



NEWBOROUGH SCHOOL



Forest School Handbook

Reviewed November 2023
Next review date: November 2024

POLICY FOR FOREST SCHOOL

Introduction:

Forest School (within Newborough CE Primary School) is an exciting branch of outdoor learning that gives children an opportunity to develop self-esteem and self-confidence whilst learning within a natural environment. This supports our school aims:

- **To provide a high quality teaching and learning environment in a caring, safe and secure atmosphere. The school promotes equality of opportunity and aims to develop the pupils' awareness of moral, cultural, social and spiritual issues according to our Christian ethos.**
- **To develop and strengthen the abilities of all individuals to enable them to realise their full potential, develop a high self-esteem, and promote acceptable standards of behaviour making them responsible and valuable members of society.**

This is achieved by running forest school sessions which involve 'small achievable tasks'. This will create an environment of success where children can thrive; using their personal learning styles to complete outdoor tasks and activities.

Newborough Forest School area:

Newborough Forest School is run completely within the school grounds; utilising the 'wooded area' to the rear of the school field. The area also includes the shrubs and trees that run from the rear of the school field, down the side of the field and reach the reception outdoor area. Forest school may also use the 'allotment' beds and willow tunnels on the other side of the field. There may also be supervised access to the wildlife and pond area (fenced off) at the front of the school.

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 Newborough 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 are developed with reference to

this act and safeguarding practices.

Staff attending forest school sessions within Newborough Primary School will be familiar with the following school policies:

- Asthma Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality & Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Copies are available on the school website as well as in this handbook.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding

A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy can be found in Forest School handbook. This risk assessment will be continually revisited as the forest school changes and activities are developed.

The Forest School Leader has an up to date 2 day Paediatric First Aid qualification. The classroom first aid kit and inhaler/medication box (of the class attending the session) will be taken out to the Forest School area. Usual school first aid and safeguarding procedures will be adhered to (see appropriate policies).

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are made and updated on a regular basis and will include the following.

- Tool use
- Fire building and lighting activities
- Pond dipping

Teachers, teaching assistants will have access to all risk assessments and be aware where the forest school handbook is located.

Forest School sessions and leadership

The Forest School at Newborough CE Primary school is run by a trained Level 3 (advanced) Forest School practitioner with a 2 day Paediatric first aid qualification (which meets the requirements of Ofsted, Sure Start, PACEY and the PLA). There is also a teaching assistant with the level 3 qualification.

They are responsible for organising and planning the forest school sessions and carrying out any related risk assessments.

The forest school leader will:

- Plan sessions appropriate for the age of the children taking part – Linked to skills progression.
- Ensure safety of the adults and children within the sessions.
- Carry out relevant risk assessments and checks on the site and of equipment and tools.
- Keep the Forest School handbook up to date.
- Sessions will be led by Abbie Houghton (Forest School teacher), accompanied by the class teacher and any TAs that would usually be working within the class at the

time of the forest school session. The TA Will carry appropriate first aid and children's medication (such as asthma inhalers). The first aid kit or 'bum bag' and 'inhaler box' from the classroom will be taken out with the class taking part in the activities.

Routines and procedures:

Information will be sent out to parents regarding dates and clothing for forest school. Copies of the communication can be found in the Forest School handbook appendix.

Children will arrive at the session suitably dressed for the weather conditions:

- In cold/wet weather – warm (waterproof coat), tracksuit trousers, leggings of waterproof over trousers, a hat, gloves and wellies or walking boots.
- In warm weather – Sun hat, sun-cream applied at home (or by the children themselves), tracksuit trousers, leggings of waterproof over trousers and wellies or walking boots.

Letters will be sent out to remind parents of the clothing that is required.

In severe weather (such as extreme hot or cold, very high winds, heavy rain) Forest School may have to be cancelled, postponed or a shorter session may have to take place on that day or an alternative classroom based activity will take place.

During the session, children will predominantly work with their class group. The activities that take place are all inclusive and will cater for all ability levels and disabilities and they are introduced gradually, in small achievable steps. They will be taught to use a variety of tools safely and some groups will learn the skill of fire lighting (in a high adult to child ratio). The children will have to stick to strict rules associated with using tools and lighting fires (as outlined within the risk assessments.)

