

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy
Forest School Handbook
for Staff, Governors and Volunteers.



"It (the natural world) provides the most generous and powerful learning environment, with great affordance for child-led learning and development"

Putting Values into Practice. Jan White & Liz Edwards, 2019

Created by Rachel Derbyshire January 2020

This handbook is for use by Forest School staff, Forest School volunteers, parents and stakeholders. The policies within the book are specific to Tudor Grange Samworth Forest School and must always be adhered to. Some policies in this book link into other school policies which can be found on the school website.

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. An Introduction to Forest Schools	1
2. Forest schools' roles and responsibilities.	2
3. Daily Procedures	3
4. Forest School Rules	4
5. Forest School Health & Safety Policy	5
6. First Aid Policy	6
7. 1 st Aid Bag Contents	7
8. Missing Children Policy	8
9. Lockdown Policy	9
10. Clothing Policy	10
11. Food/Eating Policy	11
12. Woodland Conservation Policy	12
13. Fire Safety Policy	13
14. Tool Safety Policy	15
15. Tree Climbing Policy	17
16. Toileting Policy	17

An Introduction to Forest School

Forest Schools originated in Scandinavia where outdoor, child-led play was normal practice. A group of British nursery nurses brought the idea back to the U.K in 1993 and implemented a similar way of outdoor based learning. This idea has grown over the years and developed into what we see today.

Forest School sessions allow a child:

- to learn at their own pace,
- to make mistakes and build up resilience,
- to take reasonable risks so that they understand danger and how to manage it,
- to engage with and immerse themselves in the natural world.

The Forest School leader will plan sessions based on the child's needs to facilitate the child's learning. The Forest Schools ethos is to encourage and inspire through small, achievable tasks that build up a child's holistic development.

The activities will sometimes be challenging but always exciting, keeping safety in mind at all times.

Hopefully, the children will have FUN and enjoy learning in a less structured setting.

Forest School Staff.

All sessions will be led by **Mrs Rachel Derbyshire** (Level 3 L.S.A./Level 3 Forest Schools Leader / Level 3 Paediatric First Aid trained)

She will be supported by other Level 3 L.S.A's who all hold a valid First Aid qualification.

Some sessions will also be supported by our Forest Schools volunteer Mr Peter Williams (First aid trained)

All staff will hold an enhanced DBS check.

Roles and Responsibilities.

Forest School Leader (FSL)

- To plan and lead all Forest school activities.
- To ensure that planned activities are age appropriate and within the group's capabilities.
- To have an up-to date First Aid qualification (preferably Outdoor first aid)
- To ensure the children are dressed according to the weather conditions.
- To carry out risk assessments and site sweeps prior to sessions.
- To ensure all Forest school policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and adhered to at all times.
- To ensure that medication required by any children in the group is on hand at the Forest site. (Text pens, Inhalers, etc)

Responsibilities of accompanying staff

- To take an active role in the activities and assist the leader to deliver these.
- To assist the F.S leader in ensuring the safety of the tools, reporting any defect instantly and ensuring safe use of the tools by the children.
- To assist the F.S leader in teaching the children to be aware of their own safety and that of others around them.
- To have read and understood all the policies and emergency procedures regarding Forest schools and its activities.
- To be aware of the location of the First aid kit on site.
- To be responsible for their own wellbeing by wearing the correct clothing for Forest schools' activities.

Responsibilities of the Children

- To wear suitable clothing and footwear for Forest School sessions.
- To listen and follow the rules of Forest Schools.
- To help keep themselves and their peers safe.

Daily Procedures

- The Forest school leader will carry out a daily risk assessment/site sweep to ensure the site is safe to use prior to the session starting.
- Any equipment/tools will be checked by the FSL before use. Sometimes pupils will be encouraged to help carry resources to the site.
- The Forest school leader will ensure activity risk assessments are provided for all staff/adults involved in the session and make them aware of the control measures in place to reduce risks.
- Prior to the start of the session, staff/volunteers will be briefed on the intended structure of the session and their individual responsibilities.
- A register will be taken before leaving the school building and a head count taken at the entrance to the woods. Another head count will be taken during the session and again at the end.
- Once inside the forest, the gate will remain shut but not locked. The Forest school leader will hold the master key, with a spare being kept in the session rucksack.
- A quick re-cap of the rules and boundaries will happen at the start of each session.
- All tools and equipment will be packed away at the end of the session and any damage reported to the FSL. Nothing will be left out in the woods between sessions other than the logs around the fire area.

