

Holy Family Catholic
Primary School

Forest School Handbook



January 2015

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1.The Forest School Ethos

Forest School is a unique educational experience and process that offers children the opportunity to succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment. Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers. Children will work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world.

A Forest School encourages children to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- discover how they learn best
- pursue knowledge that interests them
- learn how to manage failures
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- regularly experience achievement and success
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- become more motivated
- improve their concentration skills

2. Our Forest School Code of Conduct

	<p>Entering the Forest We will enter the Forest respectfully and follow 3 environmental rules: 1) I must look after nature. 2) I must look after myself. 3) I must look after others. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.</p>
<p>Boundaries Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. If you lose sight of a child shout '1,2,3, where are you?' The children have been taught to respond '1,2,3, I'm over here' through classroom games that are practised regularly.</p>	
	<p>Lighting a fire When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square. (Fire risk assessments)</p>

<p>At the Fire Circle An open fire will be lit within a fire square. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There may be no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.(Fire risk assessments)</p>	
	<p>Using Tools All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. (See tool use guides and risk assessments).</p>
<p>Eating and Drinking Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Forest, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session (e.g. blackberry picking). Children must be</p>	

reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.



Leaving the Site

We work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' that we were in the forest as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters should be taken down, imported materials need to be removed. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish and toileting items will always be removed. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult.

Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.(Tree climbing risk assessment)



3. Suggested Activities for Forest Schools

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.

Some activities might include:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying wildlife
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Tracking games

- Cooking on an open fire
- Using a Kelly Kettle
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities

4. Equipment for Forest School

In addition to tools suited to the planned for activities, the Forest School leader will always take an **emergency bag** with them.

The contents of the **emergency bag** will vary depending on the time of year and weather conditions, the site being used, and the planned for activities according to the relevant risk assessments and daily risk assessment.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

- First aid kit
- Emergency procedures
- Risk assessments
- Medication for individuals
- Appropriate clothing
- Sharps box and gloves
- Mobile phone

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT – CLOTHING:

No person will be permitted to go to Forest School without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold, keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes, that fits appropriately for comfort, and that meets any religious requirements.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session. In the forest it can often be cooler than expected under the shade of the trees.

Clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood.
- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers
- Warm boots (wellies can be very cold during the winter)
- Warm Socks, and a spare pair
- Gloves and Woolly hat – Cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility– sunny weather

We work on the principle that **“there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”**.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT – FIRST AID:

- Latex Gloves
- Bandages
- Plasters
- Burns gel
- Burn dressing
- Dressings
- Eye wash
- Sewing Kit
- Scissors

- Cotton wool
- Antiseptic wipes
- Medication for individual children
- Sterile water
- Cling film
- Blood bag (disposal sack for medical waste)
- Bites and stings cream or spray (parental permission required)

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT – FIRE

- Flame retardant Gauntlet gloves
- Fire Blanket
- Bucket of water
- Fire steel
- Vaseline
- Cotton wool
- Matches

5. Using and Storing Tools

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked outdoor store. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order.

Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers, many of which are also lockable. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times, this should be done in the form of a “tool talk” before using each tool. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group, “two arms and a tool length” and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool.

Only wear a glove when using a bow saw and only on your bracing hand. No other tools may be used when the operator is wearing gloves.

Potato Peelers and Knives – for peeling or sharpening sticks (whittling)

A ratio of 1 adult to 2 children will be observed. This tool must be used seated on a log with elbows placed upon knees and using the tool in a downward motion between the legs. A 'blood bubble' space must be determined ensuring a safe distance away from others. If someone wished to pass through your bubble they must verbally ask and you must stop whilst they pass, Safe, very temporary, storage is to store the blade end of the peeler in the soil. When carrying peelers you must walk with them held down by your side. Once a child is deemed to be competent by the forest leader they may be allowed to use a fixed blade knife to whittle. The same rules as above still apply. When carrying a knife return it to its sheath and tie it in securely using the strings. Carry the knife either by your side or with the string around your neck. Tools must be returned to the storage container when no longer in use.

Bow Saws – for cross cutting wood up to 12cm diameter

Children may be taught how to use a bow saw with 1:1 supervision, or with a 'buddy' helping in a 'push-pull' fashion. Adults must always supervise closely and should place their hand (gloved) between the child's hand and that of the saw blade. The safest method of use is to brace the wood through the bow saw itself. The saw blade must be covered when not in use. When being carried the bow saw blade (in its' cover) should be pointing downwards, and to the back. When not in use (shed storage) blades should be loosen off by an adult.

Kelly Kettle

The Forest leader may use this to heat water. Never leave the bung in whilst heating water. This is only to be in place during storage so as to keep the chamber clear from forest debris or insects and minibeasts. Once the fire is going in the Kelly Kettle base carefully add the chimney top to it by holding the handle parallel to the ground, and supported on each side by your hands. When lit, do not stand directly over, or look straight down the chimney. Never blow into the top. When pouring out the water support the base by holding the bung chain in one hand and the handle with the other. To put the fire out, pour the remaining water into the base.