Children will use the toilet prior to the Forest School session and will be supervised (where necessary) for any additional toilet trips (using the usual school toilet facilities, accessed by the exterior door under the canopy).

Children will be encouraged to wash their hands after their Forest School session.

Kitbag

The forest school leader will have access (some of which will be kept inside the school building) to the following:

- Emergency procedure
- Pen and paper
- Water
- Tissues/toilet roll
- Wet wipes
- Carrier bags or bin bags
- Foil blanket

- Camera (Ipad)

The first aid kit from the classroom will be taken outside with each class as the forest school is on site. Medical records and contact details for children and adults remain in the school office (to be accessed in an emergency).

Spare clothing will be available to children who do not come to school dressed appropriately or who need additional/change of clothes during the session.

Current Forest School equipment

- 2 Bow saws
- 12+ potato peelers
- 3 palm drills
- Large ball of string
- 2 Kelly Kettles
- 10 flint and steel
- Tarpaulins
- Cotton wool
- pairs children's protective gloves
- pairs adult's protective gloves
- Fire gloves
- Water bottle
- Plastic trays and plant pots for collecting
- Trowels and forks
- Air drying clay
- Willow withies
- Fire pit
- Firewood and kindling
- Hammers and nails
- Pop-corn sieves

Additional 'natural' wood will be sourced by friends of the school.

The resources for forest school are kept locked in the shed(located at the rear of the forest school area.). The key can be obtained from the school office only. Only adults (or supervised children) will be allowed to access the shed and its contents.

Safe use of tools

The high ratio of adults to children (usually 1:10) will mean that children will work with tools in very small groups – Usually around 6. The following policy and procedure will be adhered to when using tools with children.

- Children and adults will be continually briefed on the safe use of tools and adhere to the safe use of tools policy.

- Children and adults will wear gloves when using a bow saw and hammers (glove on the hand that is not holding the tool).
- A guard will be placed over the bow saw when not in use.
- Other tools (e.g. palm drills, potato peelers) will be counted out at the start of the session and counted back in at the end.
- Tools will be kept in a secure container and locked in the shed or kept in the 'food/science' room when not in use.

Safety when lighting fires and using Kelly kettles

The high ratio of adults to children (usually 1:10) will mean that children will light fires in very small groups – Usually around 6. The following policy and procedure will be adhered to when lighting fires (in fire pans only) with children.

- Kelly kettles to only be used on flat ground or bricks.
- A lit kettle will never be left unattended
- A boundary (visible) will be created of 1.5m from the edge of the fire pan.
- Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't, it must be extinguished with water or sand at the end of the session.
- Kelly kettles will be 'boiled' with the cork removed.
- Long hair should be tied back and loose clothing tucked in.
- Kettles must be placed on, and removed from the fire pan using two hands holding the wire handle at 90 degrees to the kettle chimney (this will be completed by an adult).
- Fires will not be lit during very windy or very dry conditions.
- Ensure that the spout is opposite to the spout.
- Ensure the chain is outside the firepan.
- Water should be poured by holding the wooden handle and tipping using the chain.
- Water heated for children's drinks will not be boiling.
- Children will be given clear rules around boundaries and fire lighting. Children will be asked to repeat the rules back to the forest school leader to ensure understanding.

- Kelly Kettles will be checked by the forest school leader on a regular basis for signs of wear and tear.

Conserving species and damage to environment through overuse

In the forest school area there are at least 5 well maintained, mature trees. It is important that we look after these trees and the environment around them. By following these procedures, we will limit the impact/damage on the trees and environment that could happen through over use.

- Only use lying dead wood and wood brought into the forest school from outside the school grounds for activities. No branches will be cut from the existing trees (except through maintenance).
- Although the forest school area is small, where possible, different areas will be used over the school year and holiday times will allow for the ground to be undisturbed and therefore conserving species and limiting long-term damage.
- Children to be reminded to look after any living things they find and to ask before picking anything up.
- Wildlife will be encouraged in the forest school area through the construction of 'bug hotels' and creating bird feeding stations.