Blackwood Primary and Nursery Class who have been trained to deliver Forest School. Miss Illingworth (class teacher) and Ms Marshall (Early Years worker) are trained Forest School leaders. Mrs Brownlee (school support assistant) is a qualified Forest School assistant leader. The ethos of Forest School is based on a

fundamental respect for children and young people and for their capacity to instigate, test and maintain curiosity in the world around them. It believes in a child's right to play; the right to access the outdoors (and in particular a woodland environment); the right to experience and evaluate appropriate risk and the vibrant reality of the natural world; and the right to experience a healthy range of emotions, through all the challenges of social interaction, to build a resilience that will enable continued and creative engagement with their peers and their potential.

Forest School is based on the process of learning more so than the content - the 'how' than the 'what'. This means that genuine Forest School practice steps boldly out of the shadow and limitation of 'planned activities' and ventures collaboratively into the realms of the unplanned, unexpected and ultimately unlimited. Children and young people are given encouragement to direct their own learning - this often requires catalysing on the part of the Forest School leader either through stimulating play in the outdoors or through 'scaffolding' a child's learning, but mostly through simply observing how children act and interact in the outdoors.

Therefore the role of adults on site is to facilitate children's learning from a supportive position. Adults must take time to understand what the child wants to achieve. Adults and leaders will strategically record children's targets and aims and plan responsively in order to help them achieve.

Adult/helper information

- Involved in the leading the Forest School sessions will be Miss Illingworth, Ms Marshall and Mrs Brownlee who have all undertaken Forest School training.
- Other adult helpers may attend as long as they hold current disclosures and PVG Scheme certificates.
- The ratio we work to is one adult to 8 school pupils and one adult to 6 nursery children. There will always be a minimum of two adults at a Forest School session.
- Supervision ratios will depend on activity undertaken and will be age and stage appropriate.
- All adults participating in Forest School must have relevant disclosures and PVG Scheme certificates.
- Staff and helpers at Forest School sessions will be informed of any health and safety, risk assessment or medical changes prior to each session beginning.
- Insurance policies in place are South Lanarkshire Council's Outdoor Learning Insurance and South Lanarkshire Council's excursion policy.

Risk Management and Risk Assessment

Risk taking is widely understood to be a natural precursor to a child's development. Adults who work with children are moving on from the mindset that risk is harmful and must not be allowed within learning. Considering the concept of 'risk' from a child's point of view, it could be better understood and reframed as 'challenge'. Providing appropriate risk, as well as allowing children to work through realistic challenges which they set for themselves, supports their development, actively engages them in learning and can help them better understand themselves and each other.

At Forest School, leaders are setting learners up to succeed by supporting and scaffolding their learning and development. The type of skills and experiences that learners will have at Forest School involves taking appropriate risk. Leaders observe the children, identifying their development needs and support them in taking appropriate risks in order to achieve identified goals and targets, aiming to boost self-esteem and self-confidence.



Risk Assessments

A site risk assessment will be carried out in advance of a block of sessions by a Forest School leader taking into consideration all layers of the woodland - namely ground, field, shrub and canopy. Other adults who will be on site would be recommended to contribute to risk assessing. Not all risks can be removed as children will be expected to evaluate risks and make decisions regarding safety on their arrival at site.

A daily risk assessment will be carried out on arrival on site each time it is used. This is carried out by all Forest School participants, including the children, and discussed as a group. The same areas are considered and any changes are recorded by the leader with risk management strategies identified. It is important that all daily risk management information is shared with all participants.

Activity risk assessments will be carried out for specific activities. These need to be carried out by a Forest School leader prior to the activity being undertaken.

First Aid

First Aid on site will be administered by Miss Illingworth or Ms Marshall, who both hold a current First Aid in the Outdoors certificate. A basic first aid kit will be taken on all visits to the Forest School site and will include the following:

- Silver foil bag/blanket
- Whistle
- Gloves
- Triangle bandages
- Safety pins
- Plasters (different sizes)
- Burn dressings (Cling film)
- Crepe bandages
- Zinc oxide tape
- Tweezers
- Antiseptic wipes
- Plastic bags
- Scissors
- Wound dressing
- Aspirin
- Vaseline
- Piriton
- Vics vapour rub (for bites)
- Gaf tape
- Sams splint



Accident and Emergency Procedures

The session leader has the overall responsibility of health and safety at Forest School sessions.

