



Mulbarton Primary School



Forest School Handbook and Policies



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1. Ethos and Key Principles

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 children's right to play; the right to access the outdoors (and in particular a woodland environment); the right to access 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 Training website*)

The Forest School ethos has six key principles:

- 1 . Long term process
- 2 . Takes place in a woodland or natural environment
- 3 . Promotes holistic development
- 4 . Opportunities for supported risk
- 5 . Led by qualified Forest School practitioners with high ratios
- 6 . Student-led process

Forest School is a unique educational experience that helps to build children's confidence and self-esteem. The concept originates from Denmark where it was originally used with pre-school children. They found that children had increased confidence in their abilities which transferred to the classroom and improved academic achievement.



2. Staff and Ratios

Forest School Leader:

Miss E Cobb
Level 3 Forest School Leader
Year 2 Class Teacher
PGCE, BA Education
Outdoor First Aid

Volunteer helpers:

Forest School would not be what it is without our amazing helpers.
All staff helpers will have a full DBS check.
We aim to operate on a 1:5 adult to child ratio.

Children: Each session will have no more than 18 children aged between 6-7yrs old.

Adult Role:

All adults at Forest School; model appropriate behaviour and safe practice, interact with learners; work alongside and scaffold ideas to make a learner-centred education.

They will:

- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times
- Carry out necessary risk assessments
- Carry a first aid kit in the 'emergency rucksack' 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



3. Forest School Area

Our Forest School site is situated in the corner (woodland area) of the Junior School field.

There is a good mix of species present.

It contains predominantly broadleaf species such as Hawthorn, Hazel, Maple and Beech.



The area is currently being developed to include a digging area, log pile, mini-beast hotel, small water space and a fire area.

4. Sustainable Management

- Materials used or harvested will be replaced where possible.
- A designated area will be developed as to avoid unnecessary tramping or erosion of ground.
- Learners will be respectful of flora and fauna.
- If materials are harvested, we will try to use prevalent or pest species.



5. Equipment, Clothing and Welfare

The Forest School Leader will carry an emergency bag that contains; first aid kit, medical forms, accident forms, medication (as needed) hand gel, clingfilm, risk assessments, whistle, tarpaulin and spare clothing. The contents may vary depending on the time of year.

Clothing

“There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”. – we aim to go out in all weathers (unless dangerous).

- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trouser – if possible.
- Suitable layers of clothing – especially in colder weather.
- Long sleeve top
- Full length trousers
- Wellies and warm socks!
- Gloves and hat – cold weather
- Sun hat – sunny weather

We will provide roll mat seats for children to sit on.
All clothing should be named.

If children come without FS clothes, then leader will make decision as to whether they can attend based on weather etc.

Toileting

If a child needs to use the toilet during a session they can use the school toilets, escorted by an adult helper.

Access to water

A jerry can with clean water will be taken to all Forest School sessions along with a few cups for drinking.

Handwashing

Hand gel will be available for use if cooking food.

Children will be told to wash hands after Forest School sessions.



6. Equal Opportunities

Equal Opportunities at Forest School operates in line with the whole school policy, a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

- No person 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 learners with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues. This may include additional adult helpers, adapting the site if physically possible or adapting activities.
- All learners should feel that their experiences and contributions are worthwhile, so raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Where possible the children will be allowed to follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the environment.

Any child with a learning disability will receive support to allow them attend. This may mean they have a 1:1 support or additional adults from the school accompany them.

We find that behaviour problems often lessen at Forest School, in the outdoor environment, where they have freedom to explore. Any behaviour concerns will be discussed with class teachers. Additional adults may be required. If the safety of other children is a concern, then a child may not be able to attend.

In the event of a child with a physical disability the site will be accommodated to as much as possible. For example, clearing an access route.



7. Health and Safety Policy

Mulbarton Infant School's Health and Safety Policy sets out clear statements of intent regarding the Whole School's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School and the School Site.

This is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our Forest School sessions:

- 1) The Forest School Leader is the person in charge of Forest school sessions.
- 2) The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However, all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.
- 3) All adult helpers MUST sign and date a form to show that they have read and understood this handbook and the risk assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping.
- 4) The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry an emergency kit which will include a first aid kit.
- 5) The Forest Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services. If contact with the school is lost the Leader will contact the emergency services.
- 6) The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every session.
- 7) When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1. There is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.
- 8) The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.
- 9) The Forest Leader is responsible in training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
- 10) The Forest leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

7.1 - Cancellation Policy

The Forest School Leader will assess the weather forecast the day before a session. If there is a wind speed of 30mph+ forecast (MET office), then the session will be cancelled and helpers informed via email. Should a session need to be cancelled for any reason on the day (lack of helpers, leader ill, weather) then helpers will be notified via email or text on the morning of the session. Children will carry on with school activities.