When not in use all tools will be securely locked away in the tool shed. Tools should be checked and cleaned before they are put away. Half termly the

**Forest Leader will ensure that each tool is thoroughly cleaned and oiled.
Wear and tear will be monitored daily.**

6. Health and Safety Policies

Holy Family Catholic Primary School sets out clear statements of intent regarding the Whole School's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School and the School Site. Provided below is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our Forest School sessions.

- 1) The Trained and Named Forest School Leader is always the person in charge of Forest school sessions.
- 2) The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.
- 3) The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry and take a first aid kit into the forest at every session.
- 4) The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag into the forest for every session.

- 5) The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone and will ensure that there is easy access to a land line if the group is out of range.
- 6) In the event of an emergency, The Forest Leader will ensure that the School contacts the emergency services. If contact with the school is lost the Leader will contact the emergency services.
- 7) The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every trip into the School's Forest Site.
- 8) When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1
- 9) There is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.
- 10) The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.
- 11) The Forest Leader is responsible in training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
- 12) The Forest leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

7. Risk Assessment Guidelines

A **SITE** risk assessment is undertaken each week and a **DAILY** risk assessment and check is made prior to every Forest School session at our Forest site. In addition, an **ACTIVITY** risk assessment will be established prior to any activity that may require it. These will include: whittling, cutting wood, shelter building, fire lighting and cooking on an open fire, and palm drilling. Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them.

The risk assessment process is detailed below:

- We look for potential hazards.
- We decide who might be at harm.
- We think about how harm may occur and the worst outcome that we could face.
- We evaluate the current level of risk.

- We decide on a course of action or set of precautions that will be put in place to minimise the potential risk.
- We then re-evaluate the level of risk once our course of action and precautions have been put in place.
- We create a risk assessment and collate them in the Forest School file.
- We inform all adults with accompanying the group and require them to sign each relevant risk assessment to show that they have read and understood the assessments
- We regularly monitor and review each risk assessment, half termly and report any action which is needed.

8. Accident and Emergency Procedures

<u>FIRST AID</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Follow Policy and Procedures Document. Any illness or injury to be treated by a qualified first aider.2. Check Dr -A-B-C, Administer First Aid.3. Remove others in group from the situation, ensuring they are safe.4. Notify school office. And if necessary call for further assistance, or notify emergency services.5. Have medical details available in medical bag, and notify parents/guardians as appropriate.6. All accidents, however minor, must be reported to the Principal who will complete an accident report form.7. Follow up to parents as usual.
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<p><u>MISSING CHILD</u></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On discovery of missing child use '1,2,3, where are you?' procedure and recall rest of the group. 2. Commence immediate search of vicinity. 3. Immediately notify school office. 4. Secretary will notify the Head teacher and a decision will be made on whether to notify the police, then the parent or guardian.
<p><u>STRANGER OR UNINVITED PERSON</u></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Challenge intruder, asking them to leave immediately. Escort them from the site. 2. Inform the School's Office and Child Protection Officer. 3. If a child is involved the police must be called, and the child/children involved are to be removed from situation and made to feel safe. 4. Parents/guardian should be briefed by Forest School Leader ASAP or in accordance with advice of the Police, ASAP.
<p><u>BEHAVIOUR</u></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk child involved down. 2. Remove other children from the area of risk, if it is deemed to be necessary. 3. Inform office and call for help as needed. 4. Debrief child after calm down period. 5. Log incident. 6. Inform parents/guardian 7. Create risk assessment, if necessary 8. Close supervision and monitoring of behaviour.

9. Poor Weather Procedures

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunder storms, or during periods of extreme cold. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions. When it is wet a shelter will be built immediately by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area that is available from the start that can be used.

Many of our activities can be carried out inside, such as our tracking, knot tying, sensory and team games so no child will miss out if conditions do not allow us to go out into the Forest.

10. Designated Person Responsibilities

Forest School Leader: Miss Kendall

First Aider 1: Miss Kendall

First Aider 2: Mrs Morrison

Additional First Aiders in the school include: Miss Foltanova, Mrs Dyas, Mrs Pointer, and Miss Davies

Designated Senior Leader: Mrs Kaye

11. School Parent Agreement

<u>The School</u>	<u>The Family</u>	<u>The child</u>
We will aim to work in partnership with parents and carers to :-	I/we will aim to work in partnership with the school and its staff to:-	I will aim to follow the rules of the forest:-
provide high quality teaching & learning through a broad and balanced curriculum	ensure that my child will attend school regularly and on time	I will be gentle
value each child as an individual	ensure that my child is equipped appropriately for Forest School	I will be kind
understand that each child has their own learning style	let the school know about any concerns and problems	I will try my best

	which might affect my child's behaviour or progress	
encourage each child to achieve their personal best in all areas	support my child in opportunities for learning at home	I will be honest
provide opportunities for children to learn and practice new skills	support the school policies and their rules for promoting good behaviour.	I will listen to others
encourage collaborative learning	To attend the children's celebration of Forest Learning in the Forest	I will look after living things
encourage children to take risks in their own learning		
provide a high ratio of adults to children		
ensure all adults working with our children are fit to do so		
Signed: _____ Dated: _____	Signed: _____ Dated: _____	Signed: _____ Dated: _____