

Whitewater C of E Primary School



Forest School Handbook Policies and Procedures

Version 2 (last updated 28/11/22)



Contents

1. What is Forest School?
2. Site including ecological impact assessment
3. Adult Supporters
4. Daily procedures
5. Weather and Clothing
6. Safe use of Tools and PPE
7. Safe use of Fire
8. First Aid
9. Emergency Procedures
10. Eating and Drinking
11. Policies
 - a. Health and Safety Policy
 - b. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - c. Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
 - d. Inclusion/Equal Opportunities Policy
 - e. Behaviour Management Policy
12. Complaints and Concerns
13. Parent Letter and Consent/Medical Form
14. Copy of Paediatric First Aid Qualification Certificate

1. What is Forest School

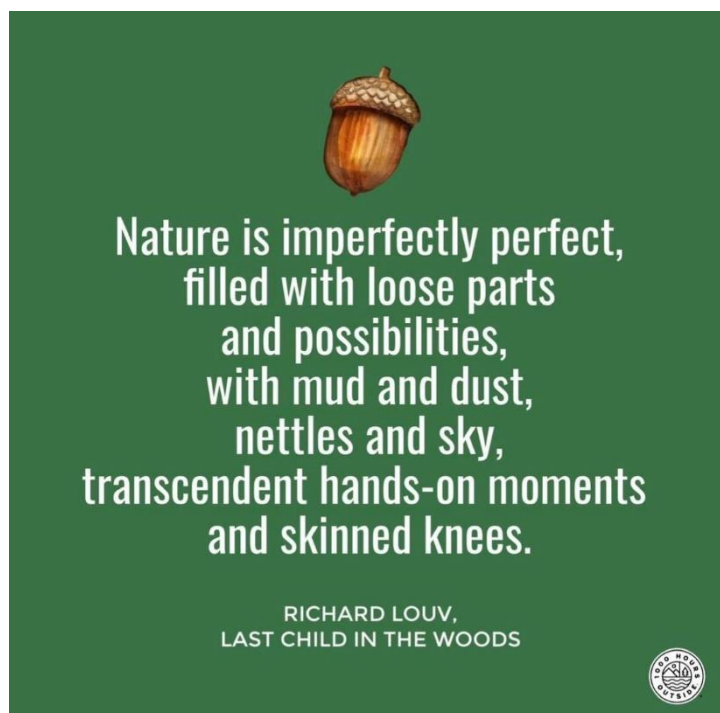
“Forest School is an inspirational process offering ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor learning” (www.forestschoollassociation.org).

Building on the school’s values of Love, Respect and Courage, Whitewater Forest School endeavours to help our children to develop their resilience, creativity and compassion for the natural world and to care for living beings both human and non-human. These values are encompassed in the six Forest School Principles as follows:

- Developing a relationship between learners and the natural world that features mutuality and compassion
- Facilitating a long-term programme of regular contact with the natural world that make deeper, caring nature connections
- Working in a learner-centred way whereby an “equal” learning community is developed. Forest School follows a constructivist approach whereby the learning, in and of, of the real natural world and the learners themselves emerges.
- Risk taking in a safe context is encouraged, enabling learners to move into their learning zones where they can manage their own risks, be they emotional, physical, cognitive or social risks
- Developing the whole person, supporting cognitive processes and fostering creative, resilient, physically healthy independent learners
- Practitioners who are qualified and continually reflect on, question and develop, their own learning and Forest School facilitation

The ethos behind the Whitewater Forest School will be:

- **Look after ourselves**
- **Look after our friends**
- **Look after our woods**



2. Site including ecological impact assessment

The Forest School Sessions will be held on the school site specifically in the Woodland Walk and Orchard area. The children will also have the opportunity to visit the pond and outdoor learning classroom on site. Occasionally the sessions may be held in the Hudson Copse woods in Rotherwick which the children will supervised to walk to or travel by school minibus dependent on their age and physical ability.

