

Forest School Handbook



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The Best Kind of Classroom

This is the best kind of classroom;
No walls, just sky and trees.

This is the best kind of classroom;
No radiators, just a gentle breeze.

You can learn well here, as birds sing, about your place
In the scheme of things.

This is the best kind of classroom;
It's a journey through time and space
From the smallest seed to the largest tree
This is a forest and a learning place to be
This is the best kind of classroom

Where the seasons

Don't happen in books

Where the learning is watching and thinking and talking
Any everyone notices, everyone looks.

By Ian MacMillan

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The policies and procedures set out in this Handbook are in addition to the company's policies and do not replace them. All policies are available at www.wisbechdaynursery.co.uk

1. What is Forest School?

Forest School is based on Scandinavian origins, where an active outdoor lifestyle is encouraged for adults and children alike. There is a strong belief that nature and movement are essential to a child's overall development and wellbeing. The current manifestation of Forest School originated in Sweden in the 1950's and has developed throughout the decades. Forest Schools' philosophy is built upon the desire to provide children with an education that encourages an appreciation of the natural world, which will foster throughout their life.

Forest School was first introduced into the UK in 1993 by a group of nursery nurses from Somerset who had visited a Danish Forest School. Children freely exploring their environment were seen to grow in confidence, take responsibility for their own learning and show a greater appreciation for the natural world. They were so impressed with this ethos they began their own programme. Forest School has become widely accepted across the UK as a valuable mode of learning for children of all ages, enabling children to work at their own pace, building their self-esteem, confidence and knowledge of the natural world.

Six principles of Forest School

Forest School is a long term, repetitive learning process that uses a natural outdoor space.

Forest School empowers children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

Forest School promotes holistic, individualised learning and development. It is for all ages and abilities and its ethos is fully inclusive.

Forest School encourages emotional growth, self-esteem, confidence and independence

Forest School is facilitated by qualified Level 3 Forest school Practitioners.

Forest School instils a deep respect and awareness for the natural world and reconnects participants to their environment.



2. Our Forest School

Our Forest School site is in the nursery grounds. Forest School sessions are offered throughout the year, but sessions are planned to take into consideration the need to allow for ecological regeneration. Children in all nursery rooms, aged 6 months to 11 years, attend Forest School sessions.

Our ratios for Forest School follow nursery policy.

3. Environmental impact

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave.

4. Our Forest School rules

- We are always polite, kind and considerate to each other
- We always listen to each other and grown ups
- We always answer if we hear "1, 2, 3, where are you?"
- We always come back if we hear the whistle
- We look after our plants
- We try not to pick living things, if we do, we remember to say thank you.
- We are careful and aware when we are using our sticks, when you carry a stick shorter than your arm (but make sure you are not too close to anybody), longer light sticks can be dragged behind us, heavier sticks you need to ask a friend to help.
- We don't throw sticks or pull them from a living tree.
- Stay outside the fire circle, don't walk through
- Do not put fingers or anything else near our mouths and clean our hands when we go back to nursery.

5. Learning and Development

The Forest School approach to learning is holistic and in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It covers all areas of the EYFS and allows children to learn and develop in their own way and at their own pace.

Additional benefits of Forest School

Physical health – Increased physical activity reduces the chance of obesity and increases bone density (reducing chances of osteoporosis) whilst increased oxygen levels from being outside can increase brain function.

Mental health – Spending time in green spaces reduces Cortisol (a stress chemical) levels in the brain and therefore has a calming influence. The reduction in cortisol also increases receptivity for building neural pathways (learning) in the brain

Social – Playing outside can help to develop communication, teambuilding and language skills.

Risk awareness – Playing outside allows children to learn about risk assessment and risk taking. Children that are exposed to acceptable levels of risk at a young age are less likely to make bad judgements in the future.

Behaviour – Due to the calming effect on the brain and the increase in physical space outside, improved behaviour is often noticed.

6. Safeguarding children and confidentiality

Wisbech Day Nursery fully recognises the responsibility to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.

