



# Forest School Handbook

## The Six Principles Of Nurture

The nurturing approach offers a range of opportunities for children and young people to engage with missing early nurturing experiences, giving them the social and emotional skills to do well at school and with peers, develop their resilience and their capacity to deal more confidently with the trials and tribulations of life, for life.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
2. The classroom offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives

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## **Forest School at Holy Trinity**

Forest School is holistic outdoor learning through play and exploration; children learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others.

At Holy Trinity C of E Primary School we value the importance of learning; both indoors and outdoors. We strive to provide a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum to all of our pupils. We believe that learning outdoors can support a wide range of learning outcomes—including improving emotional, mental and physical wellbeing, cognitive development and other socio-emotional outcomes.

Our offer of Forest School is underpinned by the six Nurture Principles and the six principles of Forest School. There will be further details around these principles later in the handbook.

Children who are invited to take part in Forest School sessions at Holy Trinity will partake in activities such as den building, lighting and maintaining fire, safely using a range of full sized tools, exploring their limits and managing own risks by climbing and how to care for and maintain the natural woodland area. In addition to this, children will be invited to explore the area and develop their own activities. There will also be a range of activities available to promote the skills children have been taught and to develop their team building, resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

A qualified Forest School Leader will work with staff to plan and implement appropriate activities. Teachers will be shown how to safely use tools and fire and will be supported in carrying out these activities with the children.

The Forest School Leader will complete risk assessments, these will be reviewed by the head teacher and shared with relevant staff. Ongoing risk assessments will be kept and will be shared with relevant staff and phase leaders as changes are made.

## Forest School expectations

### Expectations-

- Look after your Forest School. Do not deliberately damage any natural structures of wildlife.
- Do not pick anything growing or put your fingers or anything else in your mouth—No picking, no licking.
- Stay within the boundary rope, we don't go over it we don't go under it and we don't go through it.
- Do not walk through the fire pit unless you are asked to by the adult leading the session. This applies to both adults and children.
- Point sticks/ sharp objects down when walking with them.
- Children can only carry a stick as tall as themselves, anything taller than this will need a friend to help.
- Do not open/ touch the tool box unless an adult has asked you to.
- If you find anything that you consider dangerous on the site, tell an adult immediately. Do **NOT** touch it.
- Only one person to climb a tree at any one time, other children must remain at a safe distance and an adult must be nearby. Children can only climb as high as the tallest adult can reach.
- You must stop, look and listen when an adult shouts 'high 5'. This will be followed by one of two instructions; **circle**—all children and adults should return to the fire circle, **line**—all children and adults should immediately line up in the designated space
- Only three children at a time are permitted to climb on the bug hotel.
- The schools behaviour policy will also apply during Forest School sessions, a copy of this is available upon request.

## Forest School sessional procedures

### Before the session :

- A thorough safety sweep will be completed before each session to check for litter, glass, animal faeces etc. Any such items will be collected and disposed of appropriately.
- Trees will be checked for broken or dead branches.
- Weather conditions will be checked—thunder storms or unduly high winds will lead to the cancellation of the Forest School session.
- Children will change into suitable clothing and footwear.
- Any observations or issues found during the safety sweep will be recorded by the person leading the session

### At the start of the session :

- Children will be reminded of the expectations at the beginning of each session.
- The adult leading the session will discuss any safety notices with the children and will count any specialist tools/ equipment brought out that day. They will remind the children where these need to be kept in between use.

### During the session:

- All adults will be aware of and implement the expectations and rules.
- All adults will be responsible for showing a high 5 and stopping the session, if needed.
- Children who require first aid will be given first aid on site, where possible.
- Children needing to use the toilet will be able to go through their classroom door and to the toilet on their own, unless the adult feels it is necessary to accompany the child.

### At the end of the session :

- At the end of the session an adult will show a high 5. The children will be informed that it is now the end of the session and instructed to tidy up.
- All adults and children will tidy up.
- Once tidy, an adult will show a high 5, all children will return to the circle. The lead adult will count the children and then any tools/ specialist equipment brought out that day.
- Once all children and tools/ equipment are accounted for, the children will be asked to line up.
- Once back inside the school building children will remove their waterproof clothing, change footwear (if necessary) and wash their hands.

## **Essential equipment and clothing for Forest School sessions.**

### Essential equipment:

The lead adult will ensure that essential equipment for the session is taken out when carrying out a Forest School session\*.

