

St. Mark's



Forest School Handbook

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Introduction



The purpose of Forest School is for the students to gain an understanding of the natural environment, whilst developing the Forest School ethos, namely, development of self-esteem, confidence and social skills. Through carefully planned activities, students from all year groups at the school take part in Forest School work

throughout the year which enables them to excel in all areas of their personal, academic and spiritual development.

The philosophy which underpins the Forest School movement is to encourage and inspire individuals of any age from 3 years upwards, and any groups, through mastery of small, achievable tasks in a woodland environment, to grow in confidence and independence so that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth. Students will acquire new skills when they are ready to use them so that activities can maintain a degree of challenge and excitement, whilst remaining safe and controlled.

At the St, Mark's Catholic Primary School, we operate our Forest School on two sites. The park on Kingsdown Avenue and our own site which we are developing in our own school grounds.

The freedom of the 'forest' allows the students the opportunity to experience remoteness and a realistic experience in which they are able to practise their skills and further develop their understanding of a woodland environment.

The Forest School embraces an entirely different approach through the support and development of the self-esteem of participants.



Mrs. S. Smith and Mrs. K. Khan

Forest School Leaders

Forest School Policy

Our Vision

At St. Mark's we are committed to encouraging all children to take part in Forest School, as a means of enhancing and extending their learning in a natural environment.

We believe that Forest School aids the holistic development of our pupils, improving social skills, speaking and listening skills, writing and motor skill development.

We encourage the use of our outdoor learning spaces to develop our pupils' knowledge and

understanding of the world around us and the impact we have on its sustainability.

We will provide a safe and caring environment in which pupils can express their creativity and learn to work as a team, learn about woodland management and take calculated risks. The safety of our pupils is always our foremost concern and we will ensure that each activity is planned, executed and assessed to the highest standards.

Environmental Considerations

Forest School has environmental awareness at the heart of its ethos. Wherever possible, environmentally friendly products and recycled materials should be used when appropriate. Good practise will be modelled by adults showing children that the world in which we live in should be cared for. Involving children planning environmental games will help support this.

Health and Safety Considerations

The Forest School programme will support young children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will even encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others.

Policy Documents

The following policies are the minimum requirements for the safe running of Forest School Activities. They are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them.

All members of staff and volunteer helpers have a duty to follow these policies and will be made familiar with the contents of this booklet before Forest School sessions. The Forest School Leaders have a duty to ensure the necessary people have access to this booklet.

Policies located in this handbook are as follows:

- Absconding
- Behaviour
- Clothing Policy
- Eating Policy
- Emergency Procedures
- Equal Opportunities at Forest School
- Fire Safety
- Hand Tool Safety
- Health and Safety (Forest School Addendum)
- Safe Guarding (Forest School Addendum)
- Disclosures (Forest School Addendum)
- Toileting
- Lost Child Policy
- Volunteers (Forest School Addendum)

Policies written in December 2017 – to be reviewed annually

St. Mark's Catholic Primary School Absconding Policy

St. Mark's priority is to keep children safe. This policy had been written to apply to children when they are working on the Kingsdown Avenue Park site.

If it is discovered that a child is missing from the group, the following emergency procedure will be implemented.

- Activity for the rest of the group shall be suspended and children will return to the site agreed with the children at the beginning of the session.
- One member of staff will remain with the group and a search for the missing child/children will begin.
- The School office should be informed immediately.
- The decision to alert the police will be made by a member of senior management.

Emergency services 999

School office 01213579892

St. Mark's Catholic Primary School Forest School Behaviour Policy

In addition to the general Behaviour policy adopted by St. Mark's Catholic Primary School the following guidelines during Forest School sessions are:

- All participants will be made aware of the behaviour expected of them during the Forest School sessions.
- Adults will model appropriate behaviour at all times.
- All participants will be made aware of the rules regarding Forest School sessions.
- All participants will be given an initial 'time out' period if they break the rules.
- Any participant exhibiting behaviour deemed dangerous or likely to cause harm to themselves or others will be removed from Forest School sessions by a member of staff inside school who has been telephoned by the Forest School leader.
- In the event of the removal of a participant from a Forest School session, the parents will be informed by telephone by the Forest School Leader as soon as the session is finished.
- All adults will report any inappropriate behaviour to the Forest School Leader immediately.

The following 3 rules are used as part of Forest School delivery

- Look after yourself
- Look after each other

- Look after Nature (the environment)

These rules are discussed with children at every session, with children self-assessing to see if they have followed the rules, these are also used as a review tool at the end of sessions.

St. Mark's Forest School Clothing Policy

Flooring in the woodland and parks can often be very slippery all year round. It is essential that suitable footwear is worn at all times. Walking boots or wellies can keep feet safer from slips and trips in different weather conditions.

Suitable clothing for sessions is also essential. This can change depending on the time of year. It is important that children are fully prepared during different times of the year and are prepared for changes in the weather.