Our policy applies to all staff, paid and unpaid, working in the setting, including volunteers, all of whom have a vital role in safeguarding children. Concerned parents may also contact the setting's Designated Person/s for Child Protection who are: Sarah Vick, Jasmin West, Nicola Glover and Lynn Clifton

This policy sets out how the setting complies with statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who attend the setting. The policy will be reviewed regularly, annually as a minimum.

We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and good lines of communication with a trusted adult help to protect children. The setting will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are actively listened to.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the setting whom they can approach if they feel worried or in difficulty.

We will follow Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board (CPSCB) procedures. The setting has regard for Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and What to Do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused 2015 (Department for Education).

Please also refer to the Companies Safeguarding Policy available at

www.wisbechdaynursery.co.uk

Confidentiality

Wisbech Day Nursery recognises that we hold sensitive/confidential information about children and their families and the staff we employ. This information is used to meet children's needs, for registers, invoices and emergency contacts. We store all records in a locked cabinet or on the office computer with files that are password protected in line with data protection principles. Any information shared with the staff team is done on a 'need to know' basis and treated in confidence.

Legal requirements

- We follow the legal requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2017 and accompanying regulations about the information we must hold about registered children and their families and the staff working at the nursery

- We follow the requirements of the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 with regard to the storage of data and access to it.

Please also refer to the Companies Confidentiality Policy available at

www.wisbechdaynursery.co.uk

7. Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

In our Forest School, we are committed to equal opportunity for all and we create an environment in which people feel equally valued, regardless of their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and all contributions are valued.

8. Dealing with discriminatory behaviour.

Wisbech Day Nursery does not tolerate discriminatory behaviour and take action to tackle discrimination. We believe that parents have a right to know if discrimination occurs and what actions the nursery will take to tackle it. We follow our legal duties in relation to discrimination and record all incidents any perceived or actual relating to discrimination on any grounds and report these where relevant to children's parents and the registering authority.

We tackle discrimination by:

- Expecting all staff in the nursery to be aware of and alert to any discriminatory behaviour or bullying taking place
- Expecting all staff to intervene firmly and quickly to prevent any discriminatory behaviour or bullying, this may include behaviour from parents and other staff members
- Expecting all staff to treat any allegation seriously and report it to the nursery manager. Investigating and recording each incident in detail as accurately as possible and making this record available for inspection by staff, inspectors and parents where appropriate, on request. The nursery manager is responsible for ensuring that

incidents are handled appropriately and sensitively and entered in the record book. Any pattern of behaviour should be indicated. Perpetrator/victim's initials may be used in the record book as information on individuals is confidential to the nursery

- Informing: the parents of the child(ren) who are perpetrators and/or victims should be informed of the incident and of the outcome, where an allegation is substantiated following an investigation
- Excluding or dismissing any individuals who display continued discriminatory behaviour or bullying, but such steps will only be taken when other strategies have failed to modify behaviour. This includes any employees where any substantiated allegation after investigation will incur our disciplinary procedures (please see the policy on disciplinary procedures).

Please refer to Wisbech Day Nursery's policy guidance for full details.

9. Using and Storing Tools

Please note, we do not use tools without a qualified Forest School Leader

General rules

- Tools will be kept maintained and in good order
- Tools will be inspected before each session
- Children and adults will not use tools until they have been shown how to use them
- Tools will be kept in the toolbox or designated area when not in use
- Tools will be removed from the toolbox only by the Forest School Leader
- We never run with tools
- Tools will be counted at the beginning and end of each session
- Permission to use tools can only be given by the Forest School Leader
- Permission to use tools may be withdrawn at the Forest School Leader's discretion if the rules are not followed
- The working area should have sufficient space (at least two arms and a tool away from anyone else) and be clear of trip hazards

Bow Saw rules

- Bow saws must have a blade guard on when not in use
- Supervision ratios are 1:2
- Bow saws are used to cut anything larger than a 2 pence piece
- A glove must be worn on the helping hand (children and adult sizes are available)
- Wood being sawn must be supported on a safe cutting bench
- The crossed hands method must be used to start sawing

Lopper rules

- Supervision ratios are 1:2
- Loppers are used to cut anything smaller than a 2 pence piece
- Loppers are used with bare hands

