

**Matlock Bath Holy Trinity C of E  
Primary School**



**Forest School Parent's  
Handbook**

**September 2023**

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# Our Vision for a Forest School

## **What is a Forest School?**

‘Forest School is an inspirational process which offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-confidence through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.’  
(Forest School Association).

**At Matlock Bath Holy Trinity CofE Primary School we aim to help raise and encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned, interesting child-led approach through learning and play.**

## **The Forest School Principles:**

- 1:** Forest school is for all children, fostering opportunities for children to take risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.
- 2:** Forest school maximises the learning potential of our school nature area and the surrounding area through frequent and regular visits and experiences throughout the school year.
- 3:** Forest school builds on children’s innate motivation, positive attitudes and curiosity for learning, offering them opportunities to make choices and initiate learning for themselves.
- 4:** We will use a range of learner centred processes to create an environment for development and learning, promoting holistic development in all of those involved.
- 5:** It will be managed and led by a qualified Forest School Practitioner; Chris Layhe-Humphreys and Vicki Parkin are Level 3 Forest School Leaders.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be found at  
<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

## **Forest School Ethos**

At Matlock Bath Holy Trinity C of E Primary School we are committed to the ethos of Forest School and aim to:

- Fulfil every child's potential
- Develop a love of learning that creates independent and confident learners
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community
- Promote independence and self-esteem
- Promote positive behaviour to ensure the safe running of Forest School sessions.
- Provide appropriate adult-child ratios
- Support children to develop resilience and a 'can-do' attitude.

### **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 to set the rules which will be revisited at every session.

These include :

- 'No pick, No Lick , be careful how you carry a stick.'
- Respect for all living things, plants and trees.
- Staying within the boundaries and designated areas at all times – ' if you go past where the trees end you have gone too far and I won't be able to find you'.
- Adult 'spotter' supervision for tree climbing.

### **Adult role and responsibilities:**

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, 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 the children's needs.
- Encourage positive relationships based on mutual respect, whilst promoting honesty, politeness and kindness.
- 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, torrential rain causing flooding or icy paths.

***‘There is no such thing as bad weather... just bad clothing’.***

Suitable clothing is **essential** for everyone participating: we need to be adequately dressed in order to access the full learning potential of the session.

### **Children should wear:**

- Long sleeved t-shirt
- Trousers/Jeans, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches.
- Long socks, wellies or old trainers- in hot dry weather only.
- Waterproof over trousers, dungarees or all in ones if possible.
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be applied.
- During the colder months (Oct- Mar/Apr), extra layers should be worn such as fleece, leggings, tights, hats, gloves etc.
- Waterproof, warm coats are also required.

Children should arrive at school dressed in their Forest School clothes and bring a bag with their school uniform and shoes in to change into after the session, spare socks are advisable.

Due to the nature of Forest School sessions it is suggested that you do not send your child in any clothes which you mind getting dirty, muddy or wet.

## **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.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

All forest schools 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 on a need to know basis and kept confidentially within the school's Forest School Handbook.
- In case of emergency contact will be made via a runner to the school office who will then contact parents.
- 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 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 promotional purposes such as the school website: any child without this permission will be recorded in the Forest Schools Handbook.
- Only school cameras and ipads must be used for this purpose.
- Volunteers should only use the school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader.
- Mobile phones should be fully charged and only used for emergencies.

### **Observations.**

- Trained staff will be required to undertake observations and assessments of the children attending, as part of the curriculum and well-being scales.
- Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family.
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity in the strictest confidence.

## **Safeguarding at Forest School**

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Matlock Bath Holy Trinity C of E Primary School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

A summary of the policy is outlined 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.

**Matlock Bath Holy Trinity C of E Primary School safeguarding lead persons are Chris Layhe-Humphreys (Head Teacher), Flori Bors (Infant Teacher) and Vicki Parkin (Junior Teacher and SENDCo).**

## **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 or 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 the Forest School must meet prior to the session to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give notice as possible. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of adult to child.
- The Forest School Leader will have a fully charged mobile phone for emergency use.
- The Forest School site is managed and maintained by the Forest School Leader who 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's website.
- Basic session information will be shared with the children and staff prior to the session and rules discussed.
- Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the school office at the earliest opportunity.
- The Forest School Leader will be responsible for visiting the site before the children arrive to risk assess the area.



## **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 and written observations. All staff involved in Forest School will be responsible for gathering evidence, volunteers will be required to give feedback to the Forest School Leader.

Information gathered will be used to plan activities and next steps for children, particularly within the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Observations will also be shared with parents if required.

## **Forest School Hygiene Policy.**

### **Toileting :**

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet in school before leaving the school building.
- An adult with relevant DBS checks will accompany the children in groups to the toilet in KS1 should the need arise during the session.
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident they will be changed in accordance with the school personal care policy.

## **Practical skills and safe tool use**

### **General rules for tool use:**

- All tools must have an individual risk assessment in the Health and Safety folder.
- Ensure safe storage at school with nominated Forest School Leader access and responsibility.
- Ensure safe storage and responsibility by Forest School Leader at the Forest School site.
- Never walk around with tools.
- Always make sure tools are clean and sharp before using them.
- When using tools with children it should only be with the Forest School Leader.
- Always sit when using tools.
- Tools must only be used in the designated tool area.

### **Sheath knife:**

- Must be with the Forest School Leader.
- Always sit down when using the sheath knife.
- Ensure sheath knife is placed inside the sheath when not in use.
- Open the sheath knife away from you sitting down with plenty of room around you.
- Always use the sheath knife away from your body.
- Always insure that the children are supported when using the sheath knife on a suitable manageable ratio dependant on their age and experience.

**Bow Saw:**

- Ensure that the guard is in place when not in use.
- Must only be used with the Forest School Leader.
- Must only be used in the designated tool area.
- Must be used with a safety glove.
- Talk to the children about how to hold a bow saw.
- Ensure safe storage and safe handling in Forest School.

**Bill Hook:**

- Ensure that the guard is in place when not in use.
- Must only be used with the Forest School Leader.
- Must only be used in the designated tool area.
- Talk to the children about how to hit the Bill Hook.
- Ensure safe storage and safe handling in Forest School.