



Blackmoor Park Forest School Handbook





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Forest School Vision & Philosophy



“The philosophy of Forest Schools is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age through an innovative, long term, educational approach to outdoor play and learning in a woodland environment....By participating in engaging, motivating and achievable tasks and activities...each participant has an opportunity to develop intrinsic motivation, sound emotional and social skills. These, through self-awareness can be developed to reach personal potential.”

Forestschools.com

Blackmoor Park Infant School’s Forest School believes that outdoor play is important for child development and learning, an entitlement for our pupils. However, Forest School is much more than just outdoor play, as the above quote illustrates.

Forest School is learner-centred and led by the individual. The role of Forest School practitioners is to provide resources, activities and skills development but when the pupil requires or requests them. Observation is the practitioner’s key method of assessing and planning a Forest School programme for every pupil, lead by the pupil themselves.

Unlike learning in the classroom or during outdoor learning/play, the focus of Forest School is to develop the social and emotional aspects of each individual and provide a programme that develops resilience, independence and confidence.



Forest School Health & Safety



Blackmoor Park Infant School's Health & Safety Policy identifies the measures we put into place to keep children, staff and visitors to our school safe. In addition to this policy however, the following measures are required for Forest School specifically.

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| <p>Risk Management & Assessment</p> | <p>There are various Risk Assessment & Risk Benefit Assessments that have been completed by the Forest School Leader (Sarah Ware). The Forest School site within Blackmoor Park Infant School's grounds has been Risk Assessed. *See Site Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Activities and experiences to be completed during sessions have also been Risk/Benefit Assessed (including fire circle, tool use, shelter building) *See Activity & Experience Risk Assessments.</p> <p>The Forest School Leader will ensure that a Daily Risk Assessment is carried out prior to each session and this will be recorded. *See Daily Risk Assessment Checklist.</p> <p>All practitioners are responsible for looking for any risk and reporting it to the Forest School Leader.</p> |
| <p>First Aid Provision</p> | <p>The Forest School Leader will be responsible for ensuring that the First Aid kit is available on site during every Forest School session. This ensures that pupils or staff requiring First Aid can receive treatment outdoors before returning to the school building or being referred to the medical professionals. The Forest School Leader will also ensure the kit is replenished when necessary.</p> |
| <p>Practitioners</p> | <p>The Forest school Leader (Level 3) will be responsible and present for each session of Forest School. Additional practitioners (staff and volunteers) will be adequately trained by the Forest School Leader, ensuring that every practitioner has read and understands the handbook and is familiar with the ethos of Blackmoor Park Forest School. All Practitioners are required to sign and date the appropriate sheet in the handbook to indicate that they have done so.</p> |
| <p>Equipment (Including PPE)</p> | <p>The Forest School Leader (Level 3) will ensure that all additional practitioners and pupils are trained in how to use tools effectively and safely (1-1 supervision with Forest School Leader). They will ensure all equipment is stored adequately and that all equipment is maintained and fit for purpose. Tools will be kept in a locked container and only the Forest School Leader will carry the key. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) will be worn by the Forest</p> |

