



Heygarth Primary School

Forest School in "The Heygarth Nest"



Handbook 2022/23

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1. Introduction to Forest School

"Nature is one of our greatest teachers"

What is Forest School?

Forest School is an inspirational programme that offers all of our children a regular opportunity to engage and appreciate the great outdoors in a Woodland setting. The opportunity that Forest School provides assists children to develop a respect and understanding for their environment. Forest School encourages children to take risks, initiate ideas and make their own choices all whilst experiencing nature and the world around them first hand.

History of Forest School

Originating in the 1950's in Scandinavian countries, this outdoor style of learning encouraged children to learn actively about nature and the world. At the time, these countries considered Forest School a very important part of Early Years Provision. In 1994, staff from Bridgwater College in Somerset visited Denmark to observe this style of learning and from here they transferred these cultural ideas back to the UK. Over the last 20 years, the Forest School approach has been adapted and developed to what we know it is today.

The 6 Principles of Forest School

In the UK, The Forest School ethos has six principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011.

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and

collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.

- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk-Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Principle 5: Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.

- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

Principle 6: Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School

2. Heygarth Forest School

"Not all classrooms have 4 walls"

Heygarth Forest School Vision and Ethos

At Heygarth Primary School, the vision for our Forest School programme will be centred on the inclusivity for all children. Learning will take place but it shall be child initiated and the focus will be on the how rather than the what. "How did it work? How can we make it better? How can we identify this? How can we move this? How can we light this? How can we make this?" Through Forest School sessions at Heygarth, we want to encourage children to become independent learners with an enthusiasm to be curious about the world around them. We want the children to think critically, creatively but most importantly feel comfortable to make mistakes AND learn from them. The Forest School approach will encourage holistic development, improve confidence and self-esteem and give children the opportunity to learn in a unique and exciting setting. The independence that Forest School will encourage shall initiate new and innovative ways for children to problem solve, cooperate, team build, fail and succeed.

At Heygarth Primary School we are committed to the ethos of Forest School which is based on a fundamental respect for the children and their right to play, their right to access the outdoors, their right to access risk and their right to access a range of emotions. Furthermore, a successful Forest School will help children to build resilience, encourage social interactions and develop their own understanding of the World around them.

The Heygarth Forest School will:

- Fulfil every child's potential, meet their individual needs and include all children.
- Develop a love of learning that encourages independence and sparks curiosity.
- Promote a secure and exciting learning environment
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community
- Promote children's self-esteem, self-awareness and self-confidence.
- Promote positive behaviour and relationships to ensure the Forest School sessions are run safely
- Plan sessions that will be open-ended to encourage child-initiated strategies and activities

Heygarth Forest School Staffing Structure

Forest School Lead:

Level 3 Certificate in Forest School Leadership

The Forest School leader is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the group and risk assesses the site, daily conditions and all activities before and during the session.

In July 2019 all staff participated in a CPD session based on introducing the Forest School. This ensured they understood the vision and ethos of the Heygarth Forest School when assisting in sessions.

Heygarth Forest School Code of Conduct

Entering the Forest: We will enter the Forest respectfully and know that when at Forest School specific expectations are in place. We will line up on the "magic river" and wait to be invited across using our magic "whoosh". We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.

Boundaries: Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. If you lose sight of a child shout '1,2,3, where are you?' The children will be taught to respond '1,2,3, I'm over here' through games that are played regularly.

Lighting a Fire: When lighting a fire, the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within designated fire circles.

Tree Climbing: An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree identified as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to

not be invasive to the children's exploration

Carrying and Transporting Materials: Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

Rope and String Use: We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

Picking up and playing with stones: Stones may be picked up and transported. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

Using Tools: All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. (See tool procedures).

Picking up and playing with sticks: Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Sticks must be carried pointing towards the floor. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown.

Eating and Drinking: Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Forest, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session (e.g. blackberry picking). Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.

Collecting wood: Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses - matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

Toileting: Before a Forest School session, children will be given the opportunity to go to the toilet. While at Forest school the children will be allowed to go to the

Foundation 1 (Nursery) toilets when needed as it is a small distance from the wood.

They will be accompanied by a TA or teacher.

Clothing: It is important that all children and staff have appropriate clothing suitable for all weather conditions. The Forest School leader will ensure that they carry items of spare clothing in the kit bags. If any child is considered inappropriately dressed for Forest School and alternative clothing cannot be found in school that child will remain at school

Winter: Vest or T-shirt long sleeved jumper, waterproof coat, socks, trousers, water proof trousers, wellies, hat, gloves and scarf.

