

OUR LADY OF LOURDES RC PRIMARY SCHOOL
FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK

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Introduction

At Our Lady of Lourdes, Forest school is an inspirational education approach to learning and finding one's self. A way of removing the four walls to connect with nature. Regular woodland experiences with no borders, just horizons and only freedom, together with a holistic approach to learning help with the development of the 'whole' child. In an environment where there are no ability groups, no discrimination, no written tests or pressures; only tools, exploring, taking risks and at the end of the day being covered in mud. Forest school at Our Lady of Lourdes actually helps children identify their strengths by exploring their talents. Adults are there to facilitate a process of 'how' children can learn rather than 'what' they can learn. The children then grow their skills of resilience, confidence, self-esteem, imagination and independence over a period of time instead of following the same routines and constraints of the institutionalized classroom lesson plans. The image of the 'Fire' at Forest School reminds us that the ignition needed to explore greater things is fueled by the spark that is given to the mind.

Daily operating procedure

Forest School sessions will be held on the School premises, school ratios of staff to children will be maintained.

Staff supporting the session will have read through the handbook prior to starting the activities.

Prior to the session:

- Staff supporting will be asked to listen to planning ideas led by Leader.
- Staff will be briefed on the session objectives.
- A group register and emergency information will be placed in the First Aid/Emergency bag.
- The Forest School leader will conduct a safety and usability check on any equipment/tools/areas being used in the session.

During the session:

On arrival to the site children will be encouraged to help with a visual risk assessment, which will help to identify potential risks and help to make children aware of their surroundings. Visual checks will continue throughout the session by adults.

Staff and children are aware of voice signals, these will be used to gain children's attention if needed through-out the session (this will be practiced during every session)

Voice signals

Teacher: "Sticky Elbows"

Child: "Sticky Elbows" (Children echo and seek the leader's location)

Teacher: "Sticky Elbows - _____" (which area to meet at)

Throughout the session children have to explain which site they want to move to and staff will communicate with each other on children's location. Children are aware of the boundaries and know they can go anywhere within that.

After the session:

At the end of each session, children will be asked to come back to the leader, children will have the choice to share what they have done, encouraging a relaxed, calm atmosphere. Children will be led back to their classroom door where they are encouraged to clean/take off any muddy boots or clothing. Once children are in their classroom the Forest School

leader will conduct a maintenance/safety check of any equipment that has been used.

The Forest School leader will evaluate the session including comments/views from the support staff, which will be added to the planning.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

All our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. All staff follow procedures outlined in the school Child Protection, Confidentiality and Safeguarding policy. As children will be developing self-esteem and building a strong relationship with the Forest School Leader/s, there may be times when a child confides in an adult. All disclosures from children should be brought to the attention of The Head of School (designated senior person for Child Protection and Safeguarding) or The Executive Head teacher- Mrs Davies or Miss Dean (Deputy designated person), children will be told that confidential information must be shared with the with the Safe guarding Leads and entered onto the school system (EdAware). All members of staff will be made aware of the school's whistle blowing policy and are encouraged to raise any concerns relating to practice in school in line with the policy.

Confidentiality

All discussions regarding children at FS should be kept within the bounds of FS. All parental consent forms and other data will be kept in accordance with the school's GPDR Policy. These documents will be kept in a locked cupboard within the school office (with a coded door).

Health and safety, Risk Management and Risk Assessment

The School's Health and Safety Policy will ensure that all learners and adults can be safe in the Forest School environment. The Forest School leader will risk assess the site before use. This will include risks involving access the site, site contents and site boundaries, additionally the Forest School leader will carry out a daily risk assessment to ensure that any uncontrollable changes (weather) can be addressed.

Where activities deemed to be adventurous, an activity risk assessment will also be carried out.

Forest School staff should make themselves aware of the schools Health and Safety Policy, particularly the arrangements and procedures for ensuring the health and safety of children working at Forest School, the tools used at forest school and the risk assessments carried out for Forest School.

Wellbeing and Readiness to learn

FS Leaders, Teaching and support staff are responsible for setting the tone and context for positive behaviour within Forest School. The policy is designed to promote good behaviour and good behaviour for learning rather than merely deter anti-social behaviour. Adults have the responsibility to develop an environment in which effective learning takes place; A place where there is mutual respect between all members of the learning community. All adults are to treat all children fairly, apply this behaviour policy in a consistent way and reward good behaviour as we believe this will develop an ethos of kindness and cooperation. All children will develop a sense of self-discipline and an acceptance of responsibility for their own actions at Forest School.

Accident Procedure

The Forest School leader will carry a mobile phone at all times as a communication device.

If a child has a minor accident the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and follow the Schools procedure.

