

Alvaston Infant and Nursery School

Forest School Guidance



Signature of Chair of Governors

Signature of Headteacher

Reviewed by the Governing Body and agreed by staff:

Review date	By whom	Summary of changes made	Date implemented	Date ratified

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Alvaston Infant and Nursery Forest School is designed to enhance and complement our day to - day curriculum in Primary School. It offers all our children opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem, and to experience achievement in our outdoor area.

Our core objectives are to produce confident and capable children like these.



1. Forest School Code of Conduct

Boundaries

Children are always made aware of how far they can explore before a session begins. If children explore hidden areas, an adult should also go into the cover, deep enough to be able to see the children. If you do lose sight of them, shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The child should reply '1, 2, and 3 I'm here'. This has been introduced to them through a game and practised many times.



Picking up and playing with stones

Making patterns with pretty stones and even 'gentle' throwing are fine but make sure children are thinking of others and don't throw them with force at ANYTHING.

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but make sure they think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a child at both ends.

Sticks must not be thrown, nor should children be allowed to pull them from living trees.



Tree climbing

Adult: child ratio must be 1:1. Check ground cover for sharp objects and check 'climbing trees' for loose and rotten branches. Children are allowed to explore to their own limits but adults should be near enough to catch if one should fall but far enough away to not be invasive. Don't let children climb higher than your arm reach or chest height. Onsite there are no climbable trees.

Elsewhere unsafe but tempting trees will be marked with hazard tape.

Rope and string use

Encourage connecting and transporting materials. Prevent tying up other children or themselves! If a child has a good idea and wants, for example, to try to build a rope swing do help them and use the chance to model appropriate knot tying. (See section x)



Carrying & transporting materials

The children should be encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by hand or using ropes. The safe way to lift, by bending your knees and keeping a straight back should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects can be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Digging

Children love digging and this is fine in the designated area in our school grounds. however, making holes in the ground is to be discouraged. Show children how to look carefully for insects and their habitats using lolly sticks and fingers.

Toileting

Children are always invited to use the toilets before we start the session. If necessary, staff member to radio over to school for a member of staff to collect the child to supervise them going to the toilet in school.

Eating and drinking

Prevent children eating anything found in woods, such as berries or seeds. Keep reminding them about fingers and hands in mouths and noses. If we take drinks or snacks outside ensure children use wipes to clean their hands before eating their snack or drinking from a milk carton.





Around the log circle

If we are able to build one we will always behave as we would if we were able to light a fire. So we build a fire square – a small shape of logs with the ‘fire’ within, then a similar shape of seating logs 1.5 metres from the ‘fire’. There must be no running within 5 metres of the fire area (marked by ribbon/tape), and anything being carried must be placed on the ground behind the seating. We then step over the logs to sit down.

We will always practise this as if a real fire were being lit – one day we may be able to do it for real!

Leaving the site

The site must always be left as it was found. Shelters should normally be demolished and imported materials taken back to the school at the end of each session. Occasionally some large items may be left tidily for the next group.



Collecting wood

Wood should be collected in three thicknesses – matchstick size, pencil size and thumb thickness. This is a great sorting activity and children should be given a chance to do it even if a fire is not to be lit!

Lighting a fire

If we are given permission to light a fire the FS leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start.



2. Using and storing tools

General notes

Tools are all counted in and out and are kept in suitable containers in one designated spot. Children must never be allowed to help themselves. Tools are given out for a purpose and all adults should model their correct use, storage and transportation at all times. Tools are used well away from other active children and only walking is permitted when carrying them. Never wear a glove when using a tool.



Potato peelers – for peeling and sharpening sticks.

1:2 ratio, kneeling on one knee and always cutting away from the body, supporting wood on bent non-dominant knee and ensuring safe distance from other people. When walking with peeler keep arm to the side and point down. Safe temporary storage is to store the blade end in soil.

Fixed blade knife – to be kept by FS leader and used for cutting string etc.

Children will not be using knives; however, if an adult uses one good practice will be modelled, as with the potato peeler.

Secateurs – for cutting and pruning

1:1 ratio, ensure fingers are clear from blade. When carrying ensure blades are locked closed and pointing towards the floor.



Loppers – for cutting and pruning sticks up to 5cm diameter

1:1 ratio, ensure hands are clear from blades and only cut wood below head height. When carrying hold under fixed arm horizontal to ground, ensure blade points toward the floor. Safe storage is to lean the loppers against a tree trunk blade down and within sight of an adult who has responsibility for them.





