



Where fun and learning meet



Forest School Handbook

Newick CE Primary School

Contents

Welcome to Forest School at Newick CE Primary School	3
Forest School sessions - where, when and who	4
Forest School sessions – what happens in a session?	5
What does my child need to wear to Forest School?.....	6
Will Forest School sessions run all year?	7
The responsibilities of the Forest School leader for Forest School sessions	8
Volunteering at Forest School... ..	9
Policies, procedures and risk assessments... ..	10
Forest School policy	11
Code of conduct.....	12
Procedure for lost child & sticks, mud and tree climbing.....	12
Fire safety at Forest School... ..	13
Behaviour.....	14
Forest School hygiene.....	15
Tools at Forest School.....	16

Welcome to Forest School

In 2002 the Forest School Network defined Forest School as 'An inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland'. At Newick C.E. Primary School we fully recognise the importance of well-being in our children and that this enables them to become effective learners. By providing Forest School it is our aim that all pupils have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the natural environment, take responsibility for their learning and develop their skills in communication, respect, risk taking and trust.

What is Forest School?

Forest School at Newick C.E. Primary School provides all pupils the time and space to develop skills, interests and understanding through practical, hands-on experiences. It also allows staff to observe the children in order to then encourage and inspire individuals to achieve through careful scaffolding and facilitating. Forest School provides pupils with the opportunity to explore their local environment throughout the different seasons and to develop an understanding of how they can take responsibility for preserving the natural world that they live in.

We support the six principles of Forest School, which were agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011 and we use these to underpin our planning and provision of Forest School at Newick CE Primary 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.

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.

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

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

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

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

How important do you feel it is to go to Forest School sessions?

We learn a lot about trees it is fun.

I think it is really good to have Forest Schools because I like a bit of freedom.

It is important that we get outdoors.

I think it is important we learn about wildlife.

It is really important because it's a school in the

forest. Pupil voice at Newick Primary School

How much does Forest School help you with your learning and developing your social skills?

It helps us to work as a team.

Everybody listens to each other.

It helps me share my things with my team.

I like it because its fun and helps me to learn.

I like it because we have a lot of adventure time.

Forest School sessions

Where will Forest School sessions take place?

The pupils will have their sessions in Mill Wood which is located directly behind the school. The pupils will access the wood by walking along the footpaths and across the neighbouring field into the wood. Mill Wood is property of The Woodland Trust and the site manager David Bonsall has provided Newick CE Primary School with a permit for Forest School type activities to take place. The Forest School leader is directly in contact with Mr Bonsall when overseeing woodland management for the site. The site is checked by the Forest School leader prior to each session to ensure that the site is fit for purpose.

When will pupils have Forest School sessions?

From Year 1 to Year 6 there will be a weekly afternoon session for one term. The classes will rotate their sessions throughout the year so that over the course of time they experience the woodland in all seasons. An afternoon session is from 1.00pm to 3.15pm.

Who will run the Forest School sessions?

The sessions will be lead by a trained Forest School leader which for the purpose of this handbook is Lucy Gunston or Karen Cristina. A member of staff, either a teacher or teaching assistant will also attend the sessions. Both the Forest School leader and member of staff will be first aid trained.

Guidance on ratios of adults to pupils will be followed as recommended by East Sussex County Council. In EYFS and Key Stage 1 we will have a ratio of 1:6. In Key Stage 2 there will be a ratio of 1:8. All members of staff will wear high-vis jackets so that the adults are easily identifiable to each other as well as the pupils.

The Forest School is covered by the school's Public Liability and Employer's Liability Insurance Policy: JLT Speciality Limited

Policy number: Y103718QBE0118A

Renewal Date: 31st March 2020

Limit of indemnity: £ 50m

This document will be reviewed annually by the Forest School Leader.

What happens in a Forest School session?