Season	Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment
Spring	T-shirt, thick fleece or jumper, thick socks or two pairs of thin ones, good pair of walking boots or wellies. Waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers. Hat, scarf and gloves depending on temperature and sunlight.
Summer	Long sleeved T-shirt, light cotton trousers (arms and legs to be covered in the woodland) socks, safety footwear, sun hat and sun cream. Waterproof Jacket, waterproof over trousers.
Autumn	T-shirt or long sleeved T-shirt, thick fleece or jumper, thick socks or two pairs of thin ones, good pair of walking boots or wellies. Waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers. Hat, scarf and gloves depending on temperature and sunlight.
Winter	Vest or T-shirt, long sleeved top, fleece or thick jumper, thick socks or 2 pairs of thin ones and trousers. Waterproof Jacket, waterproof over trousers, wellington boots or waterproof walking boots, gloves, hat and scarf. Work gloves. Additional layer provided if needed.

Eating Policy

Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Forest, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session. Children must be 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.

Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire. Wild food is not carried out as an activity to avoid confusion amongst children between what is safe and unsafe to eat.

Food Preparation, transport and storage;

- Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner before handling and preparing food.
- Food will be stored in clean containers with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes; to avoid attracting flies and other insects.
- All 'use by' dates will be checked on foods before eating.
- Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage

Handling, cooking and eating Food;

- A fresh, clean, bucket of warm soapy water will be available for children to wash their hands before handling food or utensils.
- Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire policy. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.
- Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

Clearing away and cleaning up;

- ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults. The area is checked to ensure there no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.
- ALL utensils and pans carried away after the session and cleaned in hot soapy water by one of the adults and stored away correctly.

Emergency First Aid Procedures

In the event of an emergency the following will happen;

- Emergency Whistle blown
- Children to stop activities and await further instructions
- Forest School Leader to assess situation and remove any hazards

The Forest School Leader will administer First Aid on the child and the additional adult will supervise the remaining children ensuring that they remain calm and away from the accident victim

In case of serious injury:

The additional adult will either call an ambulance immediately or contact the School Office for further assistance.

There will also be an additional adult in school on standby at all times.

The remaining children will be counted and walked back to school by two members of staff.

A member of staff will wait for the ambulance to arrive and direct them to the incident.

- The First Aider will accompany the accident victim into the main building after treatment and report the incident to the office staff who will call parents or monitor the victim accordingly.
- The First Aider will fill out the accident book and provide an accident form for parents informing them of the injury and treatment received.

In the case of minor injury:-

- The designated First Aider is to provide emergency First aid to the accident victim using equipment from the 1st Aid bag at the scene.
- The additional adult will supervise the other pupils and help them to remain calm and away from the accident victim.
- The First Aider will administer First Aid as needed and take the child back into the school building if needed. The additional adult will walk at the front of the line leading the remaining children.
- The First Aider will fill out the accident book and provide an accident form for parents informing them of the injury and treatment received.

Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School

We are committed to giving each child every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, attainment, age, disability, gender or background. We actively seek to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude individual children or groups of children. We aim to provide all our children with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement.

We will:

- Ensure equality of access for all children
- Employ a range of styles, including collaborative learning, so that children can value working together
- Seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- Take account of the performance of all children when planning for future learning and setting challenging targets
- Make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of children

Our teachers ensure that our children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued or appreciate and value the differences in others
- Take responsibility for their own actions
- Participate safely, in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs
- Are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
- Have challenging targets that enable them to succeed
- Are encouraged to participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Forest School does mean Forest School FOR ALL. We do have a stock of extra all weather clothing but ask that both parents and children think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware that they are likely to take home muddy and wet clothes after a Forest School session. We encourage a level of risk-taking, always under close adult supervision, and actively foster friendships and collaboration between all children and adults. Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment, even when this appears to be of a transitory nature. The Forest environment is an environment to which we are all entitled and we strongly believe that the experiences we will have there will linger in the memory for years to come. Children with medical needs or disabilities will be

helped so that they can take part fully in each Forest School session. Those children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need one to one supervision, but their entitlement to participate in Forest School remains the same.

Procedure for Fires

- All fire lighting equipment to be kept in a labelled metal tin in a padlocked shed on the school play ground. Keys to the shed are kept in the School Office.
- Leader to complete a Risk Benefit Assessment before using fire.
- Area and fire lighting equipment to be checked by Leader before the session begins to ensure they are in good condition.
- Leader to be next to fire pit at all times when fire is lit.
- Leader to ensure all additional adults are aware of location of 1st Aid Kit containing burn gel and emergency plan in case of extreme injuries.
- Leader to review safety rules of fire pit before lighting fires in the session.
- Fire Blanket, watering can and additional bucket of water to be on hand near the fire at all times.
- Only leader to stoke fire and use equipment to cook and heat water on, demonstrating safety principles at all times.
- Leader to ensure that fire is completely out before leaving Forest School site.

