



Forest School Policy

This policy is for Barleyhurst Park School and Barleyhurst Park Nursery.

Agreed by Governors: 25.01.2024

To be reviewed: Spring 2027

Introduction

Forest School is a holistic learning opportunity designed to allow children to develop confidence and self – esteem, while fostering a life-long love of the outdoors. At Barleyhurst Park’s Forest School, we intend to provide ‘freedom with purpose’. With hands-on, achievable tasks, we aim to inspire, encourage and enable our children to engage with nature, one another and the great outdoors.

Aims

- Provide children with outdoor experiences that encourage appreciation, awareness, and knowledge of the natural environment.
- Develop children’s self- esteem, resilience, and confidence by setting small, achievable tasks.
- Enable children to be independent, self-motivated and co-operative learners by giving them open-ended opportunities.
- Encourage children to take and manage measured risks which will help them be able to manage their emotions and cope with challenging situations.
- Learn with the seasons in all weathers. We will use nature to stimulate creative thinking and problem-solving skills, whilst having fun.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

In line with the forest school principle of promoting environmental awareness and encouraging sustainability, at Barleyhurst Park the children learn about respect and responsibility for the world around them. This will be modelled by the Forest School Leader in the use of recycled and sustainable resources. Our children will learn about the flora and fauna which inhabit our site, and how to protect them. This will be done through sessions focussed on observations such as invertebrate hunts, and habitat creation. Our rule, ‘no pick, no lick’, encourages children to enjoy their surroundings but not taking them apart.

What Happens at our Forest School?

Our sessions will involve practical activities which will build on the children’s skills, abilities, and confidence each week. As the weeks progress, the children will be given more freedom to explore and initiate their own learning. Our activities include:

- Den building;
- Team games;
- Bug hunts;
- Natural art;
- Knots;
- Creating bird feeders;
- Sorting natural materials;
- Animal tracking;
- Story- telling and drama;
- Free play.



Our activities are designed to support the National Curriculum delivery and link closely with Science, Maths, Art, English, and Design and Technology.

With regular sessions we aim for our children cultivate a love and respect for the natural world, improve their social and emotional skills, and develop a life-long love of learning.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of the adults and children is of paramount importance during all sessions and activities. Safe practice is reinforced through regular reminders. Forest School provides opportunities for children to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. They will also be developing risk assessment strategies that will enable them to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and others.

Duty of Care

To ensure all individuals (children, staff and volunteers) are safe and protected, the following is to be adhered to:

- Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Volunteers will be made aware of the school's Health and Safety, Child Protection and Equal Opportunity policies and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.
- All members of staff involved will have safeguarding training. Any concerns about a child's physical or mental wellbeing should be shared with the school's named Designated Safeguarding Lead, so that the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy can then be followed.
- Forest School Leaders delivering sessions will have an enhanced level DBS check.
- Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Any concerns will be reported via CPOMS.
- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times.
- Whistles are worn by Forest School Leaders, long sustained loud whistle indicates an emergency, and in this scenario everyone will gather immediately at the designated 'safe place' discussed at the start of each session.
- Tools and equipment are locked in the shed on the school field. The Forest School Leader will have access to this key and a spare key is in the main school office.

Emergency Kit Bag

The emergency kit bag will contain all relevant medical information and emergency contacts for every member of the group. The Forest School Leader will keep the emergency bag on her person.

Contents of kit are:

- Whistle;
- First aid kit – with survival bag;
- Mobile phone'
- Non antiseptic wet wipes.

Occasional Extra Equipment and Tools

- Tools for session;
- Camera;
- String and rope;



- High visibility boundary tape;
- Secateurs;
- Litter pickers.

In case of injury to adults or children

1. Forest School Leader to administer first aid to the casualty;
2. Ensure the safety of the remainder of the group;
3. Alert emergency services if necessary;
4. Inform school office if incident requires further medical treatment;
5. Information to parents;
6. Seek further aid if required.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Forest School Leader will have a full recognised Forest School qualification, enhanced level DBS and Paediatric First Aid qualification. She has the overall responsibility for:

- Planning of sessions including boundaries, activities and ethos;
- Liaison with school staff, governors and Forestry Commission Education Officer when appropriate;
- Safety and risk assessment including pre-checks (site and kit);
- Maintain an up- to- date list of medical details;
- Minimum staffing ratio of 1:15;
- Administration of first aid and responsibility of the first aid kit, write ups in accident book, mobile phone;
- Supervision of tool use and all tool kit security;
- Emergency procedures;
- Evaluations.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management

Risk assessments are in place to cover the following:

- Forest School site assessment;
- Forest School sessions;
- Tool use;
- Fire use.

These risk assessments can be found in the Forest School handbook.

Policy and Procedures for Tool use

Use of tools is an integral part of the forest school experience. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest School Leader.

- The introduction to each tool will be by an official 'tool talk'.
- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest School Leader at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest School Leader feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:4 maximum adult to child ratio.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out.



- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session by the Forest School Leader. Dirty equipment is cleaned.
- All resources and equipment are checked for wear and tear regularly. Damaged equipment is repaired or replaced.

Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires

Before lighting a fire, the following should be in place:

- Children have a secure knowledge of log circle safety: stand behind the logs, step over and sit down. Stand up, turn around and step over log.
- Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle.
- 10 litres of water in a closed container must be placed within easy reach of the Forest School Leader.
- Only the trained forest school practitioner will light the fire.
- The fire will be contained within the fire pit. The area around the pit will be cleared of debris, trip hazards and overhanging trees.
- The fire will be extinguished before the end of the session.
- The fire will not be lit during peak risk periods.
- Adults and children will wash their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods will be stored in airtight containers.
- All fire debris will be completely removed at the end of the session.
- The Forest School Leader is responsible for checking all allergies and intolerances.

Extreme Weather

In the event of fog, where visibility is limited, forest school sessions will take place in the Art Room. In the event of winds exceeding 35mph, forest school sessions will take place in the Art Room. In all other weathers, sessions will take place outside.

Equal Opportunities

All people involved in Forest School sessions will be treated with respect and equality. Our priority is to ensure that all children and adults have access to a safe and secure environment. We work to ensure that everyone involved feels that any contributions they make to our sessions will be listened to and appreciated. Please refer to school Equal Opportunities policy.