Forest School sessions will provide pupils with the following opportunities:

- Explore and learn about wildlife local to our environment
- Explore and learn about woodland management
- Play in the mud and water
- Use tools to make projects
- Build dens and shelters
- Learn about fire safety and light fires
- Cook on an open fire
- Climb trees



The Forest School leader will plan with the class teacher to deliver, where appropriate, curriculum based activities to enhance learning within the classroom. Forest School sessions can be used to deliver all subjects within the curriculum providing pupils with the opportunity to learn through a range of environments.

Forest School also provides the opportunities for pupils to develop their own well-being by asking questions, taking risks, making observations, develop communication skills and further their sense of personal peace.



Risk-taking



Questioning

Engineering



Creativity

Will Forest School sessions run all year?

The answer is 'yes' as long as it is safe to do so. Before the session the Forest School leader will use a local forecast to assess safety of running. If a session is to be cancelled a text will be sent out to inform parents. Below is a short outline of conditions that may lead to a cancellation of a session:

- Winds in excess of 30 mph.
- The group will leave the wood if substantial tree branches are blowing at an angle of 20 degrees or more.
- Falling limbs and branches regardless of the weather.
- Lightening or thunderstorms.
- In the case of an electrical storm, children will be guided by an adult to safe shelter and conduct (avoid tall trees especially Oak, crouch down on the balls of your feet).
- Extreme cold weather.
- Extreme heat— children will be encouraged to drink plenty of water, wear suitable clothing, seek shelter from the sun when necessary and staff will monitor the situation and end session if necessary.
- Where children are distressed by extreme weather conditions a decision can be made to end a session either for that child or in some cases the whole group. It is important to remember emotional wellbeing is as important as physical wellbeing.

If the weather is too windy for a session to run in Mill Wood then consideration will be given as to whether the session can be run on the school playing field as an alternative location.

What does my child need to wear to Forest School?

The correct clothing is very important as this will enable your child to have lots of fun at Forest School particularly when playing in the mud and rain!

In EYFS, we ask that pupils come to school in their Forest School clothes as this enables us to leave promptly for our sessions. Pupils in Year 1 to Year 6 will bring their clothes with them to school and they will be given time to get changed at the beginning of the session.

All pupils will need to bring a plastic bag to put their muddy clothes in after the session.

In **Terms 2 to 4** (Winter through Spring) we ask that pupils have the following clothes for Forest School:

Vest, thermals or T-shirt

Long sleeved top

Jumper

Waterproof coat & waterproof trousers or waterproof all in one or ski suit

Socks, tights or ski socks

Trousers / jogging bottoms or leggings

Wellies or walking boots

Hat, gloves and scarf.

In **Terms 1,5 and 6** (Autumn and Summer) we ask that the pupils have the following clothes for Forest School:

T-shirt or top

Light trousers

Waterproof trousers and waterproof coat.

Socks

Wellies

Sunhat

Sunglasses (if required.)

Participants are also responsible for providing their own insect repellent and sunscreen.

Pupils will still need waterproof trousers as they like to explore the stream. Rain coats are still expected in case of showers.

The responsibilities of the Forest School leader for sessions.

Daily Operating Procedure

What to do before the session:

- Check that all risk assessments are in place, particularly the check list
- Assess the site for new hazards
- Set up activities
- Prepare and check equipment
- Ensure that there is correct staff/pupil ratio and that all staff are familiar with this handbook.

Before walk up

- Register: Register to be completed by class teacher
- Check children are appropriately dressed
- Ensure children have water bottles
- Make sure children have been to the toilet
- Do head count of children
- Remind them of the walk up rules

What to do during the session

Ongoing risk assessments to be carried out by the Forest School leader. Carry out regular head counts, particularly when entering and leaving site. Run a variety of activities which the Forest School leader will observe and evaluate.

What to do after the session

- Head count
- Tool Check and tools maintenance.
- Evaluation for next session the learning is reviewed and evaluated. The Forest School leader will discuss any observations with the other adults who have attended the session and will review the session in general. Evaluate the plan for the session that has just been completed and then plan for the next session taking due consideration of all observations and comments made.