Forest School has environmental awareness at the heart of its ethos and wherever possible appropriate, environmentally friendly products and recycled materials are used. The adults in Forest School will model good environmental practice and involve the children in site checks, recycling of waste and how we leave our site as we found it.

Logs and kindling will mainly be brought in to reduce impact to the existing woodland and fire waste will be disposed of with care and thought for the environment.

In addition, the fire pit will be kept in the same location to reduce the impact.

We will assess the site regularly to try to identify ways of reducing our ecological impact and encouraging insect life and natural growth.

Below is a summary of our ecological assessment of the forest school site at Whitewater:

Identify the impacts	What is the nature of the impact? <i>What part of the woodland structure does it affect?</i>	What are you already doing to minimise / avoid the impact?	What further action is necessary?	How will this information inform your management plan? What is your long term planning, who will do it? By when?
Moving deadwood	Woodland floor	Only use what we need. Put deadwood back if not used	Use same resources next time needed	Bring wood in to burn rather than use from site.
Cutting live wood for making things	Tree preservation disturbed Insects	Only coppice as needed. Use coppiced branches for activities – choose young branches and similar aged trees.	Bring in materials, request wood from local sources if needed	Coppice annually, alternating trees
Trees – hammocks, shelter building, swings	Trees, bark, moss, lichen, insects, field layer	Use the same trees for activities to protect the others	Rope off areas to protect certain trees. Monitor condition of used trees	Monitor number of trees on site. Potentially plant more trees. Keep monitoring trees for disease
Ground Layer	Compaction of soil through trampling	Use natural paths where possible.	Move paths using ropes/posts if area becomes too compacted	Monitor ground layer across all site. Create alternative pathways to allow original pathways to regrow/recover

Invertebrate handling	Disturbing insect environment, contamination from hands to insect	Collect with gloved hand and place into pot to minimise handling. Use magnifier sheets to see insect without handling	Put insect back where found	Retain deadwood log piles for insect habitation. Bring clear pots in for children to use to view insect
Fire on ground	Ash, disturbance to ground layer, no growth	Single area of use for fire square	Ensure fire is extinguished properly to reduce impact to surrounding area	Monitor. Fire lighting only in fire square. Remove ash if it builds up and dispose of appropriately
Bringing non-organic materials onto site	Litter, food waste	All litter to be collected and disposed of in appropriate receptacle. All food waste to be taken off site and disposed of. No food or litter to be placed in the fire.	Have a bag available to collect litter in. Have container to put food waste in	Children to be part of litter collection during session. Rules to be reinforced re leaving no evidence on site
Wildlife	Disturbing birds nesting Hibernating animals	Bird boxes to be checked regularly for any nesting. Trees to be checked for any nests and roped off if present.	Children to be aware of possible wildlife in piles of leaves/bushes and to report to FS leader if any wildlife discovered	Discussion with children on maintaining natural environment and minimising disturbance to wildlife

3. Adult Supporters

The Forest School sessions at Whitewater will be led by Robyn Jones, Forest School Leader L3. Robyn is also a governor of the school and an existing parent. Robyn has a Paediatric First Aid 12-hour qualification. Supporting Robyn will be two parent volunteers. Children who attend with allocated 1 to 1 support will be accompanied by their support member of staff also.

The role of the Forest School Leader is to allow the children to meet risks and challenges appropriate to their age, personality and stage of development whilst ensuring their safety. The sessions will provide a supportive and encouraging community where the children's contributions will be valued and listened to.

4. Daily Procedures

Before the session

- The Forest School Leader will check with the school office for any changes to children's health needs or any absent children
- The site will be checked for any hazards, and these will be removed or taped off
- A daily risk assessment will be completed.
- A session plan will be completed, taking into consideration observations, interest areas and learning points from the previous sessions. All adults will read the session plan prior to the session
- Activity risk assessments will be read and updated if needed for each planned activity. All adults will read the relevant forms prior to the session
- All staff will read the latest site risk assessment relevant to the current season
- The Forest School Leader will ensure enough adults are present for the session to go ahead and that the weather conditions allow it to take place.
- The equipment required for the session will be gathered, checked and prepared for use on site
- All children will get changed within school at 1330 and use the toilet prior to being collected for Forest School at the back playground. Older children may be allowed to come down to the Forest School by themselves if this is deemed safe after session 1.
- The pre-session checklist will be undertaken by the Forest School Leader or member of support staff. This will include a count of tools available on that day.