Forest School Rules

To enable everyone taking part in the Forest School sessions to have an enjoyable and safe time, there are just a few easy rules to follow.

- When you hear "1,2,3 where are you?" Answer with "1,2,3 I am here!"
- If the emergency whistle is blown, return to the fire circle/base camp as quickly as you can, safely, without running.
- Look for any dangers, such as branches sticking out at head height or large holes or logs on the ground, etc.
- Only climb the climbing tree to a height you are comfortable with.
- Leave the forest as we found it- show respect to natural surroundings by not picking any flowers or berries, etc.
- Everybody is to tidy up after themselves and look after the Forest Schools equipment.
- Do not eat anything you find in the forest, i.e. berries or fungi. Avoid putting your fingers near your mouth whilst playing in the forest.

Remember to have FUN!

The schools ethos and values (Trust, Unity, Democracy, Opportunity and Respect) will still be kept in mind and integrated into sessions.

Forest School Health & Safety Policy

This policy is in addition to the school's Health and Safety policy and does NOT change the school's position on health and Safety matters in any way.

To ensure safety at all times, the Forest School Leader will:

- Maintain and evaluate appropriate policies, procedures and risk assessments.
- Provide relevant information and clear instruction to all adults assisting with Forest School, so they can contribute to their own health and safety as well as the children they are working with.
- Ensure Forest School helpers are aware of their responsibilities towards the children.
- Have a good understanding of all emergency procedures such as Lock down, fire evacuation and the reporting of any near misses or accidents.
- Ensure that relevant risk assessments and site sweeps will take place before any children are allowed on site. Copies of the risk assessments and sweeps will be kept by the F.S.L.
- Ensure that an alternative plan is in place should a planned lesson be compromised by a health & safety issue.
- Adapt adult to child ratios to suit the activity or abilities of the cohort.
- Ensure the safety equipment is in good working order and is used appropriately.
- The F.S.L will ensure their First Aid qualification is kept up to date and will always be on site during a session with a complete first aid kit accessible.
- The forest School leader will be responsible for the maintenance of the First Aid kit and any other tools and resources used at the site.

First Aid

Minor Injuries.

First aid incidents will be managed outdoors by a qualified First aider, usually the Forest school leader or the assisting member of school staff.

A record of the incident and treatment given will be logged in the Forest school's accident book (As required by RIDDOR)

The casualty will be assessed, treated and monitored with the parents being informed at the end of the day.

Serious /Major Injuries.

Before taking part in any sessions, all staff will be informed of what to do in the event of an emergency.

When the emergency whistle is blown, all children and staff will meet at the fire circle.

The Forest School Leader will be with the casualty (Adult 1)

Adult 2 will use the Forest Schools mobile to call 999 to request an ambulance.

If there is an Adult 3, they will stay with the children, keeping them calm. They may escort them back into school, if the F.S Leader (Adult 1) decides that is the best course of action.

Adult 2 will then call Senior Leader Team to inform them of the incident and to inform the casualties parents/carer.

Adult 1 & 2 to remain with the casualty always, keeping them as warm and comfortable as possible.

An accident record form will be filled in to be passed onto the emergency services, a copy being kept for school records. (As required by RIDDOR)

The office/SLT will direct the emergency services to the site (via the car park gates directly onto the field and up to the forest.

1st Aid Bag Contents

- ✓ Tissues x 1 box
- ✓ Sick bags x 6
- ✓ Paper towels
- ✓ Bottle of water x 1
- ✓ Yellow clinical waste bag
- ✓ Cool Pak x 2
- ✓ Burn cool dressing
- ✓ Dressings, 1 each of size 3, size 2 & size 1
- ✓ Conforming bandage x 1
- ✓ Crepe bandages x 2
- ✓ Calico triangular bandages x 2
- ✓ Finger stool & dressing
- ✓ Sterowash x 3
- ✓ Gloves x 3 pairs
- ✓ Hand sanitiser x 1 small bottle
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Safety pins
- ✓ Head thermometer
- ✓ Foil blanket x 2
- ✓ Air-flo face shield
- ✓ Non-stick dressings various sizes
- ✓ Plasters mixed sizes
- ✓ Micropore tape
- ✓ Zinc oxide tape
- ✓ First aid leaflet
- ✓

Missing Children Policy.

Children will be registered before walking to the forest, counted as they enter and again when leaving the site to return to school.

No child is allowed to leave the forest unless given permission by an adult or accompanied by an adult (dependant on age of child)

Any child thought to be likely to escape will be checked for their whereabouts during the session.