Volunteers at Forest School

We warmly welcome any parents, carers and family members to volunteer at Forest School. Volunteering provides an opportunity to see your child or relative learning in a different environment. If you have any skills that you could share with the group then this would be appreciated too.

Volunteers will be given a copy of the Confidentiality and Safeguarding policy to read at the beginning of their first volunteer session. The Forest School leader will provide a clear explanation of relevant health and safety procedures to ensure safety of the pupils and adults.

Volunteers will need to wear the correct clothing and footwear to Forest School so that you are setting a good example to the pupils as well as protecting yourself from the elements.

Adults that volunteer regularly will be asked to complete a DBS and this information will be held in the school office. Volunteers will be asked to wear high vis jackets during Forest School sessions so that they are easily identifiable to the Forest School leader, additional adults and pupils.

Parent voice from parents at Newick CE Primary School.

What are the benefits for your child in being able to attend Forest School sessions?

Outdoors, nature play, messy weather, all the stuff it's too easy to avoid otherwise.

Being a child enjoying play outside.

Taking risks safely, learning that the weather isn't inappropriate for fun if your clothing is appropriate., getting muddy (very!!)

Fresh air, play, imaginations, nature appreciation.

Experiencing things like fire and building dens.

A great way to explore the outdoors with their peers—I love that they are always focusing on a specific theme.

To be outside doing something they are good at.

Hands on/creative learning, team building, learning outdoors, learning about the environment, a change in environment during the school week.

Really confident climbing trees, understanding importance /danger of fire.

Team work, freedom to explore, change of environment.

Great opportunity to explore the outdoors, learn out of the classroom and generally get muddy!

Freedom from the classroom—fresh air, opportunities for exploration, interaction with the great outdoors, physical exercise, question the world around them.

Awareness of the wider environment and a lack of concern over messy play!!

Learn about outside environment, get fresh air, have fun!

Policies, procedures and risk assessments.

Forest School operates as an integral part of Newick CE Primary School and is subject to the policies of the school which can be found in full here:

<https://newickschool.org/policies/>

All staff and volunteers are asked to read the policies and pay particular attention to the following:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Health and safety policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Fire & fire lighting risk assessment.

To ensure the safety of our pupils, staff and members of the public, great consideration has been given in setting our policies, procedures and risk assessments. A list of these documents can be seen below and they can all be read in full on our website under the Forest School section at <https://newickschool.org/policies/>.

Policies:

Behaviour, confidentiality, equal opportunities and inclusion, first aid, forest school, food safety, health and safety, ratios, risk management and assessment, roles and responsibilities, safeguarding and weather.

Risk Assessments:

Tools, peelers, den building, bow saw, fire & fire lighting, cooking, fire strikers, Kelly kettle, general wellbeing and weather.

Procedures:

Accusations against adults, clothing, daily procedure, first and emergency, sanitation, tools, fire lighting and cooking.

As pupils learn to use the various tools and undertake different activities the policy, risks and procedure will be shared with the pupils as part of their health and safety using language appropriate to the age of the pupils. Where possible pupils will be actively encouraged to plan their own policy, assess the risk and devise a procedure to reflect this. This will enable the pupils to take responsibility for the health and safety of themselves as well as those around them.

Newick CE Primary School

Forest School Policy for EYFS, Key Stage 1 & 2

Forest School at Newick CE Primary School is an integral part of our pupil's education. The opportunity for pupils to participate in Forest School sessions is available to all pupils regardless of age, race, physical, emotional or academic needs. Forest School is an opportunity for our pupils to embrace and take responsibility for the natural world around them whilst learning to take risks, learn new skills and develop their communication skills with pupils and adults.

In Early Years we believe the opportunity to have Forest School is fundamental to our pupils' development. Pupils will have 'Welly Walk' each week in Term 1 where they will explore the environment of our school and playing fields.