Summer: T-shirt or top, light trousers, socks, trainers, shoes or wellington boots (sandals and flip-flops are not suitable), sunhat, sunglasses (if required). Participants are also responsible for providing their own insect repellent and sunscreen.

Walking up Procedure

Children are familiar with safe walking procedures. Staff will give instructions, such as single file walking, paired walking where applicable. During progressive sessions children are gaining skills in performing risk assessments and will become more aware of dangers of moving up to site.

Weather

Before the session use a local forecast to assess safety of running. The site should be assessed prior to taking out a group. Try and leave cancellation as late as possible. Below is a short outline of conditions that may lead to a cancellation of a session:

- A rough guide is don't enter woods in winds of force 4 increasing to 5.
- In windy conditions keep a watchful eye on the surrounding tree branches.
- A rule of thumb is to leave the wood if substantial tree branches are blowing at 20 degrees or more.
- Be aware that it is possible for tree limbs and branches to drop on any day.
- Check Young Peoples clothing before going out on cold days.
- Carry spare clothing and a shelter sheet, such as a parachute.
- If the children are getting too cold either warm them up through exercise, shared shelter, sitting by the fire or going inside.
- In the case of extreme heat, children will be encouraged to drink plenty of water, wear suitable clothing, seek shelter from the sun when necessary and staff will monitor the situation and end session if necessary.
- Where children are distressed by extreme weather conditions a decision can be made to end a session either for that child or the in some cases the whole group. It is important to remember emotional wellbeing is important as physical wellbeing.

Communication Strategy

Prior to children beginning their Forest School sessions, all children must have parental permission for them to participate in what the Forest Schools sessions are likely to entail.

An initial letter will be sent to parents explaining when their child will start their forest school sessions, what clothing they will require to send in and inviting them to an information evening so they can gain a greater understanding of the vision and ethos of Forest School.

To communicate on a more regular level, a Heygarth Forest School twitter account is in use and once photo consent has been confirmed, photographs of the children participating in Forest School shall be uploaded after each session.

Forest School leader shall take photos of the children during sessions and create "Forest School class Scrapbooks" for the children which they will take with them each year to their new class. These scrapbooks can be shared with parents and carers during parents evening.

Monitoring and Assessment

Forest School leaders will create an initial plan for each session to stimulate ideas and challenges for the children. After each session the Forest School leader will discuss the session with the children regarding what they enjoyed, what went well and what they would like to do next. This reflection time between the Forest School leader and children will feed into corresponding sessions to ensure they are planned around the children's interests and ways to further develop skills.

During Forest School sessions, observations will be made on the children or class and recorded into class Forest School scrapbooks. These scrapbooks will contain pictures, notes, children's achievements and children's own comments and reflections should they wish. This learning journey of their forest school experience will be carried through each year at Heygarth Primary School. Due to the nature of Forest School, observations will be carried out as subtly as possible and interaction and support for the children during the session will always be a priority over evidence collecting.

Forest school leader will meet with the class teacher after each session to explain the purpose of the session, how it went, and ways to encourage the children to progress further and what their current interests are. This will also create an opportunity for the Forest School leader to discuss any behavioural or pastoral issues with the class teacher.

Heygarth Forest School timetable

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| Autumn term | Forest school leader to undertake Level 3 training. | Forest School sessions to commence for Foundation 1 children every Wednesday. Forest School sessions to commence for Foundation 2 and KS1 in 6 week blocks on a rotation system. |
| Spring term | Staff to attend Outdoor First Aid training Forest School sessions to commence weekly for Foundation 1 children on a Wednesday. Forest School sessions to commence in 6 week blocks for Foundation 2 children (date to be decided) | Forest School sessions to continue for Foundation 1 children every Wednesday. Forest School sessions to continue for Foundation 2 and KS1 in 6 week blocks on a rotation system. |
| Summer term | Forest School after school club to commence for KS1 children. Attend Forest School Level 3 assessment week in June. | Forest School sessions to continue for Foundation 1 children every Wednesday. Forest School sessions to continue for Foundation 2 and KS1 in 6 week blocks on a rotation system. Forest School after school club to commence for KS2. |

Heygarth Forest School Site

Heygarth Forest School shall be referred to as "The Nest" and will take place within the school grounds. The Forest School area is not accessible to the public.