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| | School Leader and any other practitioners when using and swinging an axe. Steel capped boots will be worn. |
| Welfare Requirements | Toilet facilities will be accessed through EYFS classrooms or through the playground door into school. A welfare box will be available during Forest School sessions stocked with antiseptic wipes, hand gel, towels and tissues. |
| Emergency & Incident Management | The Forest School Leader will hold an Outdoor First Aid Certificate and carry a first aid kit during Forest School sessions (see above). If pupil contact forms are needed a practitioner will access them from the main office in school. All adults will be aware of the procedure to follow in the event of an emergency. |
| Insurance | Insurance for Forest School activities is covered by LCC. |
| Daily Operating Procedure | <p>The Forest School Leader will complete a Daily Risk Assessment before each session. The site will be prepared by practitioners for the first number of sessions and then pupils will be involved with site preparation such as, erecting tarps, creating fire circle, fire building (after 6 or 7 sessions) unloading equipment and creating tool pit and so on.</p> <p>Each session of Forest School will begin with 'community time' welcome, previous session, thinking time to consider what pupils would like to do in session, singing/story, reminders of boundaries (boundary games, 123 where are you?).</p> <p>Pupils will then engage in free play and exploration. Practitioners will support learning and interests. Fire circle, tool pit and refreshments will take place during this time.</p> <p>To conclude the session pupils and practitioners will return to the fire circle for 'reflection time' and to draw session to a close. Pupils may take this opportunity to plan what they may want to do or resources they may need for the following session.</p> <p>After Forest School sessions all practitioners will be responsible for safely packing up and ensuring any equipment that is damaged or unsafe is reported to the Forest School Leader. All tools will be counted back into the container and locked by the Forest School Leader. The Forest School Leader is responsible for ensuring that the fire is completely out and no traces of a fire are evident.</p> |
| Signed: | |
| Date: | 20 th January 2020 |
| Review Date: | 20 th January 2021 |

Tool Use





Tools are stored in a locked container and the Forest School Leader is the key holder. All tools remain inside the container within the 'tool pit' and pupils are invited on an individual basis if they would like to use a tool. The Forest School Leader works with pupils on a 1-1 basis so they can teach correct use and supervise.

Forest School practitioners will model correct tool use and transportation of tools. When pupils are using a tool, practitioners will ensure children are in an adequate space or 'blood bubble' where no other person is within arm's reach. The 'respect position' will be used when using tools to ensure the individual is stable on the ground and to minimise potential of harm. When using any bladed tool or saw a glove must be worn on the non-tooled hand. For very young pupils 'hand on hand' will be used (practitioners hand on top of pupils).

Before beginning to use a tool practitioners will verbalise 'are you ready?' and pupil will reply 'I'm ready, are you ready?' 'Yes, I'm ready'.

At the end of the session all practitioners must ensure that tools are returned to the locked containers and checked off on the checklist.

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| <p>Potato Peelers</p> | <p><u>Peeling or sharpening/whittling sticks</u> A ratio of 1-1 for peeling and whittling. Pupils will wear a glove on their non-tooled hand and assume the respect position.</p>  <p>'Hand on hand' for younger pupils. Pupils hold the peeler against the knee that is raised (right hand to knee if right handed and vice versa) other gloved non tooled hand moves the stick or vegetable to be peeled or whittled. Pupils will not be using fixed blade knives to whittle.</p> |
| <p>Bow Saws</p> | <p><u>Cutting wood up to 12cm diameter (such as wood cookies)</u> A ratio of 1-1 for using bow saw or when pupils are more competent the Forest School Leader may work with 2 pupils (buddies). When using the bow saw pupils may assume respect</p> |

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| | <p>position to saw branches at ground level or stand if using a saw horse. Glove non tooled hand and brace wood with this hand.</p>  |
| Brace & Bit Drills | <p><u>Making holes in wood</u> A ratio of 1-1 is required for using this tool. The practitioner must hold the wood to be drilled securely on a flat secure surface (cutting log). Transport drills by the side of the body facing down.</p> |
| Secateurs | <p><u>Cutting twigs and small branches</u> A ratio of 1-1 is required for using the secateurs. FS Leader uses the secateurs alongside the pupil (paired use). Assume the 'respect position' if cutting free branches. When carrying secateurs ensure they are locked and like scissors blades in the palm of the hand.</p> |



Fire Safety

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure the seating for the fire circle is 1.5 metres from the fire pit. Pupils should be taught how to keep safe when seated in the fire circle. Playing games such as 'duck, duck, goose' will help pupils and practitioners to remember not to cross the fire circle but to step out of the circle and walk around the outside. Pupils will be reminded that they must walk at all times in and around the fire circle.