From Year 1 to Year 6 they will have the opportunity for Forest School sessions for one term during the year. These will rotate so that the pupils have the opportunity to learn outdoors through all seasons. The learning will support the themes taught in the classroom as well as continue to develop Forest School skills.

Pupils' experience of Forest School will be published through pictures and pupil voice. Teachers can also use the planning for Forest School sessions to support their classroom based plans. Teachers will take pictures of children's learning each week and use these as evidence which will be stored on the central system.

The content of Forest School sessions will be planned with the Forest School leader and class teacher. Forest School provides the opportunity for cross-curricular learning and the sessions will reflect the topics being taught in each year group. A long term plan is saved on the school system which shows the coverage of subjects. In addition the pupils will learn a variety of Forest School skills including building and making fires, cooking on the fire, using tools and building dens with different materials. Pupils will also be given an opportunity to plan for their own learning in Forest School. There is a policy and procedure for each of the Forest School skills taught which can be located on the school system.

At Forest School we warmly welcome the support of parents in every session. They are encouraged to actively support the pupils in their learning. Parents are also encouraged to share their skills with the Forest School leader so that these can be planned into the sessions. All parents attending the Forest School sessions will be expected to follow and promote the rules of Forest School. These will be explained by the Forest School leader at the beginning of sessions or during the activities.

It is the responsibility of all those working in and participating in Forest School sessions to follow the principles stated in this policy. All pupils and adults participating in Forest School sessions are expected to follow the Code of Conduct. The Headteacher and Forest School co-ordinator will carry out regular monitoring of this subject, with the Forest School co-ordinator reporting to Governors as required.

Subject co-ordinator: _____

Headteacher: _____

Date:

Code of Conduct for all pupils and adults

Do keep to this code at all times.

Do treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Do treat the environment with respect.

Do set an example for others to follow.

Do treat all people equally.

Do take the time to engage, talk and listen to each other.

Do have fun without limits.

Do take risks.

Do stay calm in tricky situations and encourage all involved to problem solve.

Do encourage the pupils to be independent.

Do stop your activity and return to the adult calling '1,2,3 Where are you?'

Do make everyone (young people, parents and carers and volunteers) aware of our safeguarding arrangements.

Do take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and refer them to designated person immediately.



Procedure for lost child:

All supporting adults should be familiar with this procedure.

- The Forest School Leader shall be informed immediately.
- The whistle will be blown for all pupils to go to an adult and await instructions. Adults will then bring their pupils to the meeting point where a register will be taken by an adult.
- At the same time up to two members of staff, including the Forest School Leader if appropriate will conduct a search which shall last no more than five minutes.
- The remaining children will be given a low risk activity to complete, within the Camp area by the remaining adults, being mindful not to increase any anxiety in the group.
- If, after the five minute search, the child has not been located, the Forest School Leader will phone 999 and alert the police.
- Newick CE Primary School Office will be informed so that they can contact the child's parents or adult's emergency contact and inform them of the situation.
- The adults should then continue the search with the Forest School leader calling '1,2,3 Where are you?'.
- Staff should corroborate details of the situation, including last known position of the missing child or adult and any timings. These will be recorded in the reporting book carried in the Emergency Rucksack.
- The remaining pupils should be escorted back to school, with the Forest School leader and another member of staff remaining at the site until the Emergency Services arrive.

Sticks, mud & tree climbing

Pupils at Forest School are actively encouraged to use sticks, play in the mud and climb trees in order to explore the woodland. It will be clearly explained to pupils that they need to assess the risk involved when playing with a stick to ensure the safety of themselves and others.

Transporting will be modelled by an adult so that pupils can move sticks and logs safely, emphasising the need to talk to their peers and work as a team. Sticks, leaves and mud can be thrown but not at people in case there is a foreign object. Getting muddy is great and pupils will be encouraged to think about how to keep their hands warm in winter by trying to keep their gloves dry until the end.