"The Nest" is positioned on the school field and is a clearly defined area with several medium sized trees formed throughout the site. Over 100 trees were planted in Autumn 2018 in a lower down part of the school grounds and this will form a barrier between the metal fence that can currently be seen which separates the community gardens and the school grounds. By planting a variety of trees, we hope to develop a deeper diversity of flora and fauna within the area. Funding will be applied for to purchase a secure fence which will go around the perimeter of Forest School and will include two lockable gates. This fence has been designed through collaboration with a company called "The Earth Skills Project". They have designed a fence that will create a more authentic feel for the children in the Forest Area as well as making it more secure for both the children and the actual site. Furthermore, it will define our Forest School site even more and ensure it is visible for the children and recognisable as a separate area. Prior to any Forest School sessions taking place, a safety sweep will be completed to minimise risk and ensure the site is safe and secure (see appendices).

As part of Forest School, the sessions will educate the children to minimise their impact on the area. We will teach the children to "leave no trace" meaning that the next people to visit the area should not be aware that anybody has been there prior to them. It will also educate the children on the flora and fauna within the site and how to respect and recognise these. Wood can only be collected from the ground layer of our woodland and shelters should normally be demolished and imported materials taken back into school at the end of each session.

Site Name: Heygarth Primary

School Address: Heygarth Primary

School (Wirral), Heygarth Road,

Eastham,

Wirral,

CH62 8AG

Grid Reference: SJ351803

The site shall be managed by the Forest School leader who will risk assess the site prior to any forest school activity taking place. Some aspects of site management will be conducted by the children participating for example the removal of deadwood and utilising it for fire purposes. Any animal homes including birds' nests will be left untouched and the care and protection of all animals will be included in the learning taking place at Forest School. For aspects of site management which are beyond the capability and knowledge of the Forest School Leader, they will seek advice from the Headteacher as to whether this can be completed by the caretaker or an external company.

Site management plan for Heygarth Primary School:

Year 1 .

- Remove any rubbish, deadwood and nettles.
- Establish a Fire Circle using available logs.
- Build a wood pile for natural habitat.
- Plant a maximum 100 tree saplings to separate Forest School Area with current metal fence.

Year 2 & 3

- Continued removal of nettles and brambles.
- Continued clearance of rubbish from the site.
- Plant additional tree saplings which will form boundaries around the forest school area.
- Establish a wood pile for natural habitat.
- Purchase a secure boundary fence which will be installed around the Forest School Site.
- Install lockable gate between Forest School area and playground.
- Install den building poles which will represent tree trunks for the children to utilise when forming shelters

Forest School Session Expectations

Some of the typical activities that can take place during a forest school session include:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying flora and fauna
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Tracking games
- Cooking on an open fire
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities
- Mud Kitchen

A typical Forest School Session

1. The session starts with participants getting ready to go outside by putting on appropriate clothing - waterproof coats, trousers and wellington boots. We go through rules and routines whilst still in class and children help gather any resources we need to take out with us.
2. The group then walks to the Forest School site and after crossing the magic river they will gather at the Fire circle. The circle is central to everything that happens at Forest School. It is a focal point where the group assembles and socialises. At the start of the session, participants and Leaders sit together and talk about what they did and particularly enjoyed doing at the last session, and what they are planning to do during the current one. Many activities take place in or around the circle, such as natural art and woodwork.
3. Half way through or at the end of each session participants gather together to have a drink and a snack. This may include helping to light a fire. Early sessions, however, will involve participants getting to know the site and learning basic safety rules. They then move on to more complex and detailed tasks and are given more "free time" for personalised learning.
4. At the end of each session, participants help Leaders to pack away the tools and materials they have been using and help to return the woodland to the state in which they found it.
5. The group then reassemble and reflect together about how they felt the session went and what they would like to do next time in order to consolidate their skills or progress further.

Heygarth Forest School Rules

1. Listen carefully to the instructions of the Forest School Leaders at all times.
2. Look after yourself and others including plants and animals.
3. No pick, no lick!
4. Leave no trace.
5. Have fun!



Forest School Equipment

In addition to equipment suited to the planned activities the Forest School leader will always take out an emergency bag. The contents of the emergency bag will vary depending on the group and the time of year as well as weather conditions. Contents of the bag may also vary as a result of risk assessments. However, there are some essential items that should be carried on every session.