Knife rules

- Knives must have a sheath on when not in use
- Supervision ratios are 1:1
- Knives are always used on the outside of the body and away from the body
- A glove must be worn on the helping hand (children and adult sizes are available)



10. Fires

At Wisbech Day nursery we encourage all Children to take part in fire lighting was taking part in forest school sessions. We aim to ensure participants do so safely and with little risk as possible

Preparation

1. The designated fire area should be clear of debris, leaf litter and trip hazards away from low hanging branches
2. The inner circle fire must be enclosed by logs to prevent the fire from spreading
3. Outer seating locks must be 1.5 m away from the inner circle
4. Any shelter above the fire must be of a safe height and made of fire retardant material
5. The Forest School leader must check before each session to ensure it is safe to have a fire. Fires will never be lit in unsafe conditions such as high winds and extreme dry weather

Safety Equipment

- Fire Blankets
- Fire Gloves
- First Aid Kit
- Flowing Water for treating burns
- A minimum of a 5 litre container of water for extinguishing the fire

This equipment must be present at all times when taking part in a Forest School Session.

Only qualified Forest School Leaders can be responsible for a Fire

Never leave a fire unattended

Fires will only be lit with appropriate kindling and wood

All Fires must be extinguished at the end of each session



11. Health and Safety

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- All staff and adult helpers must read this Handbook and relevant risk assessments before participating in Forest School sessions.
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- The Forest School Leader is the person responsible for Health and Safety during Forest School sessions. Essential survival equipment will be carried by a senior member of staff and will include:
 - First Aid kit
 - Burns kit (if fires are planned)
 - Accident book
 - Clean water

In addition, the Forest School Leader and staff will carry the internal Walkie Talkie to maintain contact with the main nursery site.

Wisbech Day Nursery accepts our legal obligations under the health and safety at work act 1974.

12. Accidents and First Aid

Deborah, Amanda Sarah and Caitlin all hold a Paediatric First Aid certificate and there will always be at least one other member of staff present with this certificate

In the event of illness or injury to any child or adult during a Forest School session, first aid will be administered by a qualified first aider.

All accidents will be recorded in the Nursery Accident book and parents/guardians will be notified and asked to sign the record.

13. Emergency Action Plan and Prevention Procedures for Forest School

Prior to each session:

Each staff member and volunteer involved in the forest school session will be made aware of their role in the case of emergency and familiarise themselves with the emergency whistle and procedures. The named First Aider to be identified to all adults prior to the session.

Essential Items to take to Forest School:

For each forest school session essential items needed will be taken into the Forest Schools area:

- Register containing names and any relevant medical information.
- The Nursery Walkie Talkies to ensure contact with the Nursery building.
- Prescribed medication with written instructions if required.
- Emergency details for emergency services.
- Emergency Outdoor First Aid Kit and Burns Kit.
- Accident Form.
- Risk Assessments.
- Emergency Whistle.
- Welfare Kit containing tissues, hand gel and carrier bag.
- Snacks, drinks and cups (bin bag for rubbish).
- Bottle of water.

In Case of An Accident

- Immediate assistance is to be given to the injured/ill person.
- Assessment and intervention to be carried out.
- If emergency services are required immediately:

DIAL 999

Postcode:- PE13 3DD

Grid Reference:- TF462100

(to be given to emergency services)

- Otherwise contact nursery office for them to request an ambulance.
- First aider to stay with the injured person at all times. Named adult to go and direct Emergency Services to injured person.
- Forest School Leader/named adult to issue instructions to staff to gather all children to designated area eg. Fire Circle.
- Nursery to contact child's parents/guardians/staff's next of kin.
- If injured child is on any medication this must go with them to the hospital.

Fire:

- 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.
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire.
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity.
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.

14. Risk Assessments

Risk management is an important part of Forest School. It is concerned with the identification of significant risks of harm and is based on the likelihood of an incident occurring and the severity of any injury or harm if it does.

There are four different types of risk assessment used:

Site assessment

This assesses the risks associated with the Forest School site itself. Each layer of the site is assessed at least once each half term and more frequently following adverse weather conditions.

Daily assessment

This is carried out before the start of each Forest School session and includes a review of the site and current weather conditions.