When climbing trees it will be modelled that they need to have three points of contact (two hands, one foot or two feet and one hand) with the tree at all times. The pupils will be shown how to look at a tree and check if it is rotten and to listen if the branches are making a noise. Pupils will be encouraged to risk assess in order for them to grow in independence. An adult will be located near these activities to support the pupils in their choices.



Fire safety at Forest School.

For full information please read our policy, procedure and risk assessment as found in appendix 1 or on our website <https://newickschool.org/policies/>

- Pupils will make their own fire circle each week, working together to roll or lift (adult to model) logs. The Forest School leader will direct the pupils as to where the fire circle should be placed.
- The pupils will have specific fire safety training in how to move around the fire circle prior the first fire being lit.
- The Forest School leader will be responsible for placing the inner fire circle 1.5 metres from where the pupils are sitting and that there are no over hanging branches. There will also be sufficient water in a fire bucket, provision of fire gloves and fire blanket.
- The Forest School leader will be responsible for lighting the fire or when appropriate another responsible adult.
- The Forest School leader will model to the pupils how they approach the fire by having 'one knee up and one knee down'. All adults are responsible for reminding the pupils of this rule when approaching the fire.
- Maintaining the fire will be the responsibility of the Forest School leader until it is felt that another supervising adult is able to ensure the same consistency of health and safety.
- Pupils or adults will be invited into the fire circle.
- Fire lighting equipment will be kept in a secure box.
- A member of staff will always be responsible for the use of the Kelly kettle.
- The Forest School leader is responsible for the site to be made safe on completion of activity
- A first aid kit will be present and located in a position so that all first aiders can access it.



Behaviour

For Forest School sessions to run safely it is extremely important to have high expectations of behaviour. These expectations will be explained to each class at the beginning of their Forest School session. It will be expected that pupils follow the code of conduct and have high expectations of themselves. When walking to and from Forest School pupils should treat members of the public with courtesy and respect. This respect should also be shown to the environment within in which they are exploring. The pupils will know that they are not allowed to drop litter, pick plants or break branches that are growing. The pupils will be taught that we need to leave our environment as we found it so that it can be enjoyed by all in our community.

The pupils will learn or revise the safety call during their first Forest School session. The call of '1,2,3 Where are you?' will be said by the Forest School leader and all pupils and additional adults respond '1,2,3 here I am'. At this point the adults and pupils stop what they are doing and listen for the Forest Leader to say '1,2,3 come here now' and the pupils respond by saying '1,2,3 yes I am'. At this point the pupils return to where the Forest School leader is standing and the additional adults support the pupils to do this as quickly and safely as is possible.

The pupils will also be given training that in an extreme emergency they will hear a whistle blow which signals for them to immediately stop their activity and return to the Forest School leader as quickly as possible.

The Forest School leader will deal with any incidents of behaviour and if volunteers have any concerns then these should be brought to the attention of the Forest School leader. Any pupils that need an increased level of support will be given this so that they have the same opportunities in learning as their peers. A copy of the Forest School Behaviour policy can be found on our website.

Forest School Hygiene

Toileting:

- All children will be reminded to use the toilet before leaving the school site
- A designated area will be set aside for each session
- An adult, with the relevant DBS checks, will accompany the children to the area
- Wet wipes will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will be changed in accordance with the Schools Personal Care Policy

Hand Washing:

- Whenever possible, soap and water will be used for handwashing at snack time and pupils will be reminded to wash their hands before eating or drinking. This is the responsibility of all adults.
- Antibacterial gel will also be available for use.

Snack time or cooking:

- During snack time or cooking activities, food hygiene regulations will be adhered
- Children will wash and dry hands prior to cooking and eating .
- Pupils must sit on a log around the fire circle when eating or drinking.
- Pupils will bring their water bottles to Forest School and additional drinking water will be supplied.

Please read the full policies and procedures on our website.

Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School

General rules for tool use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment (please read on our website)
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools at school
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

Knives:

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by an adult, preferably the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area
- Knives should be used away from the body
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use

Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- 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:

- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Use in a designated area, away from others
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use
- Loppers 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.