# Hareside Forest School Handbook

**Updated**
**February 2020**
**Dec 2021**
**Jan 2023**

# Contents Page:

Our vision for Forest School
Forest School ethos
Clothing
Forest school leader

Forest school site
Daily check sheet
Annual site check
Planning session

**Policies**
Equal Opportunities
Confidentiality
Safeguarding
Hygiene Policy
Behaviour
Environmental policy

Risk Assessments
Fire
Dens
Ropes
Practical Skills and Safe too use
Tools

Communication strategy
Risk
Assessment and Reporting

# 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 Hareside Primary School, 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 and aims for children to visit in blocks of six week each season. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process.

2. It takes place in designated forest school area on school site. The area is under development to encourage more biodiversity and learning opportunities for the learners.

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 and supported by teaching staff who will also undergo Forest school CPD sessions so that they can support effectively.

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.forestschoolassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/ 4

## Forest School ethos

At Hareide Primary School 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
- Support the wider ecological goals of the school community

## Forest school Leader role:

The Forest School leader should 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 and site checks.
- Ensure the first aid kit is up to date and present in the Yurt 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, ability or race, in line with the school's Equality Policy.
- Manage the site for use but also for ecological sustainability.

# 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 ice.

*'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 t-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 and sunscreen should be supplied
- 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 on the day they take part in forest school.

## Forest School Site

Daily site checks should take place before each session. This is to check that the area is safe enough for the children to use. Weather should be checked the day before by the class to help inform the children of their clothing choice. The following areas should be checked.

- Hedge row – broken glass and other objects that have been dropped or thrown into school property
- Mud pit – check for flooding and site erosion. Ensure pallets are secure.
- Fire pit area
- Walk all of forest school site checking for objects and animal carcasses.
- Trees- strong winds, check for broken branches.
- Footpaths- monitor erosion.

Annual site check

An annual site check should include a more detailed check of the area. Please refer to annual site check sheet.

## **Planning**

Each forest school session will be planned and evaluated by the forest school leader. Information will be collected from students and staff to inform future sessions. Feedback and observations will be collected and kept securely by the forest school leader.

# Policies

## 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 staff will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis. The teaching staff will bring all medication with the class to Forest school and inform forest school leader. This will be in the designated place in the yurt.
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child are kept in the office which can be contacted at anytime via the radio.
- 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, should disclose to the Forest School Leader if it could effect them during a forest school session; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

## Safeguarding at Forest School

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Hareside Primary 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.

**Harerside Primary School designated safeguarding lead persons are Mrs Purvis, Miss Mowat and Mrs Wong.**

## Forest School Hygiene Policy

**Toileting:**

- The children will be encouraged to use the toilet before attending forest school sessions. Access to the school toilets will be with a teacher's fob.

**Hand Washing**:

- Whenever possible, soap and water will be used for handwashing after sessions or at snack time.

**Snack time or cooking:**

- During snack time or cooking activities, food hygiene regulations will be adhered.
- Children will wash and dry hands and sit on the base camp benches when consuming any food or drink.

## Behaviour policy

**Our rules and routines at Forest School:**

Expectations of behaviour will be a discussion between the Forest School Leader and the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Children will also risk assess activities and set boundaries, which will be revisited at every session.

However the rule:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful with your stick.' Will be set by the forest school lead.

## 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..
- Observations will be kept safe and secure by the forest school leader.
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity; this must be in strict confidence.

## Contact Numbers

Any accidents or incidents will be reported to the school office and head teacher at the earliest opportunity who will contact parents if necessary.

## Environmental Policy

Forest school will be as sustainable as possible. We aim to have a positive impact on our environment and support its development and biodiversity.
Daily and Annual check will monitor the impact that footfall and other forest school activities is having on the area and responses will be put in place to support the site. A site management plan will be developed that will aim to increase biodiversity on the site and also help to create a sustainable source of resources for the forest school with specific planting.

## 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.

- All adults attending will have access to the forest school handbook and risk assessments and have instructions on their activity for the session.
- 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
- Teachers will receive training on basic forest school practices in order to support the Forest school lead.

## Risk

Risk allows children to push themselves to the limits of their capabilities and allows them space to progress. It also allows children to feel in control of their actions, learning and play; they learn boundaries in a safe enough environment, where they can be supported directly or indirectly by forest school leaders.

