

COOMBE HILL INFANTS' SCHOOL



FOREST SCHOOL PARENTS' HANDBOOK



September 2019

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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.”

www.forestschoollassociation.org

Through our Forest School sessions at Coombe Hill Infants’, we aim to encourage:

- independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who can manage risk and develop resilience when faced with difficulties
- respect and understanding of the natural world and the importance of our role in its conservation.



The Forest School Principles and how they link to our setting:

1. ***Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions. The cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.***

Each class will receive one morning of Forest School teaching per term where they will be able to see how their surroundings change with each season. Each session will build on skills previously learnt and further children's understanding of the natural world around them. Children will get opportunities to review their learning at each stage, sharing their experiences with each other.

Skills learnt in the Forest School session will be followed up with the class teacher who will have the flexibility to use the outdoor areas within their own teaching.

2. ***Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between learner and the natural world.***

We are lucky enough to have extensive school grounds with a variety of trees and wildlife. We will use our Forest School area, pond area and field during Forest School sessions.

3. ***Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.***

We will give children the opportunity to take control of their own learning through the way they choose to complete activities and share their experiences with others.

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

Our activities aim to give children opportunities to try new skills, take on different roles in their learning and enjoy new experiences in order to develop their creativity.

5. ***Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.***

We will offer the children opportunity to take supported risks, not just physical risks involved with using tools, fire and an outdoor environment, but also emotional risks, giving children the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with others.

6. ***Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.***

Forest School sessions will be run by Caroline Young, who is currently training for the Level 3 Award, Forest School Leader.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

Forest School ethos

At Coombe Hill Infants' 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

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session.

These include:

- 'Don't pick, don't lick, be careful how you carry a stick.'
- Look after ourselves, look after each other, look after the forest
- Listening to and understanding whistles and calls
- Staying within the designated areas at all times

Adult Role:

All adults at Forest School 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
- FSL (Forest School Leader) to carry out necessary risk assessments
- FSL to carry a first aid kit in the 'emergency rucksack' 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

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 storms.

‘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.

Children should come to school for Forest School sessions dressed in NAMED:

- 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 and bring school uniform, in a named bag, to change into after the session, if necessary.

Equal Opportunities

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 lead their activities, providing they show respect for each other and the woodland environment.

Confidentiality

All forest school staff and volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy.

Medical and personal information

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and kept confidentially within the school's Forest School Handbook
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child are kept in the school office
- 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, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

Photographic and Video permissions

- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for taking photographs or videoing
- 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, as part of the curriculum.
- Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity; this must be in strict confidence.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Coombe Hill Infants' School's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

- 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.

Coombe Hill Infants' School safeguarding lead person is Janet Berry (Head Teacher) and the nominated governor is Mrs Becky Buckley.

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.

- The Forest School Leader will discuss the risk assessment with all staff and helpers
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible so that an alternative can be found to maintain sufficient adult to child ratios.
- 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
- There will be a parents' meeting and/or opportunity for an informal chat with the Forest School Leader before sessions begin
- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the session and rules will be discussed and practised in the classroom setting.
- Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the school office at the earliest opportunity.

Hygiene Policy

Toileting and hand washing:

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving the school building
- Hand gel will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning
- An adult will be available to escort children to the toilets in the swimming pool changing building if they need to go during the morning.
- The whole class will visit the toilets and wash hands before fruit 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 logs when consuming any food or drink
- Children will bring their water bottles to the forest school area

Practical Skills and Safe tool use

General rules for tool use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- Only the Forest School Leader is to use tools with children and will ensure they are safely locked away after use.
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean and sharp and checked before every use

Knives:

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice
- Users should 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.

Loppers:

- Children must be supported 1:1 by 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

Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by 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

Fire:

- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- The Forest School Leader must be located at the fire at all times
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.

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.