Bow saws – for cross-cutting wood up to 12 cm diameter

Children may be taught how to use a saw with 1:1 supervision, or with a buddy helping in 'push, pull' fashion. Adults must ALWAYS supervise closely. Keep hands away from blade, ensure blade covered when not in use and carried pointing downwards, blade facing backwards.

Storage

When not in use all tools are kept in the secure cupboard in the Woodland area. Tools should be cleaned before they are put away. Once a week the FS leader will ensure they are thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

3. Equipment

In addition to tools suited to the planned activities the Forest School leader will always take out an **emergency bag**.

The contents of the **emergency bag** will vary depending on the site location being used, the group leading and the time of year and weather conditions. Contents of the bag may also vary as a result of risk assessments. However, there are some essential items that should be carried on every session.

Essential Items:

- First Aid Kit (appropriate for number of people out during sessions and remoteness of site; kit to be regularly checked and restocked as necessary)
- Emergency procedures
- Medical information and emergency contact details of all in group (including adult helpers and leaders of sessions)
- Risk assessments
- Means of communication (mobile phone or radio – checked in working order and that receives signal)
- Clean water
- Emergency whistle
- Emergency BIVI bag
- Accident sheets
- Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for individual to look after their own medication – clearly labelled and staff trained to administer it and parental consent received)
- Roll mat and blanket

Other Possible Items:

Wet wipes, hand gel, nappy sacks and toileting things, trowel, sun cream (parental permissions required); spare clothing; thermos of hot water; chocolate/sugary food; burns kit; fire blanket; torch; emergency fire kit; knife; emergency shelter

4. Health and Safety and Forest School

Alvaston Infant and Nursery School, Health and Safety Policy (q.v.) sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the School's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School. The following is a 12 point list of additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions.

1. However many adults accompany Forest School sessions the person in charge is always the trained Forest School Leader, Jenny Ainsworth.
2. The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in his/her charge, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
3. All adult helpers **must** sign and date a form to show they have read this handbook and appropriate risk assessments and understand and agree to comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School. (see appendix 1)
4. The Forest School Leader or Assistant will carry a First Aid kit.
5. The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag.
6. The Forest School Leader will ensure that the Emergency Bag contains:
 - Essential survival equipment;
 - A contact list for each child undertaking the activities, and;
 - The school's telephone number.(the above is for off - site visits only).
7. The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range.
8. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services. If contact with the School is lost the Leader will contact the emergency services. (See section x)
9. The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every session.
10. When tools are used the adult: child ratio will always be 1:1 (see section 2)
11. There is only one exception to this – the use of potato peelers for stick whittling. The ratio here can be 1:2. (see section 2)

5. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School

Alvaston Infant and Nursery School, fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection and for confidentiality. Our Safeguarding Children Policy, which applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school, has six main elements:

- We practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with children.
- We continually raise awareness of child protection issues and equip children with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- We develop and implement procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.
- We support children who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.
- We establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.
- We ensure that pupil and parental rights are respected and that vulnerable individuals are protected from risk or exploitation

In addition, adults working within Forest School need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may be moved to disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves.

Any volunteer or member of staff who finds that a child is telling them something which concerns them should follow these simple steps:

- **Listen**, but ask NO leading questions. Remember that you must not promise to 'keep a secret'. The general rule is that adults should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation.
- **Comfort** the child if appropriate.
- **Inform** the Child Protection Officer, Miss Molly Allen, Acting Headteacher, or in her absence, the Deputy Head/Assistant Head, as soon as possible, and make a written record of the concern.

6. Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

Alvaston Infant and Nursery School, is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all our children, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We undertake to ensure that all our children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued;
- Appreciate and value the differences they see in others;
- Take responsibility for their own actions;
- Are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate to their religious Beliefs;
- Are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success;
- Use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds;
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different Learning styles;
- Are set challenging targets that enable them to succeed;
- Participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Forest School at Alvaston Infant and Nursery School, means Forest School for all.

We have, and always use, a full stock of dungaree-type overalls, wellies, extra outdoor coats, hats, gloves and so on.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware that they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session at school.

We encourage a measure of risk-taking, always under close adult supervision, and actively foster friendships and collaboration between children who do not always get along in the usual course of events.

Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment, even if this seems to be of a transitory nature.

The forest environment is one to which we all have an entitlement and we believe the happy experiences we have there will linger in the memory for years to come.

Children with medical needs or disabilities will be helped so they can take as full a part as everyone else in Forest School sessions.