Directions for Emergency Services

Heading south along Carlisle Road - B7078. Turn right before entering village of Blackwood. Continue down road for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile over small bridge: forest school site is on left.

The following provisions have been made:

- Leaders have undertaken first aid training
- A fully stocked first aid kit will be carried
- Leader will carry mobile phone
- Access points are identified on site for emergency services
- First aid procedures have been discussed with other adults assisting on site
- Individual needs of participants are identified and provided for e.g. asthma, allergies.

Insurance policies in place are South Lanarkshire Council's Outdoor Learning Insurance and South Lanarkshire Council's excursion policy.

Accident procedure in place is:

- Respond following first aid training
- Calm pupil/participant down and reassure them
- Discuss what happened, how they feel, and course of action i.e. do they return to school or continue with session (if injury is less serious)
- If they must return to school they will be accompanied by an adult on site
- Record in appropriate way

Emergency procedure in place is:

- Respond following first aid training
- Call emergency services 999
- Identify access routes for emergency service on site
- Notify school for support as required 01555 892438
- Return other Forest School students to school if required with adult on site
- Contact parents
- Record in appropriate way

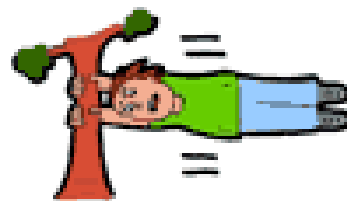
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations

Log sheets will be taken to each Forest School session and any accidents or incidents will be recorded by relevant member of staff. This will be transferred to the school's accident log book and separate incident log book if required, and parents informed as necessary.

Cancellation Procedure

A Forest School session will be cancelled in the event of:

- Adverse weather conditions i.e. high winds, (using the Beaufort Scale, 5 or above - strong winds), heavy snowfall, heavy rain
- Staff absences



In the event that a Forest School session is cancelled, appropriate tasks relating to the session may take place in school or nursery, however, this may not always be possible.

Toileting Procedure



In the pastoral bag toilet roll and a trowel will be carried. On site a designated toilet area will be identified. This area is across the road from the forest school site.

Water and soap will always be carried to site to allow for hand washing and antibacterial hand gel will also be used as long as children have permission from a parent or guardian.

Parent/ Guardian Consent



Permissions that will be sought include:

- permission to travel/walk to the Forest School site
- a current record of medical conditions and/or allergies to medicine
- a current record of any known food allergies
- permission to eat and drink at Forest School
- permission to use antibacterial hand sanitizer
- emergency contacts details

All permission forms will be carried to and from site each time a Forest School session takes place.

Information that is available to parents/ guardians in this handbook and upon request:

- What Forest School is about
- Information about the site you are using and how we will travel there from school
- Information about the types of activities you will be doing and the tools involved
- Information about weather conditions and what clothing and footwear is required
- Information related to risk assessments and management including weather and tool use

Use of Photographs

Photographs of Forest School sessions will be taken and used in accordance with the school and nursery policy. All permissions are sought at the start of a new school/ nursery year which ask for permission for photographs to be used in school, in local publications and on school websites.



Tools Used at Forest Schools

Before using any tools the following criteria should be met:

1. Risk assess tools, working area and activity
2. Tool training and assessment of individuals should have take place
3. Check tools before use and sign out to individuals
4. Keep a safe working distance

Fixed Blade Knife	
Tool used for:	This tool can be used for stripping back wood, e.g. to make a pointed toasting stick, or for cutting string etc.
Transporting to FS:	To site: Securely in protective sheath and within tool box or bag. On site: Securely in protective sheath and held down by side. The knife should be secured back into the sheath when not in use and when being passed to another person.
Safety Checks:	Make sure the knife is in good working order and the blade is sharp before you begin using it. To check the blade hold it up to the light and look at the edge. If you cannot see a line then the knife is too sharp to reflect light back and is not blunt.
PPE needed (and for whom):	Not required.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Safety boots should be worn if any risk of large or heavy objects falling on feet.
Ratio Adult/Child	One supervising adult to one child.
Safe Body Stance:	Adopt the 3 point stance, a kneeling position or sit on a stable seat with both feet on the ground.
Safe Action: (how you use it safely)	Risk assess equipment, working area and activity prior to use. Ensure you are a safe working distance from others (use the blood bubble rule). To use, individuals should be trained and assessed in proper use. Hold the knife firmly in the dominant hand and cut away from the body to the side. Ensure long hair and loose clothing are tied back/ secure and that legs do not interfere with cutting movements. Cut using strokes away from the body and down towards the ground.
How to Clean:	Use a soft cloth to dry and wipe off residue. Place the cloth on the floor or a flat, stable surface and wipe both sides of the knife against it with the blade pointed away from the body. WD40 should be applied every few uses.
Storage in your setting:	Knives will be stored securely in their sheaths and in the tool bag. When not in use they will be locked in a cupboard with all other tools and equipment.

