



Collingbourne CE Primary School

Forest School Handbook



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Welcome to Forest School

Forest School means many things to many people. The Forest School Association defines it as “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.” (Forest School Association 2020).

It is a specialised learning approach that has the learner at the centre, whatever their age.

At Forest School the learners are all seen as equal, unique and valuable, which here at Collingbourne Primary School is central to our ethos too.

Forest School creates a positive atmosphere of support where the children learn to become independent in their physical skills and mental thought processes. They learn to trust their own ideas, believe in their capabilities and recognise their own needs. They understand that support comes from trusted adults and friends alike as they are nurtured to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people. Everyone is equal. It is a safe place where they can be themselves, spend time with friends and leave day to day stresses behind.

Central to all of this is the environment. Children experience the seasons, the wonders of nature, the highs, the lows, life and death. This enables them to build a strong, positive relationship with their natural world helping them to make sense of the wider world. We are fortunate at Collingbourne Primary School to have a designated space solely used for Forest School. We have easy access to fields and trees for our nature studies and den-building.



What to expect

At Collingbourne School we offer a broad and balanced curriculum to develop the whole child. Forest School will offer the same broad range of experiences designed to develop the whole child; physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and morally.

We aim to challenge and support the children to become independent resilient learners who enjoy trying out their ideas, working together with their peers to solve problems and conquer challenges.

Some of the challenges might include:

Shelter building	Using tools
Fire lighting	Forest art
Using a Ghillie Kettle	Planting and harvesting
Carving and whittling	Sculpture with natural materials
Looking after wildlife	Building bird boxes
Group games	Drama
Looking closely at wildlife	Cooking on an open fire
Pond dipping	Learning knots
Physical challenges	Building bug homes
Rope and string work	Bug hunting
Traditional woodland craft	Team games
Telling and listening to stories	Free play

We have a progression of skills covered at Forest School for the whole school.

The skills are grouped into six strands with each strand starting with EYFS and developing through each year group to Year 6.

The strands are:

- Safe-working and Teamwork
- Fire and Cooking
- Knots and Structures
- Using Tools
- Crafts and Traditions
- Natural Knowledge

Each year there will be an additional whole school enrichment focus which will be incorporated into the Forest School sessions.

These are:

Citizenship, PE & Sports, STEM and The Arts.

Your safety is important to us

At Forest School children can learn a great deal from their mistakes (even painful ones) and enjoy risky play activities and challenges. Learning to respect risk and danger through play will help them to cope with risks and hazards later in life. They will learn how far they can go before they feel unsafe, they will learn to understand their limits, they will gain the confidence to be able to say “No thank you, that’s enough for me,” without feeling pressurised by their peers.



The safety of all participants is very important to us. All of the activities have been fully risk assessed to minimise the dangers. Summaries of these are included in the handbook. The sessions are assessed through Wiltshire Evolve by an external assessor. All adults participating in Forest School are required to read the risk assessments and protocols. We regularly review and update the risk assessments as required.

A site risk assessment is carried out before each session to look for natural or foreign hazards in the environment.

Individual risk assessments will be made for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires it.

Our Forest School leader is fully qualified to lead Forest School and holds a Level 3 Forest School Practitioner certificate.

Our insurer is Zurich Municipal, policy number KSC1220944953. Our cover runs from the 1st of April to the 31st of March and is renewed each year. The limit of indemnity is no less than £5 million.

Where to find us

Most of our Forest School activities will be held within the school grounds in our newly created Forest School Site or in the Wildlife area.

Sometimes we will use the adjacent village recreation field.

Occasionally, we may visit Collingbourne Woods or Savernake Forest.

Collingbourne Ducis Recreation Field



Wild life area

New Forest School site with new fire circle and shelter

Our Forest School Code of Conduct

Our code of conduct is relevant to all participants, adults and children and is framed to create a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Boundaries

During their first Forest School session children will learn where the physical boundaries for activities are and any no-go zones. Each group will work together to generate some rules for safe and happy learning and children will understand that they are expected to follow them. This will include an agreed call back sign to enable speedy return if needed or wanted by the Forest School Leader.

