

# North Duffield Community Primary School



## Forest School Handbook

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## Our School and Forest School Ethos

At North Duffield Primary School, we enable all children to achieve our school vision, "Growing Learners for Life," Every child will make good or better progress because of the quality of teaching they will receive. We model and promote an inclusive ethos, so our learners are flexible, imaginative, responsible, and confident life - long learners, who value "Rights, Respect, Responsibility and Independence."

Through the direct teaching of metacognition strategies: resilience, reciprocity, resourcefulness, and reflection, we develop our children's learning behaviours thus enabling them to become lifelong learners and valued members of the communities in which they live.

We celebrate the uniqueness of every child and that they all learn in different ways and our provision reflects this. All staff take responsibility for driving continual improvement in teaching standards, in direct response to the needs of our children.

For more information, please visit our website:

[http://www.northduffield.n-yorks.sch.uk/website/our\\_curriculum\\_1/220415](http://www.northduffield.n-yorks.sch.uk/website/our_curriculum_1/220415)

## Forest School at North Duffield

### What is Forest School?

The Forest School concept originated in Scandinavia and was originally aimed at pre-school children. It was found that children who had attended forest school seemed to benefit in many ways. They arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, had the ability to work in groups effectively, displayed high self-esteem and generally showed confidence in their own abilities.

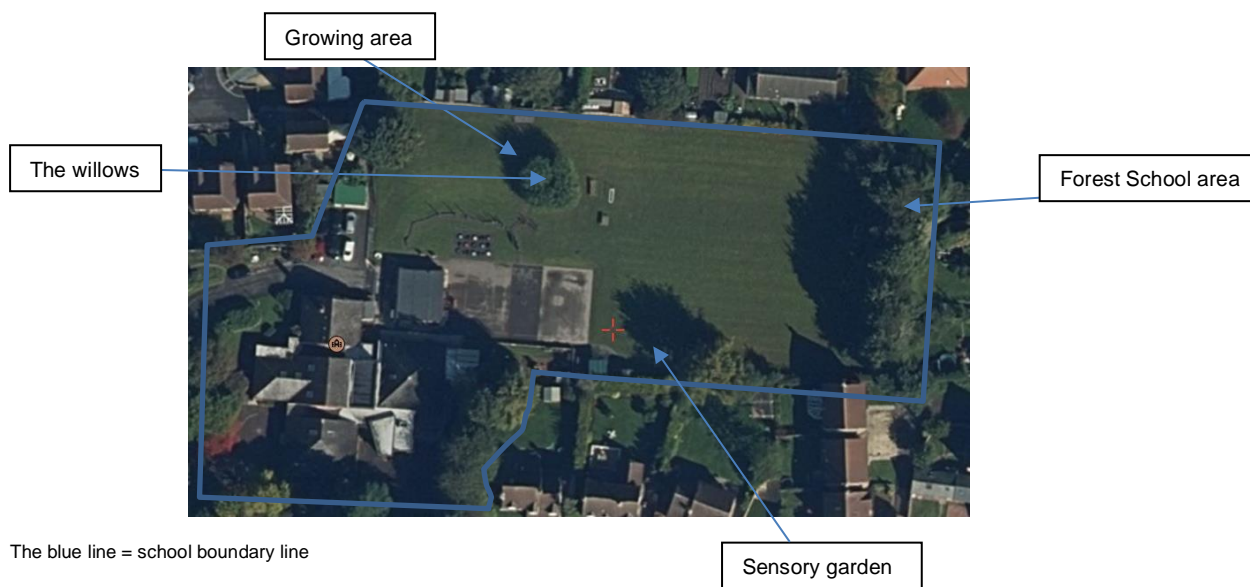
Since being adopted in the United Kingdom the approach has been used to deliver learning programmes to groups from pre-school age to young adults and across all abilities. Research has shown that the benefits identified in the original forest schools appear to benefit learners at all levels.



## Forest School at North Duffield

At North Duffield, Forest School sessions take place within the school grounds located at the far end of our school field. The Forest School area itself has a boundary, however we can use the full area of the school grounds, which include a sensory garden, a willow plot, and our growing areas.

Areas around our school are shown below:



Forest School sessions are currently run by Mrs Duffy who in addition to having completed the Level 3 Forest School Practitioner course has worked for many years as a teacher at the school.

## Activities During Forest School

Children taking part in Forest School sessions are given an opportunity to participate in activities in a natural setting on a regular basis. The setting provides a safe environment for them to learn and explore. Activities take place throughout the year and in all weathers.