Bowsaw	
Tool used for:	The tool can be used for cutting particular widths of tree; tree felling.
Transporting to FS:	<p>To site: With guard securely in place and in tool box or bag.</p> <p>On site: Held at point of balance down by side. The blade should face down towards the ground. This applies also when being passed to another person.</p>
Safety Checks:	Wear in new bow saw blades yourself before using with young children. Make sure the blade is in good working order, sharp and the tension is tight enough before you begin using it.
PPE needed (and for whom):	Safety boots and hard hats should be worn when coppicing, thinning and felling trees. Hard hats should also be worn if any branches extend above head height.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used	A saw horse may be required.
Ratio Adult/Child	One supervising adult to one child.
Safe Body Stance:	A stable standing position is a stable working position for activities such as sawing wood using a saw horse. Feet should be apart and knees slightly bent with dominant foot forward. A 3 point stance should be adopted for felling from a position low to the ground.
Safe Action: (how you use it safely)	Risk assess equipment, working area and activity prior to use. Ensure you are a safe working distance from others (use the blood bubble rule) and have a clear flat area. To use, individuals should be trained and assessed in proper use. Use a saw horse to hold work steady as necessary. Ensure holding hand is protected behind frame. Hold the saw firmly in the dominant hand and make 3 short cuts towards the body to start work. Ensure long hair and loose clothing are tied back/ secure. Never cut on flat surfaces.
How to Clean:	Use a soft cloth to dry and wipe off residue from handle. Use a soft, dry brush to dust residue from the blade. WD40 should be applied every few uses.
Storage in your setting:	Bow saws will be stored with guards on and in the tool bag in order to keep them clean and dry. They should not be laid on the ground on site instead leaned against a tree or hung on the saw horse with guard on. When not in use they will be locked in a cupboard with all other tools.

Axe

Tool used for:	For splitting wood (used with mallet) and for shaping wood into a point.
Transporting to FS:	To site: Securely in protective sheath and within tool box or bag. On site: Securely in protective sheath and held down by side. The axe should be secured back into the sheath when not in use.
Safety Checks:	The top part of axe that holds axe onto handle is slightly raised above the axe head. Check for sharpness: if not sharp then renew axe.
Is PPE needed (and for whom):	Safety boots should be worn if any risk of large or heavy objects falling on feet.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Chopping block that is steady and in a flat area. Ideally fallen tree trunk for shaping wood. A tree stump can be used for splitting wood.
Ratio Adult/Child	One supervising adult to two children.
Safe Body Stance:	Adopt 3 point stance. Shaping: hold tree trunk in less dominant hand and axe in dominant hand. Use additional person to support tree trunk if necessary standing behind your shoulder and holding the top of tree trunk.
Safe Action:	Risk assess equipment, working area and activity prior to use. Ensure you are a safe working distance from others (use the blood bubble rule). To use, individuals should be trained and assessed in proper use. Shaping: angle the position away from the tree trunk before striking. Strike down into the wood to make several small shavings and then strike down to remove and repeat. Splitting: hold axe in both hands on top of wood, signal to person using mallet when ready.
How to Clean:	Use a soft cloth to dry and wipe off residue from handle. Use a soft, dry brush to dust residue from the blade.
Storage in your setting	Axe will be stored securely in sheath and in the tool bag in order to keep it clean and dry. When not in use it will be locked in a cupboard with all other tools and equipment.