Essential equipment includes :

- Wet wipes and antibacterial gel
- First aid kit
- Water (the water butt can be filled with the children, additional water is needed for fire sessions)
- A bag for rubbish
- Inhalers and any other medication, with care plans
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### Clothing and footwear:

Where possible school will provide waterproof clothing for children to wear when attending Forest School sessions, however, this may not always be feasible.

Children should also wear appropriate footwear. School has a limited number of wellies for children to use, but are unable to provide this for all children.

The lead adult will assess the risks and benefits of completing a session without waterproof clothing or appropriate footwear and will make an informed decision on whether the session should go ahead.

Any adults involved in Forest School sessions must also be dressed appropriately.

## The use of fire in Forest School.

Some of our Forest School sessions may involve fire. During these sessions children will be reminded of the expectations when around fire.

The expectations are :

- Children must not walk through the area where the fire pit is situated.
- When around the fire, for example when toasting, children must kneel at the side of the fire ensuring they are arms length away from the fire.
- No more than 3 children should be toasting at the fire at any one time.
- Children sitting around the fire must be tumbling distance from the fire and must remain seated and sensible at all times.
- At the end of the session involving fire, the fire must be extinguished fully. If the fire was not made in the fire pit, then holes must be dug into the ground and water poured in to ensure the ground cools

All equipment used for fire lighting and fire management will be kept in a separate box/bag and only brought to Forest School sessions when necessary, the lead adult will be responsible for the transporting and storage this.

A generic risk assessment is in place for the use of fire and will be reviewed termly, however when planning a session including fire, the lead adult must check the risk assessment and made any amendments specific to the group attending.

Any incidents will be recorded and reported on as necessary.

Sessions involving fire will be carefully planned and prepped for and will only go ahead in suitable weather conditions.

Toasting food:

If the session involves toasting food the lead adult must print an up to date dietary requirements list.

No meat is to be cooked on the fire.

Bamboo skewers must be soaked in water before use and the lead adult must encourage children to regularly lift their food out of the fire and check for flames.

The lead adult must also be checking this and must stay in the fire circle at all times.

## The use of tools in Forest School.

Some of our Forest School sessions may include the use of tools. The tools used will vary depending on the needs of the session. During a session which involves tool use children and other adults will be reminded of the expectations when using and handling tools, these are;

- Children must not touch or open the tool box or any tools without permission from the lead adult.
- Tools must only be used under the supervision of the lead adult, and at the designated tool area.
- All tools must be put away safely when finished.
- Children and adults must be aware of others around them when using tools and take into consideration their blood bubble (the area around them where someone may get hurt—usually arms length)
- Whilst using a knife or peeler you must remain seated.
- A glove must be worn on the opposite hand being used to control the tool when using a saw or pull knife.
- Anyone assisting with the use of a pull knife or saw must also wear a glove on their non tool hand.
- Other tools that are introduced will be done so following a risk assessment by the lead adult.

All tools will be stored in a designated bag/ box and will be counted in and out by the lead adult. Knives will be kept in a locked box and counted in and out using the same method.

When not in use, tools will be safely stored in a locked shed.

A generic risk assessment is in place for the use of tools and will be reviewed termly, however, considerations will be made for specific children in each groups and these will be communicated accordingly.

Any incidents involving tool use will be recorded and reported on as necessary, following the school's incident reporting procedures.

## **Other activities during Forest School.**

Forest School is a child led holistic approach to learning using play and risk taking to help children develop. Some activities during Forest School may be planned for, however the children are encouraged to explore, use their imagination and lead their own learning. Children are encouraged to assess risks themselves and decide whether they should take the risk. The Lead adult and other adults on site will monitor these risks to ensure the children are not putting themselves or others in danger and they will intervene where necessary.

Generic risk assessments are in place for Forest School sessions and these will be reviewed termly. Any ongoing changes will be made and communicated as necessary.

Activities which may arise during a Forest School session;

- Climbing a tree— during a session a child may wish to climb a tree, the child may climb to a height which they feel comfortable with as long as it is not out of reach of the tallest adult on site and as long as there are no other children climbing that tree at that time. Adults will supervise and only intervene if necessary, they will also ensure other children are not below the tree. Adults will not help a child to climb, the child must be able to climb themselves.
- Bug hunting.
- Den building / shelter building.
- Digging.
- Exploring.
- Mud kitchen.

This is just some of the activities which may occur during a session and is not an extensive list. The lead adult will endeavour to include all children in these activities where possible. Statutory adult: child ratios will be in place for these activities.