Entering the Forest School site

At Forest School we learn to respect the world around us. When we enter the site we will be aware that we share the space with plants, birds and animals and we need to work in a way that will not damage or harm anything.

Toileting

Children will be encouraged to use the toilets before a session starts. They may go to the toilets by using the side door at any point if they need to just as they do during outside PE lessons. Younger children will be supervised if returning from the Recreation Field.



The Fire Circle

For everyone's safety, no one is allowed to walk or run inside the fire circle even if there is no fire lit. We use logs and stools to mark out our circle and to sit on. If anyone wants to move around the circle or change places, they must step out of the circle and walk around the outside. The fire is lit in a large free-standing fire pit in the centre of the circle. Children may be invited to approach the firepit for cooking or fire lighting but only under adult supervision.

Fire Lighting

A fire can only be lit if our fire safety equipment is present and correct. The Forest School Leader will always take the lead during fire lighting. All helpers will be briefed prior to a fire lighting session to set out protocols. A lit fire will never be left unattended. Open fires will only be lit in the fire pit or on the designated small trays.

Collecting wood

Wood may be collected for fire lighting from the recreation field and wild life area. We look for four different sizes of wood: matchstick, pencil, thumb and wrist sized. We try to use freshly fallen wood to protect creature habitats. Most wood used will be logs sourced by a local firm.

Collecting natural materials

Natural materials are collected for art, sculpture and woodland craft. Children are encouraged to look for the materials themselves but leaders will supervise to check that nothing harmful is gathered. Children are not allowed to eat anything gathered on foraging trips without adult supervision.

Carrying larger materials

Children will be taught how to lift, roll drag or pull heavier materials safely using hands or ropes, keeping a straight back and bending the knees. Team work is encouraged.

Digging

When investigating the environment, children may carefully move logs or stones to look for insects, taking care not to harm the creatures or destroy their habitat. They can dig under the soil using their fingers or small sticks but they may not use tools to dig deep holes. Deeper digging opportunities will be included in the planting activities in the school vegetable garden.

Using tools

Children will be taught the correct way to use tools at Forest school. This will include the use of safety equipment, like gloves or goggles, posture and awareness of others around them. Some tools will have a marked zone for their use. All tool use will be under strict adult supervision. Tools will only be used when the children are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so. Children's ability to use tools will develop at different ages.

Tree climbing

Climbing trees is a good opportunity for children to learn to manage their own risks. They will be shown how to climb safely, checking the ground below for sharp objects, looking for a safe path of ascent and descent, numbers in the same tree and which trees are suitable for climbing. Children are permitted to reach their own limits to a maximum of 1.5 metres. Adults will supervise tree climbing activities and ensure that children are wearing

appropriate clothes and shoes. The Forest School leader will assess the trees to check for rotten or broken branches.

Sticks and stones

Throwing sticks and stones is not permitted at Forest School. Children may pick up sticks shorter than their arm to carry pointed down to activities. Longer sticks must be dragged behind them. Stones can be dropped but children must check what is underneath before dropping them.

String, ropes and knots

Children will learn a useful selection of knots for different uses. Adults will supervise activities where ropes are tied to trees for tarps or shelters. Safety tapes will be used if ropes are considered to be in dangerous locations. Children are also shown how to use ropes and string to move or carry materials.

Eating and Drinking

Children will be encouraged to bring their water bottles with them. Anti-bacterial hand wash, wipes or sanitiser gel will be provided for hand washing before eating or drinking any snacks during Forest School. This will include food the children have cooked on the fire. Food allergies will be noted as part of the risk assessment for the cooking activity.

Leaving the site

At the end of each session there will be a short time of reflection before the participants leave the site. All personal belongings must be taken away, any craft created can be taken home, and the site must be left clean and tidy ready for the next group.



Our equipment

The Forest School leader will ensure the onsite First Aid station and Burns Kit are checked and restocked when necessary. These will be easily accessible for adults or children. A fire blanket is hung on a designated hook on the shelter and a water bucket is always next to the fire. A bottle of clean water is part of the burns kit.