Whilst the sessions may provide opportunities to learn and understand more about the natural world, they also provide opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills.

There are opportunities to learn practical skills that there is often little opportunity to learn in formal school settings or even in the home these days. For tasks such as tree climbing, tool use, fire lighting or cooking there might be an element of managed risk. However, by giving children these opportunities they ultimately become better



equipped to manage risk and as a result have the opportunity to grow their self-confidence.

Opportunities for reflection and to share experiences are provided and these help with the social and emotional development of participants. Group size plays an important role in this area, smaller groups allowing, eventually, more in depth reflection to take place and greater social interaction.

The Forest School leader should be seen as a facilitator. Although activities are well planned, they should essentially be child led. There should be flexibility in the planning to allow children to pursue their interests, planning being used to scaffold their interests. For this to happen, leaders need to have a good understanding of practical skills and an ability to match or adapt activities to learner's interests. Most importantly they need to have a good understanding of the site where the sessions take place and the opportunities it can present.



Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous, but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

The following will give some indication of the type of activities that might be undertaken:













- Den and shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Wildlife studies
- Habitat development
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Tracking games
- Cooking on an open fire
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional crafts
- Story telling
- Drama
- Imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities



## Forest School Delivery

Forest school sessions at North Duffield generally follow a common pattern.

- At the start of each session there will be a short input during which children are reminded of the expectations that are in place for forest school and, any new safety information is relayed. The theme or focus for the week's activities is then introduced.
- A short starter activity then takes place which is usually a game or 'nature hunt'.
- The main activity follows. Activities are commonly offered that link into the interests of the children wherever possible. Where tools are being used there is a high emphasis on safety. If the activity requires a high ratio of supervision the group may be split. An example of the possible activities for each are shown below.

<b>Week 1</b>	Getting to know the environment – games, nature hunt, tree identification		
<b>Week 2</b>	Forest Art – using nature to create artwork including making our own nature wands		
<b>Week 3</b>	Sprite making and dens – making our own forest sprites from clay and den building for the sprites.		 
<b>Week 4</b>	Den building for ourselves – inc knot tying		
<b>Week 5</b>	Whittling (Santa or foxes)		 
<b>Week 6</b>	Campfires, fire lighting, hot chocolate and smores		

- 'Free time' to explore a natural environment and pursue their own direction of learning. Therefore, in each session an opportunity for children to pursue their own interests is included. Quite often children will continue with the activity they have started or will continue with something that has sparked their interest in a previous session. Although it is 'free time' there are guidelines in place to ensure the safety of all, which participants soon become familiar with.

- Finally, the group is brought together for a period of reflection. This may involve a review of whatever guided activities have taken place or their independent activities. Whilst this is very much a child led activity it may be guided by the Forest School leader when necessary.

## Risk Management and Benefits

Forest School aims to develop children's self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. The Forest School Leader will therefore be responsible for conducting appropriate site and activity risk assessments prior to each session. A five-step approach is adopted where the following steps are taken:

- Identify hazards and risks.
- Decide who may be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide if existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done.
- Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits and observations.
- Review assessments on a regular basis.



Participants, including staff and volunteers, will be informed of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further. When possible, all participants will be involved in the risk assessment process as part of their learning.

Particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and management of fire, participants will be taught appropriate and adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe.

## Clothing

As children are potentially outside in all weathers, they need suitable clothing.

Outdoor PE kit of tracksuit bottoms, t-shirt, sweatshirt, and trainers with an added waterproof jacket meets the basic needs.

Wellingtons or walking boots and waterproof over trousers offer greater protection in wet weather conditions.

Hat, gloves, and scarves are useful throughout the winter months.

During the summer period sun hats and sun cream, as outlined in the schools School Sun Safety Policy should be provided.

## First Aid

The Forest School leader, Mrs Duffy has been trained in Forest School First Aid and there will be trained First Aiders in School. A first aid kit is available on site during each session. When there are fires on site, a fire first aid kit will also be available.



## Emergency Procedure

Prior to any Forest School session participants are briefed what they will be expected to do in the event of an emergency.

In the event of an emergency on the Forest School site the following steps will be taken.

- Immediate safety of other group members and self assessed.
- Attend to casualty and make as comfortable as possible.
- Make sure the group is safe sending them to the picnic bench area close to the school.
- Two children will go into school for adult assistance.
- Administer First Aid
- If necessary, contact emergency services.