If a child is thought to be missing, another head count will be taken. If it doesn't tally, then the register will be taken again to clarify who is missing.

One member of staff will remain with the group, one will check the woods and one will check the playing field and school grounds.

If the missing child cannot be located, the Forest school leader will call the school to check the child hasn't returned inside and the senior management team will be informed.

All the children will return to school.

Parents and police will be informed by the Primary Head.

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy safeguarding children's policy and procedures will always be adhered to at all times.

Lockdown Policy



Forest School Leader
receives call from Primary
Head.

Advised if to remain
outside or return to school
building.



Return to school

- Forest school leader to calmly inform all other staff that lockdown has been called.
- Staff to gather all pupils to base camp calmly and quickly.
- Head count taken.
- Fire (if lit) put out by forest school leader and all tools locked away.
- Return to school if safe to do so, Forest School Leader at front and another adult at end of line.

Stay Outside

- Forest School Leader to inform other staff.
- Recall all children to base camp (if needed)
- Forest School Leader to put out fire and lock away all tools.
- Move group to the back of woods, until all clear or further instructions are given by Primary Head.

Clothing Policy.

For the children to be able to enjoy Forest schools, they need to be protected from the weather. Clothing will get wet and muddy so old clothes are best. Long sleeved tops and long trousers are to be worn both in summer and winter, to protect from insect bites, stings or light scratches.

Forest school staff will ensure children are dressed appropriately before the session starts.

As a responsible person, the Forest school leader can exclude any child they think is inappropriately dressed for Forest school activities.

Winter Clothing

- Long sleeved t-shirt/shirt
- Long Trousers
- Vest
- Jumper/Fleece
- Warm hat
- Gloves (not mittens)
- Warm socks (or 2 pairs thin socks)
- Thermal underwear (if desired)
- An old coat or one that can get dirty
- Sturdy shoes

Summer Clothing

- Sun hat
- Sun Cream (child will apply themselves)
- Light long-sleeved top
- Light long trousers
- Trainers

N.B Wellington Boots need to be provided (or walking boot type footwear) for all winter sessions.

Waterproof over-trousers and jacket are desirable but not compulsory.

Food/Eating Policy.

Once the Forest schools leader is happy that the children understand the fire safety rules, there may be the opportunity to enjoy some basic campfire cooking. All the food will have been prepared by a member of staff holding a food hygiene certificate and stored/transported to the site in a safe and hygienic way.

- Before handling any food, the children will be able to wash their hands using cold water and soap in a bucket. Hand sanitizer will also be available.
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- All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is thoroughly cooked before children eat it.
- Children's food requirements will be checked before the session and any allergies catered for.
- Children will be taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and keeping the fire policy in mind.
- All food debris will be bagged and taken back into school to be disposed of leaving no trace in the forest. This is to avoid attracting vermin.
- Any utensils used will be taken back into school to be washed thoroughly by an adult ready for the next group/session.

Woodland Conservation Policy.

One of the principles of Tudor Grange Academy Samworth Forest school is to encourage an awareness of the environment and promote sustainability. The children will be taught to respect, appreciate and take responsibility for the world around them. We will talk about how to conserve our woodland area and how to counteract the impact our usage might have on the ecology of the woodland.

Tudor Grange Samworth is very fortunate to have direct access to its own woodland but with that comes the responsibility of working within the boundaries of a Tree preservation Order (TPO) covering the entire area.

With the above in mind, consideration will be given to the following:

- Any fire will be kept to one area of the woods to minimise damage to the ground and periodically moved to allow the ground to recover.
- Fires will be extinguished with a bucket of water and the cold ashes scattered around the site to avoid a build up of potassium in the soil.
- The amount of deadwood collected by the children will be enough to sustain small fires and no more. Bags of kindling and logs will be brought in from time to time to allow a supply of deadwood to build up again.
- Green wood needed for creative activities will be brought in from another source and NOT CUT FROM OUR WOODS.
- Children will be educated not to pick anything that is growing.
- The Forest School leader will ensure that woodland species are conserved.
- An ecological impact assessment of the site will be done and will link into a three year site management/development plan.

Fire Safety Policy.

The forest school leader will ensure all children and adults participating in forest school sessions which involve fires and or storm kettles, will do so safely and will aim to minimise any risks to an acceptable level.

Location of Fires.