The Forest School Leader will prepare an Emergency Bag and a Kit Bag for offsite sessions. The contents for each bag may vary depending on the group, activity, time of year and weather conditions.

Essential items that should be included in the Emergency Bag are:

- ✓ First Aid Kit (regularly checked and restocked as necessary)
- ✓ Burns kit
- ✓ Emergency procedures list
- ✓ Medical details and emergency contact details for all participants
- ✓ Mobile Phone
- ✓ Accident sheets
- ✓ Emergency whistle
- ✓ Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for individual to carry it themselves) clearly labelled with parental consent
- ✓ Drinking water

Other items which may be included in the Kit Bag could include:

- ✓ Wet wipes, hand gel
- ✓ Spare clothing
- ✓ Sun cream (parent consents)
- ✓ Flask of hot water
- ✓ Hot chocolate sachets
- ✓ Chocolate or sugary food
- ✓ Roll mat and blanket
- ✓ Bivi bag or emergency shelter
- ✓ Torch

The Forest School leader will organise the equipment and tools needed for each session including tools, ropes, tarps, food, kitchen implements and fire lighting kit.

Using and storing tools

Using a range of tools in Forest School helps children to develop physical skills and how to manage risks safely. Tools may not be used at every session and they will only be used for particular purposes appropriate to the age and level of skill of the child.

Tools used will include:

- Peeler
- Knife
- Secateurs
- Bow saw
- Pruning saw
- Hand saw
- Palm drill
- Hammer
- Mallet

The Forest School leader will ensure that tools are stored, maintained and transported safely. Tools will be kept packed away until needed.

Tool Rules

Before and after a session the leader will check:
Are tools in good, working order? Tools will be checked for damage and durability.
How many? Tools will be counted out and counted back in.
Are the tools secure? Tools will be kept in suitable containers; Peelers, knives, axes and secateurs in a locked tool box, Bow saws in a kit bag, drills in a small container.
When tools are being used:
The Forest School leader will give a safety talk before tools are used.
Children must never help themselves to the tools without permission.
All tool use, carrying and collecting will be under adult supervision.
Children must walk when carrying tools.
All participants need to be aware tools are in use.
A safety zone must be established around each user, at least one arm's length between users.
All tools used under adult supervision. Ratios depend on age. 1:1 for Fox class, 1:2 for KS1, 1:4 for KS2.



Our Risk Assessments

Hazard	Harm	People at risk	Measures to be taken	Responsibility and timescale
Waste/litter	Glass, drug use, metal cans	All	Pre-visit check and continuous monitoring. Children not to pick up rubbish but inform adult if they see something hazardous. Remove and dispose of safely following school procedure for waste disposal.	Leader prior to and during visit
Animal droppings	Contamination and disease	All	Pre-visit check and continuous monitoring. Sign to say No Dogs on school property. Remove and dispose of safely following school procedure for waste disposal.	Leader prior to and during visit. SLT
Boundaries	Escaping children Public entry	Children	Ensure the gates are closed when in FS area. Ensure safe supervision on way to and from site following guidelines on School Risk Assessment Policy. Inform children of boundaries, staff supervise boundaries when in site. Staff to be aware of members of the public walking along the footpath. Children to be reminded of Stranger Danger	All on visit
Fences	Broken fences falling on person	All	Check fences are intact and safe especially after stormy weather – replace as necessary	Leader prior to visit SLT
Trees	Falls	Children	Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present. Leaders to support children to manage their own risks and stop when they feel unsafe.	All on visit
Tree branches	Branches falling Children falling due to branch breaking	All	Pre-visit check and continuous risk check to look for dead wood hanging in trees, dead branches and damage to trees. Remove hanging dead wood	Leader prior to visit and all staff on visits SLT

