

**Wheatfields Primary School**

**Forest School  
Handbook**

*2026*

*If you go down to the woods  
today...*

**What is Forest School?**

## **The History**

- Draws inspiration from early education pioneers such as Susan Isaacs, Margaret McMillan and Montessori.
- Strong links to Scandinavian countries such as Finland and Denmark who run similar outdoor sessions.
- Began to emerge in UK in the 1990's and has continued to gain momentum ever since.

## **The Basics**

- Fresh air and exercise
- Spiritual, physical, intellectual, communication, emotional, social
- Opportunity to take 'safe enough' risk
- Supports building and developing friendships and other personal, social and emotional skills
- Develops knowledge of the natural environment and language of the environment
- Builds and develops language through storytelling and role play.

## **Why Forest School and the Forest School Way**

- Forest School is an inspirational process, which 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 is a specialised learning approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.
- Forest School provides opportunities for children to be outside, to take safe risks, to be free and to explore the world around them.
- The beauty of Forest school is that there is no set agenda; you are led by the child through their interests with a child centred approach embedded.
- This is achieved by setting small, achievable tasks where children feel empowered and successes are attainable.

## **Forest School at Wheatfields**

The Forest school sessions will take place on school site at Wheatfields Primary school, St Ives – ‘Wheatfields Woods’.

The school is set within the Burleigh Hill Housing Estate to the north of St. Ives town. The area used for Forest School sessions was set up on school grounds with support from a County Forest School Advisor several years ago.

The Site manager and forest ‘volunteers’ have maintained pathways and areas and has a system in place for ground maintenance which includes the forest area and there is a three year sustainability plan in place.



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## **Flora and Fauna on Site**

The area has several well established trees and plants is a list of some of the species of flora and fauna native to our Forest site.

<b>Woodland Identification</b>						
<b>F</b>	-	Silver Birch	Apple	Holly	Pine tree	Hazel

	<b>Trees</b>	Twisted willow	Apollo fir tree	Spindle Tree	Hawthorn trees	Field Maple
	<b>Plants</b>	Mint	Lavender	Thyme	Daffodils	Narcissus
		Ivy	Tulips	Grape hyacinths	Bamboo	Bramble
		Little leaf boxwood	Giant knotweed	Sticky weed	Tall fescue grass	Sage
<b>Fauna</b>	<b>Birds</b>	Robin	Blackbird	Bullfinch	Wren	House sparrow
		Wood Pidgeon	Collared dove	Magpie	Starlings	
	<b>Mammals</b>	Squirrels	Foxes	Hedgehogs		
	<b>Insects</b>	Snails	Ladybirds	Spiders	Woodlouse	Butterflies – monarch,
		Earthworms	Bees	Shield Beetles		

## Forest Site Checks

Forest School has a thorough site risk assessment in place and before every session a site check is carried out.

When sessions involve use of tools or a fire relevant risk assessments are also in place and should be read and adhered to by all adults involved to ensure that activities can be carried out in a safe way.

## Forest Safety equipment

Each Forest session will require specific equipment which will vary based upon activity and some equipment that is needed for every session.

Every session will require:

- A fully stocked first aid kit
- Walkie talkies or Mobile Phone
- Box for medical needs of group –inhalers, epi pens etc.

## Forest School Clothing

**‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’**

Forest school sessions happen in every season as it not only builds upon a child’s understanding and respect for the changes in the natural world but it supports resilience and embeds learning. For these reasons Forest Sessions will take place in all weathers, bar strong winds and storms for health and safety purposes.

## Clothing and equipment for every Season

<b>Season</b>	<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Personal, protective equipment/ Kit</b>
<b>Spring</b>	Thin, light layers- covering arms and legs. Covered, sturdy shoes, rain coat and waterproof trousers. Sun hat if needed.	thick gardening gloves/ loppers for coppicing  Water bottles bug hunting kit
<b>Summer</b>	Thin, light layers- still covering arms and legs. Covered, sturdy shoes.  Sun hat, sun cream, insect repellent.	Rope and tarpaulins to provide shade.  Water bottles.
<b>Autumn</b>	Several layers - tights, leggings, long sleeve top, jumper etc. Warm hat, scarf and gloves. Covered, sturdy shoes/wellies, Waterproof trousers and coat.	Bow Saw – create firewood Gloves  Rope and tarpaulins to provide shelter  Burns kit and fire bucket, fireproof gloves  Water bottles /hot drinks

<b>Winter</b>	Several layers - tights, leggings, long sleeve top, jumper etc. Waterproof trousers and coat. Warm hat, scarf and gloves. Covered, sturdy shoes/wellies	Bow Saw – create firewood Gloves  Rope and tarpaulins to provide shelter  Burns kit and fire bucket, fireproof gloves  Water bottles /hot drinks
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## Wet Weather Options

We will endeavour to go out in any weather and that includes heavy rain!

