

Barley and Barkway Federation of First Schools



Parents handbook for Forest Schools

Our Vision for Forest School

What is Forest School?

‘Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees’.

(Forest School Association)

At Barley and Barkway Federation, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child-centred approach.

The Forest School Principles and how they link to our setting:

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process.
2. It takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment –we use the Newsells site, on the edge of Barkway village which was given to us by the Newsells stud.
3. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. We will offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.
5. It will be managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner; Jessica West is currently training for the Level 3 Award, Forest School Leader.
6. We will use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-goodpractice>

At Barkway and Barley Federation we are committed to the ethos of Forest School and aim to:

- Fulfil every child's potential
- Develop a love of learning that creates independent and confident learners
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community
- Promote children's self-esteem
- Encourage independence
- Promote positive behaviour to ensure the safe running of Forest School sessions
- Provide appropriate adult:child ratios
- Plan sessions that contribute towards a safe environment

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session.

These include:

- Look Listen Think
- Respect for plants, trees and animals
- Getting to the site safely
- Dressing for the weather

Adult Role:

All adults at Forest School model appropriate behaviour and safe practices, whilst interacting with the children and each other; boundaries are shared, promoting positive reinforcement and choices and consequences discussed. They will:

- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times
- Carry out necessary risk assessments
- Carry a first aid kit and individual children's medicines and administer first aid as required
- Create a positive learning environment, based on each child's needs
- Encourage good relationships, based on respect of each other
- Promote, honesty, politeness and kindness through example
- Use encouraging language and show appreciation of each child's contributions and effort
- Ensure fair treatment and equality for all attending, regardless of age, gender, race etc

Forest School Clothing

Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy roads.

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’

Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating; we need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session.

In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved tee shirt
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Long socks, wellies or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat should be supplied and sunscreen applied before school
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Children should arrive at school in their Forest School clothes and bring school uniform, in a bag, to change into after the session.

All Forest School Kit should be named.

Forest School Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy operates in line with the whole school policy, a copy of which can found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

- No child or adult will be discriminated against on any grounds including gender, age*, background, race, religion or ability including SEND.
- Wherever possible, adjustments will be made to accommodate children with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues. This may include additional adult helpers, adapting the site if physically possible or adapting activities.
- All participants should feel that their experiences and contributions are worthwhile, so raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Forest School is a child led experience and wherever possible the children will be allowed to follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the woodland environment.

Confidentiality Policy

All forest school staff and volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy.

Medical and personal information

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and kept confidentially within the school's Forest School Handbook
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only trained staff will apply first aid to children and adults attending; volunteers must make staff aware if they are approached by a child needing care
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

Photographic and Video permissions

- As part of the permission to attend Forest School sessions, parents will be asked to agree to their child being photographed or filmed for observational, training or school promotion purposes; any child without this permission will be recorded in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for this purpose
- Volunteers should only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader.
- Mobile phones should only be used for emergency purposes.

Observations

- Trained staff will be required to undertake observations and assessments of the children attending, as part of the curriculum and wellbeing scales.
- Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity; this must be in strictest confidence.

Safeguarding at Forest School

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Barley and Barkway Federation of First School's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

A summary of the policy is included below:

- Every child has the right to be kept safe from danger and learn in a safe and secure environment
- All staff involved in Forest School hold relevant DBS checks
- All Forest School staff attend regular safeguarding training
- All concerns and disclosures are confidential and will only be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and necessary agencies, if appropriate.

Communication Strategy

Clear communication is essential for the smooth running of Forest School. Children and adults need to listen carefully to rules, boundaries and instructions, linked to safety procedures and activities. There will always be time for questions or comments from children and adults.

- Any staff or volunteers attending Forest School must meet prior to leaving school to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a mobile phone for emergency use.
- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website
- Parents will receive general information letters before sessions begin and a permission slip will be needed.
- There will be weekly communication via the newsletter to inform parents of that week's activities.

The Forest School Leader is responsible for visiting the site before the children arrive to risk assess the area.

Contact Numbers

Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the school office at the earliest opportunity. Any changes of contact number will be given to the School Office.

Transport and travel arrangements for Forest School

Children will walk to Forest School from Barkway school. At the end of the session they will either walk back to Barkway or be collected in the school minibus and taken back to Barley school.

Assessment and Reporting Arrangements for Forest School Sessions

During Forest School sessions, children will be observed and assessed in an unobtrusive way as within the classroom. Evidence will be gathered using photographs, videos, written observations and through our electronic observation tool '2simple'. All staff involved in Forest school will be responsible for gathering evidence; volunteers would be asked to feedback to the Forest School Leader.

Information gathered will be used to plan activities and next steps for the children.

Forest School Hygiene Policy

Toileting:

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school
- A toilet tent with a portable toilet will be erected for sessions of over 2 hours.
- An adult, with the relevant DBS checks, will accompany the children to the toilet tent.
- Antibacterial spray will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning.
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will be changed in accordance with the Schools Personal Care Policy

Hand Washing:

- Antibacterial spray will be used before snack time.
- Water will be carried up to the site at each session and available to wash hands in a bowl with handwash and a towel if necessary.

Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School

General rules for tool use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

Tools we could be using at Forest School:

Potato peelers, knives, loppers, bow saws, drills, rope