7.2 – Risk benefits and management

Taking risks is an important learning opportunity for children and part of growing up. Sadly, fear of litigation has caused the prospect of children being exposed to risk has dramatically increased. Forest School gives children the chance to take ‘managed risks’ in a safe environment. This allows them to explore, gain confidence, gain an awareness of their own limits and boundaries. It helps them to be safe. At Forest School we believe in raising children’s self-esteem and by allowing them to take supported risks a secure level of trust develops and therefore a positive relationship between learners and leaders.

When completing risk assessments for individual activities three things will be considered:

1. The chance of coming to harm.
2. How severe that harm would be.
3. The rewards or outcomes of the activity.

And a risk matrix is used:

The Forest School Training Co op.
DCN accredited training

Forest School
TRAINING

Evaluating the Level of Risk - Example Risk Matrix

Possible Injury or Consequence	Serious injury or health effect to multiple people (fatal or major permanent injury or disabling condition)	High	High	High	Medium
	Serious injury or health effect to one person (fatal or major permanent injury or disabling condition)	High	High	Medium	Medium
	Significant injury or health effect to multiple people (RIDDOR reportable but non-permanent injury/condition)	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Significant injury or health effect to one person (RIDDOR reportable but non-permanent injury/condition)	Medium	Low	Low	Low
	Minor injury or health effect to multiple people (non-RIDDOR, 1 st aid only)	Low	Low	Low	Low
	Minor injury or health effect to one person (non-RIDDOR, 1 st aid only)	Low	Low	Low	Low
		Probable	Possible	Remote	Nil/Negligible
		Likelihood of Occurrence			

If an activity initially appears to be high risk then measures, such as protective equipment or level of supervision, may be put into place to reduce these risks and make it an acceptable activity. The benefits of individual activities may outweigh the level of risk involved.

Risk assessments including site, daily and activities are in clear plastic wallet.



8. Incident and Emergency

All staff, volunteers and learners will be briefed on what to do in case of an emergency.

Procedure

A whistle will be blown multiple times as a signal to stop and find the nearest adult ready to hear instructions. The Forest School leader will assess the situation.

If Leader thinks it is required, the rest of the group will be removed from any danger and will be supervised in the '**safe zone**'. The leader will attend to the casualty, giving necessary first aid. An accident form will later be completed in the red folder at school (in Yr2 cloakroom).

Should the Forest School leader become injured and require a first aider then one of the helpers should send for Nikki Fowler (Year One teacher). However, if cannot be treated by first aid then Emergency Services should be contacted and children removed to **safe zone**.

Safe zone: outside the entrance to the forest school site, behind the boundary fence.

8.1 – Serious incidents

In the event of Injury If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by First Aid on-site and requires medical assistance:

- In serious cases (concussion, severe breaks), the Emergency Services should be contacted (see below) using the Emergency Phone carried by the Forest School Leader, then the school will be notified.
- The School Office will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- If required, an additional First Aider from school will be requested to assist at the Forest School site.
- RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) will be completed on the schools Eurovia



system should there be any serious accidents.
Information on what needs to be reported can be found
at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/edis1.pdf>

8.2 - Information for the emergency services:

School address: Mulbarton Infant School, The Common,
Mulbarton, Norwich, NR14 8JG

Grid reference: TG 19279 00565

Nearest Access: Main school entrance on 'The Common'

Helicopter landing point: junior playground or field.

School Office phone number: 01508 570326



9. Fire Policy

Campfires are an important part of forest school. They have a spiritual element that gives children a sense of belonging, as well as building communication, cooking and fire lighting skills.

It allows children to be responsible for their own safety and safety of others in a supported environment.

"There is nothing nicer than sitting around the campfire with friends."

There will be a designated site, away from overhanging branches, stones and surface roots. Campfire areas are enclosed by logs to make a Fire Pit to make a safe fire pit which prevents the spread of fire.

A separate risk assessment will be made for fire use.

- Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit.
- Learners are not to enter the area immediately surrounding the fire without permission.
- Learners will be shown how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area.
- A fire will not be lit with a group until all learners have demonstrated safe practice.
- Learners are taught not to throw anything onto the fire.
- FS leader will advise on smoke direction.

Fire Lighting

- Forest School leader is trained in fire lighting.
- A Fire Blanket, watering cans, plunge bucket and Burns Kit must be sited close to the camp fire.
- Only adults light fires, unless children are under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader or Forest School Assistant.
- Fires are lit using a fire steel or match to paper and natural tinder. Cotton wool, and waterproof matches may be used in wet conditions.
- No accelerants are to be used on fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If children are involved in adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.



Extinguishing

- All fires must be thoroughly extinguished.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Large remains of wood should be separated from one another.
- The fire must be doused down using a watering can until there is no smoke or steam.
- Ash build up should be dispersed and scattered.

Campfire cooking

- To begin with the only things cooked on the campfire will be marshmallows.
- Children will use hand gel before holding any food.
- They will be taught to whittle a stick to have a clean utensil for roasting.



10. Tool Policy

Tool use is an important element of Forest School. It allows children to take supported risks and learn new skills, whilst connecting them to nature and building their self-esteem and confidence.

- Tools will be stored in the locked gardening shed.
- Tools are all counted in and out after each session.
- Children are not to help themselves.
- Any tool use activity is in a safe working area – outside 'blood bubble'.
- We do not wear gloves when using a tool..
- The Forest School leader is responsible for checking and maintaining tools. They will be cleaned and oiled once a week.
- An activity Risk/Benefit analysis is completed for all activities.

Tools we may use:

Potato peelers

- 1:2 ratio, kneeling on one knee, cutting away from the body. Carry at side of body pointing down.

Secateurs

- 1:1 ratio, fingers clear from blade. Carry with blade locked and pointing down.

Loppers

- 1:1 ratio, fingers clear of blade. Cut wood below head height. Carry under fixed arm horizontal to ground, blade points down.

Bow saw

- 1:1 ratio, cross-cutting, buddy helping 'push, pull'. Hands away from blade, behind A-frame axel. Carry with blade cover on, blade facing backwards.

Gimlet

- 1:1 ratio, bit facing down, hands secure round edge (not on top of wood).



11. Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Mulbarton Infant School's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

Main points:

- 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 concerns and disclosures are confidential and will only be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and necessary agencies, if appropriate.
- If a child chooses to disclose something they must be listened to, not questioned.
- If they ask you to keep something a secret, you must explain that you cannot do so.
- Any disclosures should be written up on an orange disclosure form (found in class folders or on staffroom wall) word-for-word.
- Orange forms should then be put in an envelope and given to a safeguarding lead.

Mulbarton Infant School's safeguarding lead persons are Bev Theobald (Head Teacher) and Rebecca Jennings (Deputy Head).

11.1 - Communication

- All parents will be invited to an information meeting. The presentation will then be available on the school website.
- Handbook on website
- Parents will be emailed any additional information required as and when needed.

11.2 - Photographs

- All children can be photographed but certain photos cannot be published, only those who have given school permission.
- Forest School Leader is responsible for what happens to the photos taken at Forest School, removing from the iPads and choosing select photos to publish or display.



11.3 - Medical

- Forest school leader will have a list of children at session and they will be labelled with any medical conditions or allergies to be aware of.
- Any inhalers will be in FS Leaders backpack.

11.4 – Lost child or unwanted visitor

- Children are taught boundary games and rules. They know to be in sight of an adult.
- We are working within locked, secured school grounds.
- There should be no unwanted visitors. However, we are on the edge of school field and there is a footpath running alongside. Children are not to talk to unknown adults. If concerned they should tell an adult helper. Helpers to be vigilant.

12. Behaviour Policy

- At Forest School adults will model appropriate behaviour towards each other via good communication and listening.
- Adults will not be judgemental towards children, no praise will be given at forest school, only acknowledgement. For example, 'I can see you're making a den' rather than 'Wow, what a fantastic den!'. This is to encourage internalised behaviours instead of behaviours to acquire an external reward (such as a sticker). This to raise children's self-esteem by allowing them to play and make for themselves with no comparison.
- Along the same lines, show and tell will not be an element.
- If negative behaviour occurs (being unkind to others for example) then there will be group discussions in the fairy circle to address issues and voice opinions.
- If a learner acts inappropriately (violence, being unsafe) then they may be removed from the site either temporarily (if calmed down) or permanently (if others safety is impacted).