Any incidents which occur will be recorded and reported as necessary, in line with the school's incident reporting procedures.

## **Responsibilities of adults involved in a Forest School session.**

The lead adult for the session holds the overall responsibility, however they may require other adults involved in the session to take on responsibilities.

Adults involved in the sessions may include members of staff, volunteers such as parent helpers/ governors and students completing placement at the school.

Whilst involved in the session adults are expected to;

- Observe children, taking photographs where possible
- Ensuring children remain safe during the session whilst allowing them to manage and take risks.
- Reinforcing the expectations of Forest School.
- Report any potential risks to the lead adult.
- Be involved in the session with the children! Do not be afraid to get dirty!
- Refer children who require tools to the lead adult—only the lead adult may work with the children whilst using tools.
- In the event of an emergency or incident adults must refer to the lead adult for instructions whilst ensuring the safety of the children. If the lead adult is unavailable, another adult must take charge.

Toileting—

All children will be encouraged to use the toilet before a Forest School session commences. If a child needs the toilet during the session they will be able to go through their own classroom door or key stage door to their designated toilet. The child must inform the adult upon their return. If the staff member decides a child needs assistance they should inform the lead adult that they are leaving the site with the child.

Staff should also communicate to the other adults, where possible, when they have given permission for a child to go inside.

## **Emergency/ Incident Procedures.**

In a MINOR incident such as a small first aid need the first aider on site will attend. In the event of a potential small risk occurring, the lead adult will attend to the incident. If tools or fire are in use during this time, these areas will be closed whilst the issue is dealt with, if there is a fire lit at the time of the incident another adult will be asked to gather all the children together and remain a safe distance away from the fire.

In a MAJOR incident the lead adult may decide it is necessary to evacuate the site and call in emergency services or other outside help. In this case the lead adult will show a high 5 and give the 'line' instruction. The lead adult will accompany the children to the line and any other adults will ensure all children have received the message and are making their way to the line. Once all children and adults are at the line, the lead adult will count all the children.

The lead adult will designate another adult to clear away the equipment on site whilst they evacuate the children. The safety of the adults and children on site is paramount and this will be taken into consideration when deciding whether to move all the equipment. If it is deemed unsafe to move the equipment straight away, i.e. in the event of a fire alarm sounding, the equipment may be left on site and cleared away as soon as is practicably possible.

If there is a fire lit during an evacuation, the lead adult will designate another adult to stay and safely put the fire out. If this is deemed unsafe then the lead adult must designate another adult to inform a member of SLT immediately.

## **Missing Child procedure.**

Before each Forest School session children will be reminded of the importance of staying within the safety zone ( the area inside the stick fence or rope if the visit is offsite or in another location)

In the event of a child going missing the following procedure will be followed:

Upon discovery of a missing child the adult will show a high 5 and give the 'line' instruction. They will count the children and the lead adult will designate someone to conduct a quick, but thorough, search of the Forest School site. If the adult knows where the child has gone, they will designate an adult to check that area.

If the child is not located at this point the lead adult will lead all of the children inside and call a member of SLT. Another adult will then need to take over the class.

The lead adult, with SLT, will then find out at which point the child went missing to try and build up a time line of events. They will check CCTV and a search of the school grounds will take place.

The incident will be recorded and reported as necessary in line with the school's procedures.

# The Six Forest School principles and Nurture principles

The Forest School offer at Holy Trinity C of E Primary School is underpinned by the six forest school principles and the six nurture principles.

These are:

- 1. Forest school is a long-term process with frequent and regular sessions rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.**  
(Children from years one to four are offered regular Forest School sessions. The class teacher and support staff attend with the children and are accompanied by a Forest School leader. Staff are encouraged to assess, observe and review sessions in the moment. They are facilitators of the sessions rather than directors).
- 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.**  
(Children access the school grounds for their Forest School sessions. The site is maintained by the site manager and Forest School leader and children are encouraged to care for the natural world).
- 3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.**  
(All children in the identified year groups access the sessions. The sessions are child led and encourage all children to take part, their learning is fun and unhurried. Sessions allow every child to have a voice, especially those who struggle in a more conventional learning environment. Repetition each session builds confidence, independence and creativity).
- 4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.** (Children are encouraged to assess, take risks and make their own decision. They are carefully supported to achieve).
- 5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.**  
(Sessions are hosted by a qualified Forest School leader. Other staff in attendance are issued with a copy of the school's handbook and are given ongoing guidance on how to interact with children. Class teachers are also shown how to safely use tools and fire with children).
- 6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.**  
(Sessions have a child-led approach which lots of opportunities for repetition where children come into contact with nature using all their senses. This supports personalised learning and staff recognise that all children have different strengths and limits).