- Campfire area will be enclosed by logs to prevent the spread of fire
- The storm kettle will only be used on bare, flat ground to avoid it falling over or setting fire to the forest floor.
- The campfire area will be monitored and moved if necessary, to minimise damage caused to the forest floor as set out in our Woodland Conservation policy.

Positioning of pupils and adults.

- Seating logs will be placed 1.5 metres from the fire. The logs will be the boundary of the campfire area.
- An adult will remain with any fire, once it is lit.
- Pupils will have to walk around the outside of the seating logs when a fire is lit and only when permission is given by an adult.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything into the fire.
- If the wind is causing the smoke to blow in the pupils faces, the seating logs will be moved by an adult to a better position.

Types of fire.

- Storm kettle fire (Kelly kettle)- small fire within the base of the kettle. Used to heat the water in the kettle for hot drinks.
- Fire Bowl- medium sized fire used for warmth and toasting food items.
- Fire on bare ground-medium fire used for cooking food on and for warmth.

Fire safety and responsibility.

- Only adults are permitted to light fires until a child is deemed ready with 1:1 supervision.
- Fires are lit using a fire steel, cotton wool and petroleum jelly.

- NO flammable liquids are to be used.
- NO plastics are to be burnt.
- Sticks and wood will be placed onto the fire, not thrown. Hands should not go directly over any fire.
- Fire gloves must always be worn by the adult (or child) when dealing with the fire.

Extinguishing.

- If possible, all fuel must be burnt off to ash.
- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session and not left to burn out.
- Water should always be to hand during a campfire session.
- The fire must be damped down with water and all embers put out.
- Any large build up of ash will be spread out over the forest floor when totally cold to enable natural decomposition and to lessen the impact on the forest floor.

Tool safety Policy.

To enhance learning, development and physical skills, the children will be provided access to a range of hand tools.

Using hand tools is an important part of a child's Forest school journey as it enables them to develop new, practical skills which in turn increases self-confidence. The children will be taught how to use the tools safely and to treat them with respect. The staff to child ratio will be increased in sessions where tools are used, and only age appropriate tools will be used.

Guidelines for tool safety (also see tool risk assessments)

- Adult to child ratio will vary depending on tool used. The ratio will vary between 1:1 to 1:4.
- Small tools will be kept in a locked box and only un-locked by adults.
- Tools will be counted out and in when in use in the woods.
- Adult and child sized rigger gloves will be used and worn when necessary.
- Children must listen to a tools talk given by the Forest school leader before they use any tool.
- If found messing around with or using tools in a dangerous manner, a child will lose permission to use them again.
- Forest school staff and volunteers will always model safe use of tools.
- Volunteer adults will be shown how to use the tools safely before they can work with the children.

Food/Eating Policy.

Once the Forest schools leader is happy that the children understand the fire safety rules, there may be the opportunity to enjoy some basic campfire cooking. All the food will have been prepared by a member of staff holding a food hygiene certificate and stored/transported to the site in a safe and hygienic way.

- Before handling any food, the children will be able to wash their hands using cold water and soap in a bucket. Hand sanitizer will also be available.
- All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is thoroughly cooked before children eat it.
- Children's food requirements will be checked before the session and any allergies catered for.

- Children will be taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and keeping the fire policy in mind.
- All food debris will be bagged and taken back into school to be disposed of leaving no trace in the forest. This is to avoid attracting vermin.
- Any utensils used will be taken back into school to be washed thoroughly by an adult ready for the next group/session.

Tree Climbing Policy.

Within our wonderful Forest area there are two mature trees that are suitable for children to climb. These will be clearly identified by a colourful flag.

The trees will be checked for loose or rotten branches and the ground surrounding the trees will also be checked for hazards/sharp objects before any climbing takes place. If the climbing of the trees is seen to be causing damage to either tree, then it will cease to happen as we are responsible for the care and protection of all the trees within the forest area.

- Only one child climbing a tree at any one time.
- Tree climbing is NOT allowed in adverse weather conditions (wet weather /high winds/frost).
- Children will be allowed to climb as high as they feel safe to do with an absolute maximum of 3.5 metres from floor level. This level will be marked by coloured tape.
- Extra caution to be taken if climbing in wellington boots.
- Adult to child ratio 1:1 .

Toileting Policy

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before beginning a session and again at the end of the session.

Should a child need to go to the toilet during a session they can use the eco - friendly composting toilet situated in the woods. This toilet is cleaned before and after each session and hand sanitizer is offered for cleaning hands.

If a child refuses to use the outdoor toilet, they can be escorted back into school but this will impact on the session taking place due to losing a member of staff and altering the ratio.