Mallet	
Used for:	For hammering sticks into the ground or to split wood (used with axe).
Transporting to FS:	To site: carried in tool box or bag. On site: held by handle in both hands.
Safety Checks:	Check that mallet head is secure on handle.
Is PPE needed (and for whom):	Not required.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	Not required.
Ratio Adult/Child	One supervising adult to two children when using with axe to split wood.
Safe Body Stance:	Adopt the 3 point stance (for hammering wood into ground). Adopt a stable standing position when using to split wood.
Safe Action:	Risk assess equipment, working area and activity prior to use. Ensure you are a safe working distance from others (use the blood bubble rule). To use, individuals should be trained and assessed in proper use. Hold with both hands and hit down, applying pressure repeatedly.
How to Clean:	Not required.
Storage in your setting:	Mallets will be stored in the tool bag. When not in use they will be locked in a cupboard with all other tools and equipment.

Fire

Considerations before deciding to have a fire:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Risk assess working area and activity. Do not light a fire in windy or timer dry conditions. b) Train all participants how to approach and leave before lighting a fire. Ensure appropriate equipment is on hand to extinguish fire and suitable first aid equipment is on hand.
Safety regarding clothing and hair:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Long hair should be tied back or tucked away into a hood or similar. b) Loose clothing should be tied, rolled up or fastened away. <p>Neither hair nor any clothing should be allowed to dangle above the fire.</p>
Safe Siting: (the features you would look for in a suitable fire site)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All fires should be sited carefully avoiding tree roots, peat soil, deep leaf mould, unstable ground and low overhanging branches. b) Use pegs to secure a fire surround and seating logs. Have at least 1.5 metres between fire surround and seating logs. Seating logs should have emergency escape routes clearly visible and know to all participants. c) Keep fires about 4 metres safe distance away from any shelter built from easily combusting materials.
Safe Management:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Never leave a fire unattended. Designate a fire attendant who is the only person to approach fire and add fuel. b) Have all appropriate equipment and fire building materials organised and on hand. c) Ensure all participants walk around the fire in a safe way using the safe exits and no hands or feet are in or near the fire surround.
Safe Extinguishing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pour water over and disperse fire with stick. Check no embers remain. Leave to cool. b) Put hand in water once cool to disperse twigs and sticks, adding more water if required. c) Hold thicker fire stick to check no heat is held within. Check no heat is held within ground of fire site.

Storm Kettle/Kelly Kettle	
Used for:	The Kelly Kettle is used for boiling water.
Transporting to FS:	Carry the Kelly kettle empty and upright, ideally in a bag with top handles.
Safety Checks	The kettle should be used on clear, flat ground, sitting in a stable position on the bottom which no risk of toppling over. The stopper should be removed before boiling. Ensure cold water is only added up to the fill line. Ensure the chain is attached for pouring.
Is PPE needed (and for whom):	Not required.
Additional Safety Equipment to be used:	The site of any fire is important. Site away from tree roots, peat soil, deep leaf mould, uneven ground and low overhanging branches. Have a reasonable distance between fire surround and seating logs if used. Seating logs should have escape routes and be securely pegged into ground. Keep fire away from any combustible materials in use on site. Never leave the fire unattended.
Ratio Adult/Child	One adult to one kettle.
Safe Body Stance:	Adopt a 3 point stance or stable kneeling position.
Safe Action:	<p>Setting up: Have all appropriate equipment and fire building materials organised and to hand. Mark a fire surround using sticks and secure with hammered in pegs. Set up fire in the base by making a raft and using fuel of twigs and cotton with petroleum jelly. Add cold water up to the fill line.</p> <p>Using: Add fuel by dropping it in one piece at a time down the centre being careful of smoke. Flames should just come out of top of kettle but no more.</p> <p>Pouring: Hold the handle and the chain to pour.</p> <p>Lifting On/Off: Lift on and off by using the sides of the handle. Do not lift the handle by the top.</p> <p>Adding fuel: Add fuel carefully by dropping one piece at a time down centre of kettle.</p>
Storage in your setting:	The Kelly kettle will be stored empty with the stopper inserted (attached by chain).

Fire at Forest Schools



Considerations for campfires at Forest School:

- Risk assess working area and activity
- Food hygiene regulations should be followed
- Carry antiseptic wipes, hand sanitizer, soap and water for hand washing
- Check food is cooked thoroughly before consumption
- For toasting sticks use green wood and remove bark using a knife
- Do not re-heat cooked food
- Long hair and loose clothing should be tied back, rolled up or fastened securely

Food Hygiene Procedure

High-quality hygiene standards will always be adhered to throughout the cooking process. Water will always be carried to site to allow hand washing, antibacterial hand gel will also be used as long as children have permission from a parent or guardian.