# **The Six Forest School principles and Nurture principles**

**(continued)**

## **Nurture Principles:**



1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing.
4. Language is a vital means of communication.
5. All behaviour is communication.
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

At Holy Trinity C of E Primary school all staff recognise and value the six nurture principles. Forest School sessions support these principles by providing an outdoor classroom as a safe base as well as the traditional indoor classroom. All children are supported and encouraged to achieve to their full potential in a non-threatening environment completing activities that do not rely on high academic attainment.

The Forest School is nurturing with children being encouraged to lead their own learning relevant to their current stage of development, regardless of their age.

**Forest School Impact**

*Forest school has an impact on the whole child's health, education and well-being*

<p><b>Physical Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Strength</li> <li>• Fine motor skills- tying knots etc.</li> <li>• Gross motor skills- lifting, climbing</li> <li>• Stamina</li> <li>• Coordination</li> <li>• Using tools safely</li> </ul>	<p><b>Science</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather</li> <li>• Seasons</li> <li>• Growth and decay</li> <li>• Plants</li> <li>• Animals</li> <li>• Habitats</li> <li>• Senses</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personal, Social, Emotional, Health Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Risk taking</li> <li>• Cooperation</li> <li>• Collaboration, team work</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Self esteem</li> <li>• Confidence</li> </ul>
<p><b>Literacy and language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Vocabulary</li> <li>• Speaking and listening</li> <li>• Stories</li> <li>• Reference books- information books</li> <li>• Spotter sheets</li> <li>• Role-play</li> </ul>	<p><b>Art and Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Imagination</li> <li>• Joining materials</li> <li>• Musical instruments – natural percussion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement</li> <li>• Estimation</li> <li>• Comparison, – sizes</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Sorting, ordering</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Religious Education</b> <b>Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awe and wonder</li> <li>• New life</li> <li>• God's wonderful world</li> <li>• God's creatures</li> <li>• Caring for the environment</li> </ul>	

DEVELOPING A **GROWTH MINDSET**

<b>INSTEAD OF</b>	<b>TRY SAYING</b>	<b>BUT THEN.....</b>
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?	I don't know what I'm missing!
I give up	I'll use a different strategy	If I had a different strategy I wouldn't have given up
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?	Yep! Turns out it is my best work
I can't make this any better	I can always improve	I don't know how to improve on this!
This is too hard	This may take some time	I spent the time and still don't know how.
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me learn	That mistake proves I haven't learnt!
I just can't do that	I'm going to train my brain	How do I change my brain?
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this	How do I learn this?
Plan A didn't work	There's always a Plan B	How do I create Plan B?
My friend can do that	I will learn from them	I can't work out how my friend does that.

# YOUR WORDS

# MATTER

	INSTEAD OF..	TRY
	Be quiet.	Can you use a softer voice?
	What a mess!	It looks like you had fun! How can we clean up?
	Do you need help?	I'm here to help if you need me.
	I explained how to do this yesterday.	Maybe I can show you another way.
	Do I need to separate you?	Could you use a break?
	Stop crying.	It's okay to cry.
	Do you have any questions?	What questions do you have?
	You're OK.	How are you feeling?
	It's not that hard.	You can do hard things.
	We don't talk like that.	Please use kind words.

**WE ARE TEACHERS**

## What to Say to Kids Instead of "Be Careful!"

### Help Your Child Foster Awareness by Saying:

- Notice how... these rocks are slippery, that branch is strong...
- Do you see... the poison ivy, your friends nearby?
- Try moving... your feet carefully, your quickly, strongly.
- Try using your... hands, feet, arms, legs.
- Can you hear... the rushing water, the singing birds, the wind?
- Do you feel... stable on that rock, the heat from the fire?
- Are you feeling... scared, excited, tired, safe?

### Help Your Child Problem Solve by Saying:

- What's your plan... if you climb that boulder, cross that log?
- What can you use... to get across, for your adventure?
- Where will you... put that rock, climb that tree, dig that hole?
- How will you... get down, go up, get across?
- Who will... be with you, go with you, help you if?

[www.backwoodsmama.com](http://www.backwoodsmama.com)

