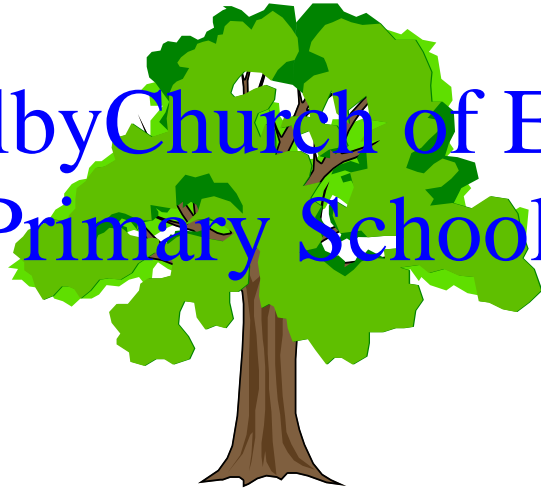


Old Dalby Church of England
Primary School



**FOREST SCHOOL
HANDBOOK
PARENTS**



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What is Forest Schools?

'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'.

(Forest School Association)

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. This is achieved by setting small achievable tasks. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions and aims for children to visit in blocks of six to eight weeks each season. Our sessions will take place in the woodland area at the bottom of our playing fields where we can offer experiences and let the children explore and learn from the world around them in a safe area. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners. We will offer the children the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.

It will be managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner; Katie Keast who has the Level 3 Award and is our Forest School Leader.

Behaviour Policy

Everyone, including staff, volunteers and participants, have a responsibility to protect their own and other group members' health, safety and well-being. They should inform the lead member of staff if anybody's actions are likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others.

We aim to promote:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness of personal abilities and limitations
- Respect and care for oneself, other people and the natural environment
- Co-operation and non-violent communication

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:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick.'
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment
- Staying within the designated areas at all times
- To work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other

Encouraging Positive Behaviour

Adults will be a positive role model for participants and will encourage and reinforce caring and nurturing behaviour. Whilst recognising that it is useful to have previous information about participants' needs, we believe that no child is inherently 'naughty' and therefore will welcome each participant from an open and unbiased viewpoint with regards to their behaviour and abilities. This is with the hope that the greater freedoms offered by a forest school environment will allow for a more flexible interpretation of positive engagement.

Physical Intervention

In accordance with the law, and our values, Old Dalby school do not use, or threaten to use, corporal punishment and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not administered by any person who is in contact with them. However, where necessary, physical intervention may be used in order to avert immediate danger to any person (including the child). All school staff are trained in physical intervention techniques. Any occasion where physical intervention is used will be recorded in an Incident Report and parents/carers will be informed on the same day as the incident.

Recording & Reporting

In all cases the forest school leader will complete an incident report form, and where necessary inform parents/carers.

Staffing to child ratios are as follows:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – 1:6
- Key Stage One – 1:8
- Key stage Two – 1:15

Vulnerable children will be decided on a case by case scenario.

There will always be a minimum of 2 adults

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
- Carry out necessary risk assessments
- 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 icy roads. Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating; we need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session.

In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved tee 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 school uniform and bring Forest School clothes in a bag, to change into. All Forest School Kit should be named and kept in school for other activities and taken home regularly to be washed.

Essential Equipment Needed and provided by the lead adult

A rucksack – The Happy Sack - containing the following essential items will always accompany the group:

- EAP (Emergency Action Plan)
- Mobile phone
- Medical Care Plans
- Newspaper
- Matches (Campfire sessions only)
- Wet wipes
- Protective gloves
- Sun cream (summer months)
- First Aid Kit
- Inhalers (where appropriate)
- Carry bag for dirty / wet items
- Spare hat & gloves for children and adults

We would also take a ground sheet and string to erect a shelter as needed

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The risk assessments carried out for Forest School are written with the Health and Safety of all participants in mind; children, volunteers and members of staff.

The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers. Routines and procedures at Forest School are developed with reference to this act and safeguarding practices.

Health & Safety Policy

Forest School programmes may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for participants. It is important to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits too. Taking risks is an important part of learning and developing and we want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn about risks, challenges and personal safety. However, we will seek to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessment covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session.

Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School

General rules for tool use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- All tools should be signed out when in use
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

Knives:

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

Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably 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
- Use a saw-horse where possible with the bow saw.

Loppers:

- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably 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 if possible.

Fire Procedure

Fires are an important part of Forest School and we aim to ensure that all people participating in sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Fires will only be used where it is appropriate to do so.

- Leaders will explain to participants the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood. Those in smoky areas will be encouraged to move to less smoky areas
- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times
- Participants will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment
- Related safety equipment, including heat-proof gloves, a fire blanket, a burns kit and water will be kept within close range of fires
- All fires should be fully extinguished and 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.

Forest School Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy operates in line with the whole school policy, a copy of which can be 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 follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the woodland environment.

(*Due to curriculum and practical reasons, the younger children in the school will initially attend Forest School on a regular basis.)

Confidentiality Policy

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 will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook
- 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

- As part of the permission to attend Forest School sessions, parents will be asked to agree to their child being photographed or filmed for observational, training or school promotion purposes; any child without this permission will be recorded in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for this purpose
- Volunteers should only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader.
- Mobile phones should only be used for emergency purposes.

Safeguarding at Forest School

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Old Dalby Primary School's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office. A summary of the policy is included below:

- 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.

Old Dalby Primary School safeguarding lead persons are Rosie Browne (Head Teacher), Katie Keast (Deputy Head) and Jayne Scott (Deputy Head).

In addition some points which overlap in other policies include:

- An adult, with the relevant DBS checks, will accompany the children to the toileting area
- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for the purpose of capturing evidence
- 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

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.

- All adults attending will have received a copy of the Emergency Action Plan which will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook, in the 'emergency rucksack'.
- Any staff or volunteers attending Forest School must meet prior to leaving school to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a mobile phone for emergency use
- Our current site is managed by the school which has responsibility for keeping the site safe and maintained on a long term basis.
- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website
- Parents will receive general information letters before sessions begin, a permission slip and details of medical needs
- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the visit; rules will be discussed and practised in the classroom setting.

Contact Numbers

Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the school office at the earliest opportunity. Any changes of contact number will be given to the School Office.

Forest School Hygiene Policy

Toileting

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school
- With the woodland being on site a member of staff can take children to the toilet if necessary
- A designated area will be set aside for emergency use only
- An adult, with the relevant DBS checks, will accompany the children to the area
- Wet wipes will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will be changed in accordance with the Schools Personal Care Policy back at school

Hand Washing

- Whenever possible, soap and water will be used for hand washing at snack time
- Disposable paper towels will be used for drying and bagged for disposal
- Anti-bacterial wipes will be available throughout the session

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 benches when consuming any food or drink
- Drinking water will be supplied.

Disposal of food & waste Policy

A responsible Forest School must ensure that we make no detrimental impact on it's natural surrounding environment, this includes the correct management and disposal of food, litter and waste. To achieve this the following procedures will be followed at every session:

- Recap with the group our responsibility to the environment and the need to keep it clean and uncontaminated.
- Vegetable peelings may be discarded on site to decompose.
- Paper and cardboard packaging can be used to light the next fire.
- Waste water that is not contaminated by food scraps or chemicals can be tipped away or used to douse the camp fire.
- If water has been contaminated by food scraps then dig a hole, tip the water in and cover it with earth to prevent animals from finding it.
- Any water that has been contaminated with chemicals should be transferred into a

suitable container and taken back home/school to be disposed of.

- Any leftover/waste food should be put into the designated rubbish bag/box and taken back to school/home to be disposed of.
- At the end of every session a thorough check of the site must be undertaken to ensure no litter or waste is left behind.

Assessment and Reporting Arrangements for Forest School Sessions

During Forest School sessions, children will be observed and assessed in an unobtrusive way as within the classroom. Evidence will be gathered using photographs, videos, written observations and through our electronic observation tool 'Tapestry'. All staff involved in Forest school will be responsible for gathering evidence; volunteers would be asked to feedback to the Forest School Leader. Information gathered will be used to plan activities and next steps for the children. Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family.

For our Emergency Action Plan and Risk Assessments please visit the school website and view the complete 'Forest School Handbook'.