During the session

- A headcount will be taken on arrival at Forest School and whenever the group is brought back together
- Risks will be continually assessed, and appropriate action taken to reduce or remove risks if found
- If tools are used, they will be used under adult supervision and only in the dedicated areas.
- If a child requires the toilet during the session on site, they will be escorted back to the school building by an adult or peer if appropriate.

After the session

- A headcount will be taken at the end of the session
- If tools have been used, they will be counted and checked by the Forest School Leader to ensure no items are missing.
- Children will be accompanied back to the school building at 1515 by an adult (older children may be permitted to go back by themselves if deemed safe to do so after the first session)
- After the children have left, the Forest School Leader and support staff will clean, check and maintain tools as required. The toolbox will be then locked.
- The area will be tidied and left as it was before the session commenced.
- A session evaluation will be completed by the Forest School Leader with feedback from the support staff and observational records completed.

5. Weather and Clothing

At Forest School there is no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing. The weather forecast will be reviewed the day before and on the morning of Forest School. In extreme weather, mostly due to high winds, a decision will be made whether to move the session away from the trees or inside or whether the session needs to be cancelled that day. If the session is to continue as normal, the Forest School Leader will check the site for safety and also ensure the children have adequate clothing. Sessions will take place if it is raining and there will shelter for the children to use if they wish.

Extreme weather examples:

- Strong winds that make our forest area hazardous due to falling debris (approximately over 35mph)
- Very wet freezing conditions where hypothermia could be a real possibility
- Thunder and lightening
- Heavy falling snow, freezing and causing ground to become slippery or icy
- If it is too hot and there is risk of sun exhaustion

The children will change into their forest school clothes prior to the session. They will likely get muddy/dirty/wet so please send in old clothes if you are concerned about this. The following is the recommended items they should bring to wear:

Layers	The best way to keep warm.
Waterproof Trousers	Essential. Standard thin pair in summer for protection, ski trousers ideal in winter or extra layer under trousers.
Trousers	Full length for protection. Extra pair of leggings/tights/thermals under normal trousers in cold weather
Warm socks	Normal socks are not warm enough for wellies in winter. Extra pair of socks preferably wool/fleece/fluffy socks
Waterproof coat	Thick and warm for winter or use a fleece jacket under a thinner coat. Preferably has a hood
Warm hat and gloves	Hat preferably covering ears. Thermal and waterproof gloves are best as knitted gloves get damp and cold. Sun hat in warmer weather.
Tops	Always to wear long sleeves and at least three layers under a coat in winter e.g., top, jumper, fleece and coat
Waterproof boots	Wellies are essential or snow boots/waterproof walking boots

6. Safe use of hand tools and PPE

Children will be introduced to hand tools by the Forest School Leader on a 1:1 basis and when they have been assessed as ready, they could be using the following.

- Palm drill
- Bow saw
- Pruning saw
- Whittling peelers
- Sheathed fixed blade knife
- Secateurs
- Loppers
- Mallets
- Scissors
- Metal pegs



The Forest School Leader is responsible for overseeing the safe use and maintenance of the tools. A logbook of tools will be kept by the Forest School Leader and completed at the end of each session. The toolbox will be kept locked when not in use and the Forest School Leader will have safe keeping of the key. The box is taken off site when not in use for sessions.

The general rules around tool use will be explained to the children as follows:

- Children must only use the tools with permission and under the supervision of an adult
- The tools will be kept in the toolbox within the fire circle and children do not help themselves to the tools
- Children will only use tools within the designated tool area as specified by the Forest School Leader and will not walk around with them.
- The children will be taught how to check their tools before using and correct way of handling them
- Children must put the tools back in the toolbox when finished with them
- Saws must only be used with the sawhorse
- Gloves are available for protection when needed and will only be worn on the non-working hand

Tool use risk benefit assessments are available to read, and all staff will follow the procedures outlined in them. Specific activity risk assessments will also be completed involving the use of tools.