Whenever possible students should be part of the risk assessment system. It is critical they develop as independent young people able to identify risk and make good decisions about how to mange risk for themselves and perhaps even others. Young people need to be exposed to safe levels of risk to be able to learn to identify risk but also to create fertile grounds upon which we can discuss risk, what is acceptable risk, what is unnecessary risk, do we avoid all risk, why might we engage in some risk and how can we make things safe. This type of discussion develops young peoples life skills.

Ongoing Risk Assessment is vital to ensure all adults are aware of any potential new hazard and what actions need to be implemented to make the risk small. Some actions may need to be preventative and be implemented before a session starts, such as removing trip hazards from a regular path or teaching students specific appropriate behaviours for planned activities. Other actions may responsive, for example, cancelling or ending a session if the weather conditions become dangerous. Activity Risk Assessment – Every new activity or change to an activity will generate new hazards, for example from sharp tools or heavy objects. In the planning of any activity these hazards will be logged in the lesson plan and the measures taken to reduce the risk to 'low' identified.

Risk assessments have been done for regular activities and these can been found in the risk assessment file.

# Tools

**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. Tool will be counted in and out, checked, maintained and locked away after each session.
- Forest school leader will be present at all times when tools are in use.
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use.
- Tool logs is kept and tool are maintained by forest school leader.
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

**Knives:**

- Children will work with forest school leader with low ration numbers depending on age range with forest school leader initially demonstrating good practice. Use in a designated area, away from others
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area
- Knives should be used away from the body
- Glove must be on the non tool hand.
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

## Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

•Children will work with forest school leader with low ration numbers depending on the child's skill level. Forest school leader initially demonstrating good practice. Use in a designated area, away from others

• Guard is in place when not in use

• Use in a designated area away from others

• Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand

• Use a saw-horse where possible with the bow saw.

**Loppers/secateurs:**

•Children will work with forest school leader with low ration numbers depending on the child's skill level. Forest school leader initially demonstrating good practice • Use in a designated area, away from others

• Loppers/secateurs must be kept closed except when in use

• Loppers/secateurs must only be used above the ground if possible.

**Ropes and Knots:**

• All equipment to be regularly checked for fraying etc.

• Children should not wrap rope around their bodies

• Children should be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots

• If tying between trees, the rope should be able to be seen and not cause a trip hazard.

## Fire Safety Procedures

These rules are enforced at all times by all adults. Volunteers are made aware of the rules at the beginning of each session. During sessions whether small or larger groups we aim to ensure all participants are at as little risk as possible. Forest school leader will supervise the fire at all times with other members of staff supervising the welfare of other children.

- We walk around the outside of the Fire Circle to get to the other side, otherwise remain seated unless otherwise instructed.
- We only enter the inner Fire Circle when invited by name by the Forest School Leader.
- No loose clothing or loose hair in the Fire Circle.
- We do not throw anything into the fire.
- If smoke blows in the direction of the children they will invited to move.
- The fire is located within a boundary of flour
- Seating is located around the fire at least 1.5 metres away from the fire.
- Ample water will be available to extinguish the fire.
- First aid kit including a burns kit is available.
- Dry tinder, Vaseline, cotton wool, paper, fire lighter or matches can be used to light the fire.

- Adults never turn their back to a fire or leave a fire unattended.

## First Aid Kit containing:

- disposable gloves
- wound dressing
- disposable ice packs
- triangular bandage
- hypoallergenic plasters
- hand gel
- antibacterial wipes
- an eye pad
- scissors
- adhesive medical tape
- face shield

Other essential equipment:

- Any necessary individual medication (inhalers etc)
- burns kit
- clean water
- A working mobile phone and available contacts to ring in case of an

emergency (available to all adult helpers in case of a serious accident involving the Forest School Leader)

## Emergency procedures

The Forest School leader holds a current Outdoor Learning and Paediatric first aid certificate. The leader will ensure the first aid kit is available and be primarily responsible for administering first aid. The Forest School leader also carries a mobile telephone/ radio to contact the school staff if further help or an ambulance is required. The office will immediately inform the Headmistress or Deputy head of the situation. In the event of a serious accident an ambulance will be called, the Forest School leader will remain with the casualty and the class teacher will take the students back into school. The office will send

another first aider to the forest school site and ensure the ambulance is greeted.

In the case of a serious accident involving the Forest School leader, other adult leaders are informed of the whereabouts of the mobile phone/radio and the emergency procedures followed.

Review date – Jan 2024