Activity assessment

An assessment of each planned activity will be carried out before the activity takes place.

This will include activities using tools or fire.

Ongoing assessment

This is a dynamic, on-the-spot, assessment carried out continually during each session to take account of changing situations such as a change in weather conditions or a change in planned activities.

All risk assessments are recorded and current risk assessments are kept in the office at Wisbech Day Nursery.

15. Clothing

“There’s no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”

This is an old Scandinavian saying which is of great importance for Forest School as sessions take place in almost all weathers.

It is important that all participants (children and adults) are suitably dressed for Forest School. Otherwise, they will feel uncomfortable and miserable and are unlikely to enjoy the experience.

It is recommended that long sleeves and long trousers are worn throughout the year to provide protection against sunburn, bites, stings and ticks. Layers are the best idea as

temperatures and conditions can change significantly during a session. Plenty of warm clothing is essential on very cold days.

Footwear needs to be sturdy. Sandals or flip flops are NOT suitable for Forest School. Wellies or strong boots are best and remember to add an extra pair of socks in cold weather as cold feet can make you feel particularly miserable.

Waterproof jackets AND waterproof trousers are essential if there is any chance of rain or if the ground is wet. Wisbech Day Nursery has a supply of these for children, but we encourage parents to bring in their child's own waterproof clothing for Nursery Forest School Sessions.

Sun hats and sun cream are essential in the summer. These recommendations apply to adults as well as children.

16. Poor Weather Procedures

Forest School sessions take place in all seasons and in all weathers – sun, rain, snow, ice, etc. In extreme weather conditions such as strong winds or thunderstorms, Forest School sessions may be cancelled. In the event of cancellation, a session will take place in the playroom instead.

In cold weather, shelters will be erected, and activities will be planned to keep children warm.

17. Food and Hygiene

Food safety and cooking procedure

Food and drink preparation and sitting together whilst eating and drinking are important parts of Forest School. This procedure has been devised using company policies and guidance from “safer food, better business”.

We will provide hand washing facilities at each session where food and/or drink is prepared and will ensure that all staff and children follow the Forest School food hygiene rules.

Forest School food hygiene rules

Everyone involved in Forest School should be involved in food safety and follow the food hygiene rules below.

- Staff must hold a current Food Hygiene Level 2 Certificate.
- Wash hands before and during cooking.
- Anti-bacterial wipes will be used to wipe down surfaces before use. These must be stored away from children.
- Avoid handling food when possible, and instead use spoons, tongs or other suitable implements.
- Cover any open wounds to the skins with a waterproof dressing.
- Keep food that is waiting to be cooked separate from food that is ready to be eaten.
- Use separate chopping boards for preparing different foods, especially raw and ready-to-eat food.
- Prepare food on a suitable surface, e.g. chopping board, cup, saucepan and not on the ground.
- Ensure food is cooked thoroughly before serving. Food should be cooked right through and piping hot in the middle.
- Not reheat food more than once.
- Keep utensils clean and regularly wash tea towels and cloths.
- Store food in clean plastic containers with non-leaking lids.
- Take all rubbish and food scraps away with them at the end of the session to avoid attracting vermin to the site.

Food Storage

- All perishable food must be stored in a cool box / bag and wrapped in appropriate packaging to avoid attracting insects and vermin.
- Food must never be left uncovered at any time.

- All unused food stuffs and packaging must be disposed of appropriately.
- Raw meats must be stored separately to cooked meats in a chilled container.
- Make sure products are used within the 'use by' date.

Food allergies and special dietary requirements:

Children's food intolerances will be shared with the Forest School leader by the children keyperson. This information will be used to plan what food and drink to provide during sessions, ensuring that the food and drink provided is suitable for all.

Water, soap and paper towels are available with children in Forest School to ensure good hygiene before cooking and eating.

18. Toileting

Children should be encouraged to use the toilet before they go into the Forest School Session. The area has a portable toilet for emergency use with a **portable sink**, otherwise children can use the toilet in the main playrooms. Before arriving for a Forest School session.

19. Complaints

Please follow the settings complaints procedure as displayed in the hallway and our website www.wisbechdaynursery.co.uk