Those with challenging behaviour are risk-assessed and may need one-to-one supervision, but their entitlement remains the same.

7. Risk assessment guidelines and forms

A site risk assessment is carried out every week and a daily check made before every Forest School session in our School grounds.

In addition, an activity risk assessment will be in place for any activity that may require it, such as stick whittling, wood cutting, shelter-building, and fire-lighting.

Additional risk assessments will be carried out for children whose behaviour or medical condition demands them.

The Forest School leader carries out a site risk assessment before every visit to the site.

The risk assessment process is as follows:

- We look for the hazards
- We decide who might be harmed and how this might happen.
- We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or
- Whether more should be done.
- We record our findings
- We review our assessments and revise them if necessary.
- We inform all adults accompanying the group and require them to sign to show they have read and understood the concerns.

8. Forest School Accident and Emergency Procedures off-site

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the group leader should maintain or resume control of the group overall.

She will, however, delegate responsibility when necessary, so all adults accompanying the visit must read and sign the visit handbook before the trip begins.

The Group Leader Will:	Details
Establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible.	see Scenarios
Ensure that the entire group are safe and looked after and kept together.	<i>All other adults will be told as soon as possible and allocated roles; roles may be changed as needed.</i>
Establish the names of any casualties and get immediate medical attention.	<i>Children's names and medical details will be in the emergency bag. First Aid box will be on site.</i>
Phone for an ambulance if appropriate.	<i>Another adult may be asked to do this.</i>
Ensure that a teacher or teaching assistant accompanies casualties to hospital with any relevant medical information.	<i>In extremis a DBS checked adult may have to take this role</i>
Inform the school of the name of the casualty and details of their injuries plus action taken so far.	<i>Head will notify the police if necessary.</i>
Pass on to school details of nature, date and time, location of the incident.	<i>Head will notify parents, providing as full a factual account of the incident as possible.</i>
Write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence.	<i>The group leader will give copies of notes and reports to the headteacher.</i>
Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident.	
Complete an accident report form as soon as possible. Contact HSE or LA (R.I.D.D.O.R.).	<i>Report forms are kept in the Headteacher's office.</i>
Keep receipts for any expenses incurred – insurers will require these.	

NB:

No-one in the group should speak to the media.

The names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families.

Any enquiries from journalists must be referred to the headteacher.

No-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties, nor sign anything relating to accident liability without clear advice from the LA or relevant Trades Union.

9. Accident and Emergency Scenarios

First aid	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure the rest of the group is safe – where appropriate delegate responsibility.2. If appropriate, remove the danger or people from the danger.3. Qualified First Aider called to check A-B-C, administer First Aid and if necessary call for further assistance (999).4. Have medical form details available in emergency bag and call parent/guardian as appropriate.5. Record full details through school incident procedure back at school.6. Follow up to parents as usual.
Lost or missing Child	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. As soon as child is found to be missing, make an immediate search of vicinity and use 1, 2, 3 procedure.2. Assemble rest of children and ensure they are safe.3 Call School to alert and then School calls police (and parent/guardian).4. Follow School critical incident procedure.
Death or Serious Accident	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Follow First Aid procedure (EP 1).2. Stay with casualty, but ensure rest of group is removed from the situation and is safe.3. School to call parent/guardian/next of kin ASAP.4. Follow School critical incident procedure.5. Gain advice on follow up from police.
Transport accident	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure safety of passengers/children by removing from danger if appropriate.2. Undertake First Aid as appropriate (EP1).3. Call School contact to inform of situation.4. School to contact parent/guardian informing them of situation.5. Follow School critical incident procedure.
Irregular Occurrence, Uninvited person/stranger	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The intruder will be challenged and asked to leave politely.2. If a child is involved then the police should be called and the child/children involved should be removed from the situation and made to feel safe.3. Follow School's critical incident procedure4. Parents/guardian should be briefed by FS leader ASAP.5. Inform School Child Welfare Officer and gain advice.
Poor weather Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If trees blowing more than 20 degrees, or if group leader feels uncomfortable take emergency 'safe' route out ASAP.2. Use indoor areas or shelter outdoors (away from trees) areas as alternative.
Behaviour Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trained members of staff to use de-escalation strategies.2. Remove other children from area of risk if deemed necessary3. If thought necessary, trained members of school staff to use appropriate restraint technique. As school policy on restraint.4. Debrief child after calm down period.5. Log incident.6. Inform parents/guardian.

10. Six principles of Forest School

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 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.

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the social, physical, intellectual, communication, emotional, spiritual aspects of the learner.

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