7. Safe use of fire

There is a main fire circle area on site that will be lit on some sessions by the Forest School Leader. On occasions the children may be taught and supervised on how to light and maintain fire safely

Fire safety rules

- Ratio of 1 adult: 1 fire
- The fire must not be lit without the fire safety equipment being present: Bucket of water, burns kit, fire blanket, fire gloves.
- The fire circle is safely situated away from overhanging tree branches and is clearly marked with logs.
- Seating is situated a minimum distance of 1.5 metres away from the inner fire area.
- Children must walk around the outside of the log seats to get to their seats and stand up and walk around to vacate the fire area. They must never walk into the inner fire area unsupervised.
- When the fire is in use, there will be an agreed inner fire area entry point which the children can only access if invited in by an adult.
- Children are not permitted to throw things into the fire. Sticks/wood must be placed in from the side of the fire. Hand should never go over the fire. No plastic should be burnt.
- If children are invited into the inner fire area (e.g., for cooking/lighting a fire) they must adopt the correct safe stance (down on one knee, other knee bent).
- Children will be advised the appropriate way to deal with smoke – turn their head to one side, place their hand across their face, close eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
- Fires are lit using cotton wool or organic fire lighters and a fire striker.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate a fire
- All fires must be extinguished at the end of the session and doused with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased
- Large build up of ash should be dispersed once they are totally cooled, preferably the following day or nearest school day. They should be scattered finely through the woodland to enable natural decomposition

Using a Kelly kettle

A Kelly kettle is a method of boiling water using a small pan fire underneath it.

- Only adults are to light the fire in the fire pan unless the children are under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader.
- The Kelly kettle must be placed on a flat surface i.e., clear ground
- Children must be at least 1.5 metres away from the Kelly kettle when it is lit
- Children may feed the fire when supervised 1:1 by an adult if they have been shown how to do so safely (stick held at the end and dropped in from the side; hand should never be placed over the top of the kettle)
- If the fire does not extinguish itself, then water should be used
- Kettles should only be removed from the fire by an adult wearing safety gloves
- Only adults will put the kettle on and take it off the fire pan



For more detail see risk benefit assessment for Use of Fire on the website.

8. First Aid

During Forest School the Forest School Leader is responsible for First Aid and has a Paediatric Paediatric First Aid qualification. An emergency kit will be taken to all Forest School sessions which contains at a minimum:

First Aid Kit	Medical Emergency Procedures (laminated)
Whistle	Toilet paper in plastic bag
Baby wipes	Bottled drinking water
Cling film	Small ground sheet
Burns kit	High Vis Vest
Spare clothes	Anti-bacterial gel
Spare bags	Torch
Emergency contact details for staff and children	Notebook and pen
Sugary vegetarian sweets	Tweezers

If a child requires medication to be taken during the session, the Forest School Leader will be able to administer this, or the child can return to the school office to take it if preferred.

9. Emergency Procedure

At Forest School the school's emergency procedure will be followed when on site. Supporting staff will also be briefed on what to do in the case of emergency. A whistle will be blown as a signal for all children to stop what they are doing and gather with an adult and wait to be told what to do. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation and the nature/extent of the injury. A first aid kit and burns kit will be available at the site. A charged mobile phone will be held by the Forest School Leader.

If anyone obtains an injury or illness that cannot be treated by first aid on site and medical assistance is required, then the following process will be followed:

- Emergency services will be contacted for serious cases by either the school office or the Forest Leader if off site.
- The school office will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact
- The rest of the group will be supervised by adults present and moved away from any danger if applicable
- Emergency services will be met by school staff if on site or a supporting adult if off site
- Incident report will be completed by Forest School Leader. A Riddor record will be created for any death, serious injury or 7-day injury

If contacting Emergency services

- Dial 999 and ask for ambulance or fire brigade
- School office number: 01256 762637
- School postcode: RG27 9BG
- Ambulance access: front of school on The Street for ambulance. School field for air ambulance
- If offsite at Hudson Copse, The Street, Rotherwick Grid reference: SU723566

Children's safety is maintained as highest priority at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the school's missing child procedure will be followed.