Firstly we will ensure that all the children have appropriate clothing – layers, wellies and waterproofs. We do have some we can loan out to the children but ideally they need to have their own which can be stored at school.

As there is limited natural shelter from trees in the forest area a temporary shelter will be erected with a tarpaulin underneath.

## Toileting and handwashing

As our Forest area is on school site children are able to access school toilets with relative ease.

Before heading out to the area the children all go to the toilet.

Once in the area if they need to go to the toilet they notify a forest adult who lets the classroom adult know. Once they have finished they return to the forest site and notify the forest adult of their return.

A sink, soap, bottled water and tissues are taken across to the Forest site for basic hand cleaning on site. If a more thorough wash is required the child will return to the nearest classroom.

## A 'typical' Forest School Session

There isn't one! Every session is different, led by the child's interests with some 'hooks' if needed.

- Sessions are led by Debbie Pope, Level 3 Forest School trained, Outdoor first aid trained. Thorough site risk assessment carried out. Additional first aid trained member of staff as minimum- ratios dependent on activity
- Each session starts and ends in the log circle
- At the start of the session the children remind each other of the rules – kindness to nature, boundaries etc. We may explore boundaries with a game such as 1, 2, 3 where are you.
- We sometimes share a talking point for example what could we use a stick for – it's not a stick it's a witches broomstick!
- Children then set their own agenda – bug hunting, climbing, role play, fairies village...the list goes on!
- We always end a session with a magic moment and some sort of reflection or chat about what we have done, learnt, played etc.
- Children are given opportunities to follow up the forest learning/ethos in classroom setting – reflecting through pictures or by using their collections to make transient art or explore their findings more with magnifiers.

## Example of Session for EYFS

Brief Summary of Activities	Learning Objectives	Follow up in Class
Week One  rules of forest and boundaries – 1,2,3 where are you  Handful of sounds  Magic moment	Children will be able to identify the boundaries and become more familiar with the forest area.  To develop listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment around us  Free play to allow natural curiosity and exploration within set boundaries.  Allows moment of self-reflection, encourages children to reflect of session or days experiences.	Children to get in to the habit of getting their belongings for the forest (water bottle, wellies etc.) and organising themselves once returned from forest session.
Week Two  rules of forest and boundaries – 1,2,3 where are you  Storytelling – 3 little pigs/ it's not a stick  Magic moment	To remember boundaries and how to stay safe in the forest area  To model and develop storytelling language using the natural setting  Free play to allow natural curiosity and exploration within set boundaries.	Use sticks in classroom to continue storytelling – what else could it be?  Read book 'it's not a stick' for some ideas

	Allows moment of self-reflection, encourages children to reflect of session or days experiences.	Children to make own signs for display in forest area 'it's not a stick it's a....
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## **Emergency Action Plan for Forest Sessions**

Whilst we aim to anticipate all possible accidents and incidents there is an emergency action plan in place in the unlikely event that a serious accident occurs.

- Each session has an outdoor first aid trainer and an additional adult who is also first aid trained.
- Walkie talkies/mobile phones are in use.
- A first aid Box complete with any items relating to specific medical needs of group e.g. – diabetic bag, inhalers, epi pens is taken to site.

### **In the event of a serious accident occurring:**

- All children to be called into the fire circle "Come on in!"
- Lead adult will stay at accident site to administer first aid and support. Supporting adults will return to base to gather other children and take a head count.
- Phone call made from the mobile phone to the school office and they are to call the emergency services. In the event this phone number is not manned, a direct call to the emergency services will be made. The school office will call parents and arrange the gates to be opened to ensure access for emergency services.
- The rest of the children will return safely to the classroom whilst lead adult and additional adult wait with casualty at accident site until emergency services arrive.