			Remind children of risks. Annual check by Tree Safety Company	
Tree Roots and stumps	Tripping and landing on them Falling off stump	All	All participants reminded to walk around with care under the trees Show new participants the exposed roots and inform of danger Remind children to take care on tree stump and look before leaping off	All on visit
Tree sticks	Hitting Poking Scraping	Children	Establish safe stick rules. Sticks for playing = arm length maximum Sticks for den building to be dragged to site check around before lifting	All on visit
Tree Sawdust	Saw dust in eyes	All	Wear safety goggles when cutting especially on windy days. First aid kit to include eye wash tubes Leader to flush eyes immediately and follow school first aid policy.	All on visit SLT – first aid kit
Berries and other seeds on flora	Poisoning	Children	Inform children not to pick and eat any berries without an adult present. Remind children not to put anything in mouths. Wash hands carefully before eating.	All on visit
Fungi	Poisoning	All	Remind all participants to “Look, don’t touch” at any fungi, toadstools or mushrooms.	All on visit
Nettles other weeds	Stinging Allergic reaction	All	Make participants aware of nettles and other weeds Keep central play area clear of nettles and weeds All participants to wear long trousers	Leader prior to visit and all on visit
Bees, Wasps Mosquitos Ticks	Stings, bites	All	Check area for nests – particularly the willow as wasps are attracted to it in June/July Avoid contact with bees/wasps Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present.	Leader prior to visit and all on visit Guidance for parents re ticks in communications

			<p>Call 999 if anaphylactic reaction to sting</p> <p>Children to wear long trousers.</p> <p>Parents reminded to check for ticks after visit.</p>	
Fire	<p>Burns</p> <p>Fire out of control</p>	All	<p>Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present.</p> <p>School safety policy adhered to and safety procedures followed.</p> <p>Fire only in two allotted fire locations.</p> <p><i>Separate risk assessment in handbook.</i></p>	Leader prior to and on visit.
Fire Lighting	<p>Fingertip burns from matches</p> <p>Sparks in eyes</p>		<p>Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present.</p> <p>Fire lighting on a one to one basis or in small group dependant on age and activity.</p> <p>Strict supervision by all staff</p> <p>Children taught safe and correct methods of lighting fires</p> <p>First aid – eye wash</p>	
Cooking	<p>Burns to mouth</p> <p>Burns to hand when handling pan, tinfoil, cooking stick</p>	All	<p>Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present.</p> <p>Cooking on a one to one basis or in small group dependant on age and activity.</p> <p>Strict supervision by all staff</p> <p>Children taught safe and correct handling of cooking implements</p> <p>Gauntlets/gloves provided</p>	All on visit
Inappropriate behaviour	<p>Disruption to the activity.</p> <p>Physical harm to self</p> <p>Causing accidents to others</p> <p>Deliberate harm to others</p> <p>Compromise of safety rules eg by fire or with tools</p>	All	<p>Leaders to watch for sign of frustration or aggression.</p> <p>Practice de-escalation techniques.</p> <p>Staff to radio office or SLT to assist or remove participant</p> <p>Staff to remove other participants to safety if required.</p>	

Tools	Cuts Grazes Amputation Puncture wounds	All	Tools stored away from site. Tools taken to session kept in in locked storage until needed. Used on a one to one basis or in small group dependant on age and activity. Strict supervision by all staff Children taught safe and correct use of different tools. <i>Separate risk assessments for tools in handbook.</i>	All on visit
Ropes	Burns Whipping injuries	All	Remind children and adults to use gloves when using ropes to hoist or drag. Remind all to take care when ropes are thrown, eg. over branches when den building. Children reminded to take care if skipping or twirling with ropes to avoid injury to others.	All on visit

All activities are risk assessed online through Wiltshire Council's Evolve Risk Assessment and agreed by Head-teacher.

Accident and Emergency First Aid

The Forest School Leader is first aid trained and holds the Emergency First Aid at Work Level 3 qualification and the Forest School First Aid Certificate which covers outdoor first aid and emergencies.

The Forest School Leader carries an Emergency Bag to all activities which includes an outdoor First Aid Kit and Burns Kit.

Weather Watch

The Forest School leader will check the weather forecast before every session to ensure that the planned activity remains safe. Messages will be sent to parents via School Dojo if additional clothing is required or if a change of venue is planned.

Forest School Staff and Responsibilities

Collingbourne Forest School is planned and led by Mrs Jill Stevens.

Sessions may be supported by other Collingbourne Staff or local volunteers.