10. Eating and Drinking

Part of the Forest School experience is learning about plant, berry and mushroom identification and children will be taught that they only eat food provided to them by an appropriate adult whilst in a forest school session.

Children will be offered a snack and drink during their session. Any snack prepared on site will be by staff with at least a level 2 food hygiene certificate. Any hot drinks such as hot chocolate will be made by an adult and the temperature checked before giving to the children to drink. Any food allergies will be taken into consideration in the planning of the sessions.

Older children may get involved in some safe foraging activities under the supervision of the Forest School Leader who has positively identified the plant in question.

Before eating adults will ensure children's hands are clean using water from the water bowl and hand sanitiser.

Activity risk assessments will be completed for any activity involving the preparing and/or consuming of food and will include safe storage, preparation and serving to prevent growth of bacteria and food contamination.

Food/ingredients will be stored at the correct temperature prior to the session and any food items requiring refrigeration transported in a cool box to the session and used within two hours. Unrefrigerated food will be served to the children within 4 hours of preparation. Cooked food will not be reheated. Waste food will be disposed of properly.



All utensils, crockery and cooking implements will be checked prior to use to ensure they are clean and undamaged.

Medical information for all children/adult attending will be checked by the Forest School Leader to ensure no food item or ingredient is given that they are allergic to.

11. Policies

Health and Safety Policy

The school's health and safety policy will be followed at Forest School and can be accessed at:

[Whitewater CE Primary School - Health and Safety](#)

with the following additions:

- For all Forest School Sessions there will be a high adult/child ratio and low numbers of children engaged in activities at all times.
- A minimum of two adult staff will work supporting children during the session, one of them will be the Forest School Leader who has a Paediatric First Aid qualification.
- At all times a fully charged and working mobile phone will be available
- Fully equipped first aid kit will be available during the session and its contents regularly checked and replenished.
- An emergency procedure will be in place and an accident book specifically for Forest School will be maintained.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

At Forest School our standard school Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Children Policy will be followed and can be accessed at:

[Whitewater CE Primary School - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies](#)

All adults involved in Forest School are DBS checked and existing volunteers or staff at the school. A minimum of two adults will be working with the children during the Forest School sessions.

Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy

At Forest School our standard school Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality Policy will be followed and can be accessed at:

[Whitewater CE Primary School - Policy & Documents](#)

In addition, the Forest School Leader will maintain all paperwork and registers relevant to Forest School. All confidential information will be stored within the school office. Any paperwork such as observations will be shared with the child's class teacher. Any pastoral or safeguarding matter will also be reported to the Assistant Headteacher or Executive Headteacher.

Any discussion within Forest School about a child or their learning is to be kept confidential and kept within school premises unless in the capacity of a professional nature. Any volunteer found to be talking about the children would be asked to relinquish their role within the school.

Inclusion/Equal Opportunities Policy

At Forest School our standard school Equalities Policy will be followed and can be accessed at:

[Whitewater CE Primary School - Policy & Documents](#)

In addition, at Forest School, we will adapt activities to ensure everyone can participate and seek advice if necessary to be able to fully support children with additional needs of any nature. We will keep some spare sets of waterproof/warm clothing to ensure bad weather is not a barrier to taking part.