Essential Items:

- First Aid Kit (appropriate for number of people out during sessions; kit to be regularly checked and restocked as necessary)
- Emergency procedures
- Medical information of all in group (including adult helpers and leaders of sessions)
- Risk assessments
- Means of communication (walkie talkie)
- Clean water
- Emergency whistle
- Accident sheets
- Medication for individuals (clearly labelled in a storage box and staff trained to administer it and parental consent received)

Other Possible Items: Bivi bag, blanket, wet wipes, hand gel, spare clothing; burns kit; fire blanket; torch; emergency fire kit; knife; emergency shelter (parachute).

Forest School equipment shall be stored in the shed in the Foundation 1 playground. Forest School equipment will be stored in labelled boxes and equipment **MUST** be signed in and out before and after each session (see appendix 2 for signing in and out sheet). At the end of each session, equipment used should be cleaned if appropriate and returned to corresponding labelled box. Children must carry the equipment out to the Forest School site and learn to take responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the resources.

3. Policies and Procedures

Daily operating procedure

Before the session:

- A five-minute Forest School Planning form will be completed considering children's interests and learning points from previous session.
- The Forest School leader will visit the site and assess any new hazards.
- The Forest School leader will set up for the session by ensuring the fire pit and circle is prepared.
- All equipment required for the session will be checked by the Forest School Leader and placed into boxes ready to be carried to the site.
- Tools will be checked by a second member of staff to ensure they are safe for use.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure all staff participating in the session have read this handbook including all risk assessments and are familiar with the structure of the session.

Before the walk up:

- Register: Register to be completed by class teacher
- Forest School leader to check children are appropriately dressed
- Ensure children have water bottles (only in very warm weather).
- Make sure ALL children have been to the toilet.
- Head count of children.
- Distribute equipment to children who will work in pairs or small groups to carry the equipment to the Forest School site.

During the session:

- All children to start their session by sitting around the Fire Circle, discussing what they would like to do or achieve.
- Forest School leader to remind the children of the Forest School rules and reiterate how to stay safe during the session.
- An initial game shall be played such as "1, 2, 3 where are you?" or other games which encourage team work and communication skills.
- Basic activities and equipment to be set up for the children to access. The children are to use the equipment to initiate their own ideas and challenges for the session. However, activities involving tools, rope or fire will be directed and overseen by the Forest School Leader.
- Ongoing risk assessment to be carried out by Forest School Leader.
- Observe children and photograph for evidence.
- Challenge children in order to further develop their learning primarily through questioning.
- Regular head count of children.

After the session:

- End the session sitting around the fire circle. If the fire has been used during the session ensure it is completely extinguished. Ask the children what they have enjoyed and what they would like to do next week. Were there things that didn't go well? Discuss

why and ways forward.

- Pack up equipment into appropriate boxes and distribute back to children. Tools including gardening equipment will be counted out and back into the boxes and signed by Forest School leader.
- Walk back towards the main school building. Children to take wellies off just outside the door and walk into school carrying their wellies.
- Children to wash their hands and then return to their classroom.
- Equipment to be left by Foundation 1 shed so that Forest School leader can check all equipment in preparation for the next session. This will include a tool check and tool maintenance.
- The session is then reviewed and evaluated. Forest school leader will discuss any observations with the other adults who have attended the session and will review the session in general. Evaluate the plan for the session that has just been completed and then plan for the next session taking due consideration of all observations and comments made.

In the event of extreme weather (high winds, thunder or lightning or severe cold weather), Forest Schools outside will be cancelled and indoor activities linked to the planned session will be carried out instead by the Forest School leader.