Fire blankets will be accessible around the fire circle as will a plunge bucket deeply filled with water. A large plastic bottle will also be kept next to the fire bowl to provide a quick blast of water if needed.

When a fire is lit until the embers are put out and cold the fire will be supervised. The fire will only be assembled and lit by the FS Leader. When a pupil is invited inside the fire circle to toast snack for example, they will be supervised at times (a maximum of 4 individuals inside the circle at any time, including adults).

*More information on fire safety can be found on the risk assessment for fire lighting.



Safeguarding Pupils at Forest School

At Blackmoor Park Infant school our Safeguarding Policy outlines procedures that are followed to ensure pupils are safe and limit any risk. In addition to the school policy the following policies and procedures are applicable due to the nature of Forest School sessions.

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| Staff Ratios | Forest School requires a ratio of 1:4. If a fire is lit an adult must be present at all times at the fire circle. When tools are used the ratio is 1-1 with the Forest School Leader. |
| Lost Children Procedure | The likelihood of children becoming lost on the Forest School site is minimal. Due to the Forest School being on school grounds access points/gates are locked during hours when pupils are on site. However, if such an event should occur, the Forest School Leader will recall all pupils back to the fire circle, head count and then perform a search (ensuring other children are adequately supervised). If pupil is missing then the Forest School Leader will inform the Head Teacher straight away. Parents and emergency services will be contacted if pupil remains missing). |
| Dismissing Children from Forest School | If the Forest School session is taking place as an After School Club written permission is obtained from parents/carers and their password given to Forest School Lead. Passwords will be asked for when dismissing each child. |
| Safeguarding, Disclosures & Accusations Policy | <p>All Forest school practitioners will hold an enhanced disclosure (CRB) and practitioners will be made aware of potential situations that may arise and how prevent themselves from being in any situation that may be a risk to children. Practitioners will never be left alone out of view with a pupil. The Forest School Leader will respond to any concerns or accusations from pupils or adults with sensitivity and begin steps to keep the individual safe. The Forest school Leader will then follow the Safeguarding Policy of the school.</p> <p>During Forest School when pupils feel comfortable and reassured practitioners will be aware that a disclosure from a pupil may be made. Practitioners responses will be to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen • Keep calm • Make no promises |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a written account and report to Mrs J. Hitchmough (Head Teacher), Miss A. Wilkins (Assistant Head teacher) or Mrs S. Rattigan (Assistant Head Teacher). |
| Confidentiality Procedure | It is the Forest School Leaders responsibility to ensure practitioners are aware of pupil confidentiality and that any details, data, assessments and issues arising in sessions are not discussed outside of the setting with anyone other than staff of Blackmoor Park Infant School. |
| Complaint Procedure | If a complaint should be made by a pupil, Forest School practitioner, parent/carer or member of the public a written account will be kept and reported to Mrs J. Hitchmough (Head Teacher), Miss A. Wilkins (Assistant Head teacher) or Mrs S. Rattigan (Assistant Head Teacher). |
| Signed: | |
| Date: | 20 th January 2020 |
| Review Date: | 20 th January 2021 |

Forest School Learning & Development



Forest School Ethos

The ethos of Forest School is not that of traditional education. Forest School is centred on the individual and the individual taking their own learning forward with support of skilled Forest School practitioners.

Sara Knight in her book 'Forest Schools and Outdoor Learning in the Early Years' suggests the following elements of a Forest School programme;

- The setting is not the usual one.
- The Forest School is made safe as is reasonably possible, in order to facilitate children's risk taking.
- Forest School happens over time.
- There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.
- Trust is central.
- The learning is play based and, as far as possible, child-initiated and child-led.
- The Forest School block and the sessions have a beginning and an end.
- The Forest School staff are trained.

Forest School is very much rooted in social, emotional and personal development. It focuses on individuals having the freedom to pursue their own interests and to develop their own talents with an agenda. Self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation and empathy are all fostered through Forest School and are of utmost importance.