Behaviour Management Policy

At Forest School our standard school Behaviour Management Policy will be followed and can be accessed at:

[Whitewater CE Primary School - Behaviour Management Policy](#)

In addition to the above school policy, within Forest School sessions we encourage positive behaviour and learning through the development of:

- Recognition that all behaviour is a form of communication
- Self-esteem, independence and the motivation to learn
- An awareness of respect and care for self, for other individuals and for the natural environment
- An understanding of how to work together and helping the children to learn coping techniques and reflection opportunities to talk about feelings and emotions.
- The confidence and ability to meet risk whilst feeling supported to remain safe
- Having consistent boundaries and involving the children in setting rules and boundaries and reinforcing them at beginning of each session.
- Process praising the children
- Allowing the children time to work out potential conflicts between them and redirecting them if they approach. Adult only intervention if there is a risk of harm.
- If a child's behaviour becomes unsafe to himself or others, then the behaviour should be stopped, and efforts made to prevent escalation of the behaviour. If needed the child can be removed from the forest school area and given recovery time and opportunity to discuss when they are calm which may need to be at the start of the next session. Incidents will be recorded, and the class teacher informed (for information only). The behaviour is dealt with in the Forest School setting and no further sanctions are carried out. If the behaviour is repeated and is unsafe, then further discussions may need to involve the Headteacher to determine the next course of action.
- Forest School should not be used as either a reward or sanction as it should be seen as a core part of the child's personal development and school learning.

12. Complaints Procedure

At Forest School the school's complaint policy will be followed and can be accessed at:

[Whitewater CE Primary School - Complaints Procedure](#)

If a parent/carer/volunteer have concerns related to Forest School, they can talk to the Forest School Leader or class teacher initially if they prefer.



Parental Consent Form for Forest School



Please complete this form, continuing overleaf if necessary.

Please note, children cannot take part in sessions without a fully completed consent form.

Child's Name:		
Child's DOB:		School Class:
Address:		
Phone Number:		
Email:		

- I agree to my child taking part in Forest School Activities.
- I understand that sessions will be led by a Forest School Leader.
- I understand that my child will, at an appropriate level, have opportunities to work with hand tools and small fires through the course of their Forest School work and may have the chance to cook and eat at Forest School.
- I understand that my child needs additional outdoor clothing for Forest School, as detailed in the Forest School Handbook. Children who do not have appropriate clothing may not be able to take part for their own safety and wellbeing.
- I consent for my child to be accompanied off site to nearby woodlands in order to enhance their forest school experience
- I consent for my child to receive emergency first aid should the need arise, and for my child to receive emergency treatment from healthcare professionals.

Signed..... **Date**

Use of Photographs

The children may enjoy having a record of their time at Forest School and we would love to be able to share those with you from time to time. Occasionally we may wish to use the photos on our website or social media platform. Please advise below if you consent to this use.

I consent/do not consent to photographs being taken of my child during the Forest School Sessions and for these to be used on the school website, social media platforms and/or in published literature.

Signed..... **Date**

Medical Information and Allergies

Please give details of any medical condition, fears or phobias which might affect outdoor forest school sessions as well as any allergies, including food.

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Continue overleaf if necessary

As an additional precaution, please tell us in more detail about allergies and insect stings. Please tick which statements apply:

My child **has never been stung** by a wasp/bee.

My child **has been stung** by a wasp/bee and made a normal recovery. My child **has been stung** by a wasp/bee **and had an allergic reaction**.

If you ticked the final box, we will get in touch with you for further information.

My child has the following food allergy/allergies or dietary needs, e.g., vegetarian:	
Name of GP/Doctor/Surgery:	
Emergency Contact Information (Parent / Carer and an alternative emergency contact):	
Name: _____	Tel number: _____
Relationship to Child: _____	
Name: _____	Tel number: _____
Relationship to Child: _____	
Signed: (Parent/Carer)	
Name of Parent / Carer:	Date:

Certificate

This is to certify that

Robyn Jones

has successfully completed the following:

Full Paediatric First Aid

On

06/11/2022

This certificate is valid for 3 years

This certificate has been issued for the purposes of complying with the requirements of the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, supported by the guidance provided by Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981. Teaching was delivered in accordance with currently accepted first-aid practice.



Certificate No. 222800200967



Amber Jones Course Director
Tigerlily Training Ltd

CTQ Approved
Centre
Certifying Qualifications