Food allergies must be identified in consent forms. Permission will be sought when children are eating prepared food on site that they have not brought themselves. If snacks are not being provided then a check will be made to ensure that children have adequate refreshments and snacks.

Campfire Cooking Procedures

Prior to campfire cooking taking place an activity risk assessment will be carried out. Hand hygiene is a must with campfire cooking and the following will be provided:

- Fresh water and soap to wash hands followed by anti-bacterial gel or hand wipes
- Disposable paper towels
- Gloves to be worn for preparing of food - not for use over the fire



Food will be kept off the ground with no-one stepping over it.

Transport to and from Forest School Site

Children will access the forest school site by walking. Discussions will take place about walking sensibly and safely to the site and also about the joint responsibility of carrying equipment to and from the site.

High visibility vests are to be worn when walking to the site as it is alongside a main road. Children will walk in pairs with one adult to the front and one adult to the back, similar to a walking bus.

Crossing the road will happen on three occasions. To cross the road, the adult at the front will walk out onto the road with children remaining on the pavement until signalled to cross. The adult will remain there, with all children walking in front of the adult, never behind them. The adult will leave the road when all children are safely on the pavement.



Lost or Missing Child Procedure

As part of risk management all participants will agree boundaries to be kept to on the site. Head counts will take place ad hoc during the session. Before leaving school/ nursery and before leaving site a final head count will be taken. Children will travel in pairs with an adult to the front and back of the line.

In the event of a missing child:

Office staff within the school will be alerted in the first instance to request for additional staff to come to site. South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources will also be informed using the emergency contact number 07659 107946. Directions to site will be held in the office. One of the adults will remain with the group keeping them calm and safe while the other member/s of staff searches the local vicinity until further help arrives. More dangerous places will be searched first including the stream and road. If the child is not found in a respectable amount of time (5 minutes) then emergency services and parents will be contacted.

Equal Opportunities

During term 1 of 2016-17 session, Forest School experiences will initially be made available to some primary 3 and nursery pupils. All children will be offered the same opportunities providing the safety of themselves and others is respected. There are currently no children with physical disabilities so access to site is not an issue at present. Any children who may require medication administered during school hours will have their medication taken to site and administered by a leader on site.

Daily Operating Procedure

What to do before the session?

- Site risk assessment
- Activity risk assessment(s)
- Ensure staffing within school and nursery can allow for session to go ahead
- Check permissions/medical requirements and take a register
- Check all equipment including first aid kit
- Leave details with school office about where we are going to and what time to expect us back

What to do during the session?

- Keep children safe and on task
- Dynamic risk management: review risk assessments to reflect changes in weather/site
- Regular head counts

What to do after the session?

- Head count
- Leave no trace at site
- Check, clean and store equipment safely
- Ensure children change clothes if required and wash hands
- Write up any evaluations or any required forms
- Responsively plan next session

Safeguarding Children Procedure

Ms McMillan, Head Teacher of Blackwood Primary School and Nursery Class, is also the Child Protection Officer. During Forest School sessions, any concerns should be reported to the Forest School leader on site and will be recorded in line with the school and nursery GIRFEC policies. At Forest School children will always be able to share their thoughts and feelings in an open and supported environment appropriate to their level of emotional intelligence. Children will have opportunities to speak to an adult in confidence if they feel it is necessary. Adults will follow Child Protection procedures as issued by South Lanarkshire Council.

Confidentiality Policy

All information related to Forest School and its participants will be kept in a central folder by the Forest School leaders. All data and assessment of pupils of Blackwood Primary School and Nursery Class will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2008) and South Lanarkshire Council policy.

Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy

Behaviour

Positive behaviour will be encouraged and expected at Forest School, as it is in school and nursery, following our respective policies. A traffic light system will be in place with children trying to stay on green, if warnings have to be made then their name will be moved to amber and if behaviour does not improve, or deteriorates, they will move to red and school or nursery management will be notified.



Anti-Bullying

Forest School sessions take place as part of the school day and as such any incidents of bullying will be referred to appropriate school or nursery management and dealt with accordingly in line with school and nursery policy.

Signature and Review Date

Erin Illingworth _____ Date _____

Freda Marshall _____ Date _____

Jan Brownlee _____ Date _____

Review Date: January 2017