Aims & Objectives of Forest School

The aim of Forest School at Blackmoor Park Infant School is to work with pupils to build self-confidence, self-esteem, promote well-being and to encourage independence, communication and cooperation.

Our objectives are;

- To support individual interests, schemas, creativity and enjoyment.
- To observe learning and plan for next steps.
- To encourage pupils to risk assess for themselves.
- To promote respect of the natural world and a sense of belonging with it.

Planning for Forest School

The planning for each Forest School session will identify/outline learning intentions and learning objectives will be identified for specific skills, knowledge and understanding that the Forest School Leader may want cover. However, due to the nature of learner led sessions learning objectives may not be covered or achieved in one particular session.

Observation & Assessment

During each session of Forest School practitioners will observe individual pupils, noting interests, achievements and learning that has taken place. These observations of learning and interests will then form the next steps planning for the next session of Forest School for each pupil.

Floor Books/Displays/Blogs

Floor books may be used to document the learning journeys of pupils and to plan any next steps or possible lines of development (PLODs).

Displays around school during different points in the year will capture pupils learning and enjoyment during Forest School sessions. This will also be shared with parents, carers and the wider community on the school's website/blogs.

Role of the Adult in Forest School

The role of the adult is to;

- sensitively support and develop pupils ideas, learning and play,
- respond to questions from pupils with possible ideas and use open questions to take inquiry further,
- support children to resolve any conflict or problems themselves with gentle questioning and scenarios,
- observe pupil interests, learning and identify possible next steps,
- plan and deliver a skill, knowledge, activity or opportunity when/where it fits into pupils learning,
- plan and deliver daily operating procedures such as community time (beginning of session) and reflection time (end of session).

Equal Opportunities



Blackmoor Park Infant School is an inclusive school and we are committed to giving each pupil every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards irrespective of ethnicity, religion, attainment, age, disability or gender. During Forest School sessions we aim to remove possible barriers to participation and success so that pupils do not feel hindered or excluded in any way.

Forest School practitioners will;

- ensure equality of access for all (physically and in terms of preferred learning/working styles)
- promote collaborative learning
- positively involve parents/carers in the Forest School experience
- plan sessions according to pupils individual interests and strengths
- focus on what pupils can do and celebrate achievements
- use resources creatively so that individuals are not or do not feel excluded.

Environmental Sustainability at Forest School



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| Sustainable Use of Site | The current Forest School site is located on grass. Due to the nature of Forest school and the volume of traffic the grass will naturally be worn down. When this happens we intend to risk assess and if necessary place woodchip around the camp area to prevent too much mud and possible accidents. When deemed necessary it will be possible to relocate the site in another part of the school grounds. |
| Care of Flora & Fauna | Forest School practitioners will endeavour to educate pupils about environmental education and sustainability. We will encourage pupils to learn how to care for flora and fauna, how they are important for the environment and links between them. |

Communication about Forest School



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| Communication with Pupils | <p>The Forest School Leader will take an assembly for the whole school including Reception. During this assembly pupils will be informed about Forest School and what it will look like in Blackmoor Park. Pupils will be given rules for outdoor play when FS sessions are taking place. *See Risk Assessments.</p> <p>Forest School Rules will be distributed to all classes and displayed.</p> |
| Communication with Colleagues | <p>The Forest School Leader will cascade information and philosophy about FS to colleagues during a staff meeting. Rules for pupils will be shared and risk assessments shared.</p> |
| Communication with Parents/Carers | <p>Parents and carers will receive information about Forest School and the benefits of it for their child. The Forest School Leader is always available to discuss Forest School and any concerns they may have.</p> <p>Good news will be sent home during and/or after a pupil has completed a block of FS sessions so that parents/carers can celebrate achievements at home.</p> <p>Parents and carers can also share in their child's learning by accessing school website and Forest school blogs.</p> <p>Text messages will sent out to parents and carers with reminders and important information about sessions as and when necessary.</p> |