## Policies

The school is like all educational establishments has a wide range of policies in place. These can be accessed via the school web site at <http://www.northduffield.n-yorks.sch.uk/website/policies/203915>

## Behaviour

The Forest School setting requires and expects high standards of behaviour. Children are allowed a certain amount of autonomy, but in an environment which allows children to encounter a level of managed risk good behaviour is paramount.

The school behaviour policy can be downloaded as with other policies via the school website <http://www.northduffield.n-yorks.sch.uk/website/policies/203915>



## Health and Safety

A key document for Forest School is North Duffield's Health and Safety Policy that relates to the following legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Employers' Health and Safety Policy Statements (Exception) Regulations 1975
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
- Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
- Education (school Premises) Regulations 1999
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- School Premises (England) Regulations 2012

The policy states:

*'We recognise our responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. We will take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment, and systems of work for all our pupils, school personnel and visitors to the school.'*

## Forest School Specific Policies

For Forest School two additional policies and procedures documents have been prepared. These are the '**Safe use of Hand Tools Policy**' and the '**Managed Fire Safety Policy**'. Copies of these can be below:

### **Safe Use of Hand Tools Policy**

The use of hand tools is an integral part of the Forest School experience

Before using tools with participants, the tools will be introduced, their use explained and then children will receive instruction as to how to use them safely. A tool script is used when introducing new tools and as an aide memoire when participants use them. The form of script is easily adapted if other tools are introduced.

The following tools are amongst those most likely to be used with children as part of our Forest School sessions.

- Potato peelers
- Secateurs
- Bow saw

- Loppers
- Stick peeler
- Fixed blade knife
- Bill Hook
- Mallet

Tools are used under close supervision. With KS2 children this is with a minimum of 1:4 ratio. When tools are initially introduced, or children are younger the ratio will generally be closer to 1:2 until participants have shown a reasonable level of confidence or even 1:1.

The Forest School leader will be responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools. When not in use the tools are stored in a secure setting. A full list of all tools is kept with the tools and a separate list carried when tools are taken out on site. This allows the tools to be counted out and in.

When using any items, it is essential that appropriate personal protection equipment is used. These may include gloves, hard hats, safety boots and high visibility jackets dependent on the task. The Forest School leader can advise further.

Basic risk assessments have been completed for each tool. However, as with any risk assessment it is advisable to review and modify as appropriate dependent upon the individuals involved and specific conditions.

## **Managed Fire Safety Policy and Procedure for Forest Schools**

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. The Forest School leader will aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

### **Location**

There will be an established fire area which will be the only area where fire will be permitted. The Forest School leader will establish the area.

The site will be chosen to avoid tree roots, peaty soil, deep leaf mould and uneven ground etc.

The fire pit will be central to the area and surrounded by logs or bricks to help prevent the spread of fire.

### **Seating Arrangements**

Children will be seated approximately 2 metres from the fire pit this area being demarcated by seating logs. Exit points will be created at regular intervals around the fire circle and logs.

When the campfire is in use, participants are not permitted to access the area immediately surrounding the fire without permission.

All participants will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping back over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.

Participants will be advised how to deal with fire smoke in an appropriate way. Where there is an obvious wind direction seating in the line of smoke will not be used. Wherever possible, asthma sufferers will be seated in positions well away from the line of smoke.

### **Safety**

When a fire is being used there will be a fire first aid kit available in addition to the standard first aid kit. A fire bucket containing water will be available on site and its position indicated at the start of the session. Either a fire blanket or a wet towel will also be made available, and its position indicated.

Before a fire is lit participants must demonstrate that they are able to follow instructions.

Weather conditions should also be considered. High winds or very dry conditions would mean that fire lighting does not continue.

Participants working with the fire should ensure that long hair is tied back, and loose clothing is fastened or secured.

Only adults are permitted to light fires, unless children are under the direct supervision of the Forest School leader.

No more than participants to be invited into the fire area at any time.

Fires may be lit in a variety of ways, but flammable liquids are not permitted.

When children are invited to add fuel to the fire this will only be undertaken with adult supervision.

Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire. A fire glove should be used.

Plastics are not to be burnt.

Fires should never be left unattended.

### **Extinguishing Fires.**

All fires must be extinguished at the end of the session.

Whenever possible, fires should be allowed to burn out naturally. With careful management this is easily achievable.

If larger logs have been used these should be separated out from other ashes.

The fire must be doused down with water. It is advisable that ashes are stirred once doused in case there are any hot spots remaining. A good indication that the fire is fully extinguished is when all smoke and steam has ceased.