Procedure for Cooking

- Leader to complete a Risk Benefit Assessment before using fire and cooking.
- Area and fire lighting equipment to be checked by Leader before the session begins to ensure they are in good condition.
- Leader or additional adult to be next to fire pit at all times when fire is lit.
- Leader to ensure all additional adults are aware of location of 1st Aid Kit containing burn gel and emergency plan in case of extreme injuries.
- Leader to review safety rules of fire pit before lighting fires in the session.
- Fire Blanket, watering can and additional bucket of water to be on hand near the fire at all times.
- Only leader to stoke fire and use equipment to cook and heat water on, demonstrating safety principles at all times.

- Leader to ensure that cooking utensils are cast iron and set upon an over fire tray.
- Leader to use an ovenproof glove to touch pots and pans.
- Leader to ensure that allergies and dietary requirements are met before cooking any food,
- Leader to ensure that food is of a good quality and from a reputable retailer.

Procedure for Tool Use

- All tools are to be kept in a padlocked box in a padlocked shed on the school playground. Keys to the shed are kept in the School Office and keys to the toolbox are kept by the leader in her classroom drawer.
- Leader to complete a Risk Benefit Assessment before using any tools.
- All tools to be checked by Leader before the session begins to ensure their safety and good condition.
- Ratios for using tools are 1:1 at all times.
- Only Leader or Level 3 qualified practitioner to lead tool use.
- Leader to demonstrate how to use tools in the first instance by carrying out a tool talk before any child or additional adult is allowed to use them.
- All tools to be signed out and back in by whomever uses them.
- Tools must be used in appropriate areas and children are to be informed of the 'two arms and a tool width apart' rule when using tools.
- Leader will ensure tools are packed away safely and securely at the end of each session.

Health and Safety Policy (Addendum)

In addition to the general Health and Safety procedures as detailed in the Forest School Handbook, Forest School Health and Safety guidelines will include:-

- The Forest School leader will ensure that there are up to date risk assessments and risk benefit assessments for each activity undertaken in Forest School and placed in Handbook.
- The Forest School leader will ensure that all adults are familiar with Health and Safety procedures during Forest School sessions.
- A qualified 1st Aider will participate in each Forest School session.
- The correct adult to child ratios will be adhered to.
- A daily risk assessment will be carried out by the Forest school Leader before the sessions take place.
- Forest School will not take place in weather likely to cause harm—lightning or high winds.
- Children and adults will be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear for each session.
- Children and adults will be using appropriate safety equipment during Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure that the 1st Aid kit is up to date and appropriately stocked.
- All participants will be advised of the rules and regulations surrounding Forest School sessions and will be made aware of any hazards present at the beginning of each session

Safeguarding Policy Addendum

All adults working with or on behalf of children in Forest School sessions have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Included in these responsibilities are:-

- The Forest School leader will hold a Level 3 Practitioners qualification in order for them to lead Forest school sessions.
- The Forest School leader will have details of any specific health issues or dietary requirements of each child, as well as up to date contact numbers in case of emergency.
- The Forest School leader will ensure the correct adult to child ratios at all times.
- All adults will familiarise themselves with the Forest School Handbook before undertaking Forest School sessions.
- All adults will ensure the confidentiality of all children at all times.
- All adults will be provided with relevant information on a need to know basis about individual children whilst participating in Forest School sessions to keep them vigilant to any specific needs.
- All adults will adhere to the procedures for activities as detailed in the Forest School Handbook.
- All adults will report any hazards to the Forest School leader immediately.
- All adults will be aware of the emergency procedures specific to Forest School and will carry out these procedures if necessary.

Disclosures Policy Addendum

In the case of a child making a disclosure during and Forest School session, the adult will:-

- Listen to the child and let them speak in their own words..
- Not ask leading questions.
- Never promise the child that they will not tell anyone.
- Speak to the Forest School leader immediately after the disclosure and ask to see a DSL. If disclosure is made to the Forest School leader, then they need to speak to a person directly responsible for Safeguarding issues in the school—Mr Murphy, Mrs Lindley, Mr Kettle, Mrs Dykes immediately after the session.

- Write down everything disclosed using the child's own words on a record of concern form that can be obtained from the staff room .
- Ensure confidentiality of child at all times.

Toileting during Forest School

All children to be given the opportunity to go to the toilet before the session begins.

When working on the school site:

- Children do not need to be accompanied but need to inform an adult when they leave and upon return.

If the additional adult is accompanying a child any tool work will be suspended until they return.

Lost Children Procedure

All children are counted into Forest School and encouraged to come back to a designated area on a two whistle signal. Clear boundaries will be set for each session with the children.

If a child goes missing the following procedure needs to be followed:-

- If a child cannot be located after all children are back at the designated meeting place (pre-determined), and 1,2,3 Where Are You game has not revealed them, a search of the Forest School site will take place by an additional adult taking part in the session, without alarming the other children.
- Office staff are to be contacted by mobile phone or an additional adult going into school to check inside and then checking the signing out book for taking children home.
- If failure to locate child after above procedures then the Head Teacher (or Senior Management Team in his absence) will be notified and the School's Emergency Plan will take immediate effect.

Volunteers Policy

All volunteers will be made aware of the Forest School handbook. The Forest School Leader will explain the Emergency Procedures Policy, the Safe Guarding Policy, Behaviour Policy and the Toileting Policy.