Emergency Operating Procedure

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| First Aid | <p>Minor injuries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Any minor injuries to be treated at the Forest School site using available First Aid equipment. Forest school leader or other First Aid trained staff to administer first aid, Forest School accident form (see appendix 5) to be completed and signed. Copy to be given to parents. Child to be monitored for the rest of the session. <p>Major injuries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Check for danger first. If it is safe approach the casualty and check their airways, breathing and circulation. Administer First Aid if it is appropriate.2. Remove others in group from the situation, ensuring they are safe. Take them back to the fire circle and ask them to remain seated. Staff to remain with children.3. Notify school office/SLT using emergency walkie talkie which will be taken out during every session. If necessary call for further assistance, or notify emergency services.4. Have medical details available in medical bag, and notify parents/guardians as appropriate. |
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| <p>Missing Child.</p> <p>(Forest school sessions will take place in secure school grounds.)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On discovery of missing child use '1,2,3, where are you?' procedure and recall rest of the group back to the fire circle. Head count all of the children. 2. If child is still missing, alert school office and SLT using emergency walkie talkie and ask for at least two members of staff to go to the Forest School site. Activity for the rest of the group shall be suspended in order that up to two members of staff, including the Forest School Facilitator if appropriate may be released to conduct a search which shall last no more than five minutes. The rest of the group will be kept in the learning area and sedentary activities such as having a snack, singing or sharing activity run by remaining adults. 3. Staff should verify details of the situation, including last known position of the missing child and any timings. These will be recorded on the Emergency Procedures Record Sheet. 4. School office to ring emergency services and child's parents if appropriate. |
| <p>Death or Serious Incident</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow First Aid procedures 2. Remain with causality and remove others in group from the situation, ensuring they are safe. 3. Immediately notify school office and SLT using emergency walkie talkie. 4. School office to inform emergency services, specifically the police 5. The police will notify the parents/guardians/next of kin. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Gain advice on follow up from the police7. Report to RIDDOR and Ofsted. |
| Stranger or Uninvited Person | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Challenge intruder, asking them to leave immediately. Escort them from the site. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Inform the School's Office and SLT using emergency walkie talkie. 3. If a child is involved the police must be called, and the child/children involved are to be removed from situation and made to feel safe. 4. Parents/guardian should be briefed by staff ASAP or in accordance with advice of the Police, ASAP. |
| <p>Dogs</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children will be informed to never approach any person or animal (living or dead) within the forest or school grounds and to inform member of staff immediately. 2. If a dog enters the site, Forest School Leader to alert other staff and ask the children to stand still with their hands across their chests and their heads looking up at the sky. (This will be practised in initial Forest School sessions). 3. Staff will look for dog/animal owner and ask for its removal. 4. If the dog is stray, the situation will be risk assessed and it may be determined by staff that children should be taken indoors until the dog is under control. Forest school leader to inform school office and SLT via emergency walkie talkie. |

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| Serious Behaviour Problems | <p>Always adhere to school policy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Talk child involved down.2. Remove other children from the area of risk, if it is deemed to be necessary.3. Inform office and call for help as needed using emergency walkie talkie.4. Debrief child after calm down period5. Log incident.6. Inform parents/guardian7. Create risk assessment, if necessary8. Ensure close supervision and monitoring of behaviour for further session. |
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Tool procedure

Tools should be checked before and after each session and monitored when in use. Duct tape is carried to make safe any tools which break during the session. Only in the use of the bow saw and sheath knife should a glove be worn when using tools.

All tools are ALWAYS to be used under the supervision of the Forest School Leader. Before the session, Forest School Leader to check the maintenance and quality of the tools.

All tools should be introduced thoroughly to the children:

1. Ask the children to sit around the fire circle.
2. Hold up the tool and ask the children if they know what it is and what it is used for.
3. Discuss uses for the tool at Forest School.
4. Complete the tool talk for each tool which demonstrates how to hold, walk, pass and use the tool safely.
5. Pass the tool around allowing the children to practice holding and passing the tool correctly.
6. Emphasise that all movements should be made in the direction away from the body.
7. Emphasise that we must always assume respect position when using tools except for a sheath knife which can be used whilst sitting on a log/bench.
8. Show the children the safe area or box that the tools will be stored in when not being used during the session.
9. When passing tools, ensure eye contact is maintained. A useful script is:
- 'This is a..... I am passing you the _____'.
'Thank you'.
10. Tools should be used two arms and a tools length away from everybody except Forest School Leader and the child involved.
11. Tools to be counted out and back in at the start and end of every forest school session and Forest School Leader to sign form to say this has taken place and all tools are present.

Tool Safety Check

Examine handles and hinges. Spray with WD40 if stiff. Make sure there are no signs of damage or rusting. Open the handles over your lap. Use a thumb to wipe the blades at a right angle, it should feel rough.

Ensure the locking and spring mechanisms on the secateurs are working properly. If during the session it is noticeable that the tools are not working correctly, remove them immediately and store them in the appropriate area or box.

Tools to be stored in a lockable box inside the Foundation 1 shed which will also be locked. The key for the tool box will be stored with Forest School files and books inside the Foundation 1 GDPR cupboard.

Tool Maintenance and Cleaning

Use a cloth to wipe the blade clean and dry.

Oil the tool and sharpen with sharpening stone as required.

Please see separate risk assessments for individual tools.

Fire

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Sitting around the campfire as a group: learning, listening, singing, making and sharing food cooked on the fire is a wonderfully communal and magical experience for children. It will stimulate their senses by letting them feel its warmth. They will watch the flames dance and experience its rich smell.