In the event of a serious accident that cannot be solely dealt with by the first aider, the adults will be the 'Serious Emergency Procedure'. Adults will divide roles. Adult 1 will gather the rest of the group together and keep them calm. Adult 2 will administer First Aid and contact the emergency services. The School Office will be notified so that they can wait and let the emergency services on to the grounds. Other available adults can be on hand to support Adult 1 or 2, depending on how great the need is.

A trained first aider will remain with the child/ren at all times until emergency services arrive and ask the member of staff to stop administering first aid.

If the emergency services arrive before the parents, a member of staff will accompany the child/ren to hospital taking any relevant information kept in the emergency bag.

Necessary paperwork will be completed by the Forest School leader and School Business Manager as soon as possible.

First Aid

The emergency bag will contain a first aid kit and relevant equipment at all times, this will be checked and replenished on a regular basis by Mrs. Waterworth. There are many members of school staff that has accredited Pediatric First Aid;

Mrs McDermott, Miss Dean, Miss Easey, Miss Proudfoot, Miss Grey, Mrs Lindley and Mrs Burdaky.

Staff and Helpers

The Forest School leader will oversee the planning, delivery and assessment of Forest School.

Forest School Leader; Mrs A Lindley - Level 3

Forest School Manager and Leader: Mrs M Waterworth - Level 3

All other staff supporting Forest School sessions are teachers or teaching assistants, all holding a DBS check. All staff will be given a copy of this handbook and are required to follow the guidelines within.

Parental Involvement

All Forest School information is openly shared with parents/carers. An initial letter stating the involvement of their child is sent out before the sessions begin. Weekly Photos/Tweets will be shared with the parents via the school website.

Parents/carers may be invited to attend certain sessions to be involved with their child's development. Before parents are invited, an initial letter will be sent out with the consent of the Executive Head teacher/Head of School.

Cancellation Procedure

The decision to cancel a Forest School session will be made by the Forest School leader. In the event of a session being cancelled for any reason e.g. extreme weather, causing unsafe conditions within the forest School site (broken branches, slippery surfaces, lighting) or staffing issues e.g. not enough staff to safely supervise the children the session will be replaced by a class led session. All staff and children involved will be informed as soon as possible.

Food Hygiene Procedure

At Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School we follow a Healthy Schools policy, providing children with healthy snacks and a balanced diet.

Food used at the Forest School site will be prepared before hand by staff, in the school, and transported in appropriate containers. Hand washing will be made available by using anti-bacterial hand wash gels and fresh water transported in a clean water drum will be used.

Food cooked on site will be taken down in clean containers. Cooked and Raw meat will have separate areas and colour coded chopping boards.

Risk regarding food allergies will be assessed before each planned food session.

Forest School Activities

The Forest School Leader will plan all activities with involvement from support staff. Activities will take into account the individual child's needs, confidence and ability level.

Observations and evaluations will be added to the weekly planning, tailoring sessions and aiding child development.

Tool Operating Procedure

Before tools can be used within a group or 1:1, an initial assessment needs to be made by the Forest School Leader to whether the children are ready/capable to use them in a safe manner.

All tools are to be stored in a sturdy, clip fastened container in a locked outdoor storage unit. Staff will transport the tools to and from the Forest School site. All tools will be counted before and after each session. The tools will be kept in a designated tool base on site during the activities. All staff and children will be made aware of the tool base and rules relating to their use. Children can only access the tools when instructed to do so and supervised by the Forest School Leader.

At the end of each session The Forest School Leader will dry, clean and check the condition of the tools.

The Forest School Leader will introduce all tools on a 1:1 bases. Tool talks will be compulsory before children handle any tools. Staff will model and insist on the 3-point safe stance when using the tools, other safe stances will be modeled if needed. Safe working distances will be also made aware to children. Appropriate resources will be provided to support the safe use of tools e.g. chopping block, A frame.

Staff and children will all be required to wear appropriate, safe clothing when working with tools e.g. no loose clothing, no fashion gloves, hard hat when necessary, safety boots (adults only).

Fire Management and safety

A fire area will be established on site. This will be a safe distance from other structures and will have clear exit routes. A fire kit, fire blanket and water will be kept in the fire area near the fire. All staff will be made aware of this place.

Seating will be arranged a minimum 1.5 meters from the fire. Pupils will be involved in the building process to gain ownership and understanding of the fire area. Safety rules and procedures will be shared with and rehearsed by staff and pupils before the fire is lit. This process may be repeated for

several weeks before the pupils are ready for the fire to be lit. Staff will light and extinguish the fire. Cooking activities may take place during the fire sessions.

Any food cooked on site will be left to cool at an adequate temperature in a clean environment before allowing children to eat.

Toileting

Before each FS session, children are asked to go to the toilet. While on site, if a child/ren need to use the toilet a member of staff will accompany the child/ren to the nearest school toilet (KS 2 shared area). The FS leader will always stay with the rest of the group at the FS site.