The children will also learn why it is so important in our lives; how to respect fire; the dangers of fire; how to be safe and responsible around it and will also learn about the fire triangle (oxygen, fuel and heat) and what is needed to build a small fire successfully. We need to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

- Fire to only be lit by Forest School leader. An established Fire Circle will be used as a "base camp" during all session.
- Children will practise walking around the circle and remaining seated until invited into the fire circle perimeter, they need to ask, 'May I enter?'
- Only when the Forest School leader feels that the children are capable of this will be an actual fire be lit. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.
- Children and staff are to always walk around the fire circle, even when it is not lit.
- When sitting around the fire circle, staff need to ensure that children's legs are drawn into the logs and not outstretched. Children are to remain seated unless otherwise instructed by the Forest School leader.
- Children will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the fire circle.
- Keep fires approx. 4m from any shelter built from easily combusting materials. If a shelter is designed to have an integral fire establish safety rules and multiple exits before use (check design with an expert and keep a record of this).
- Ensure fire kit, including fire resistant gloves and water, is close by.
- Respect position should be used when sitting around the fire.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- The need for an adult present around the fire at all times when lit, will ensure that, if any child does approach, who is not part of the session, there is sufficient time to extinguish the fire. There are always at least 2 adults present at forest school.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: They are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
- Before lighting the fire, assess the weather. Do not light in windy or very dry conditions in order to reduce risk.

Fire Procedure

1. Lighting and keeping fires burning

- When lighting a fire, the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start.
- A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point.
- A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square.
- No flammable liquids or plastics are to be used on the fire.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be extinguished with water until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- These items will be essential whenever a fire is lit: • Fire blanket • Heatproof gloves or gauntlets • Clean emergency water supply • Burns first aid kit.

2. Fire Risk Assessment (see separate risk assessment)

- Fires are lit using tinder of various kinds, fire steels or matches.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire.
- The hand should never go over the fire.

3. Extinguishing fires

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- FS leader should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

4. Education about fire and fire lighting

- For a fire we need fuel, fire and oxygen - the fire triangle
- Children will collect tinder (dry grasses, very dry leaves, birch bark from the floor, very fine twigs, pine needles or open pine cones) to make an apple sized tinder bundle.
- They collect their kindling. Forest School leader will also have alternative tinder if wet. Small twigs are best as it's the thickness not the length that counts!
- They will be separated into piles of different sizes - very fine twigs (a few mm diameter, size of a toothpick), slightly larger twigs (diameter of a pencil), and bigger twigs (approx. diameter of adult thumb).
- Bone dry wood and small twigs make less smoke, and standing dead wood is better than wood from the ground.
- Forest School leader will also have fuel: a few larger diameter pieces of dry wood, own supply of tinder, dry sticks or small split logs.
- Starting the fire: A few slightly larger pieces of wood will be put in the base of the

firepit to create a dry platform and keep the tinder off the floor. This is known as a waffle. Tinder will be lit with a spark from fire striker (fire steel or matches). The finest tinder will then go on, e.g. paper-thin bark, pine needles, dry grass, dry (dead) nettles, hay, super thin twigs. Gradually add larger sized tinder and kindling. As one-piece lights, add another - too much too soon can suffocate the fire of oxygen and put it out.

- Fires will be built with the session length in mind and with an aim for them to extinguish naturally by the end of the session.

5. When Cooking

- Inform parents/carers of planned activity and gain permission. Check client group does not suffer from food allergies or that other reasons, such as religious reasons, do not permit individuals to handle or consume certain food types. Ensure you have up-to date information about allergies and religion.
- Food hygiene regulations should be followed.
- Risks assess working area and activity.
- Carry soap and water for hand washing.
- Split open food and check it is cooked before consumption.
- When cooking with a stick use green wood and remove bark before cooking using a knife and scraping action.
- Don't re-heat cooked food.
- Avoid foods that need a lot of fat to cook in case of pan fire.
- Get young people to tuck in long hair and tie, roll up or fasten loose clothing.
- Children will be taught, at an age appropriate time, reasons why berries and/or fruit from the woodland may not be eaten during Forest School sessions. They will be reassured that fruit from the woodland can be safe to eat, but can equally be dangerous and that adult (i.e. parent) supervision is very important in ensuring only the correct berries are eaten.

Other Policies related to Forest School

As Heygarth Primary Forest School operates as an integral part of the school it is subject to the same policies of the school.

All staff and volunteers are asked to read the policies and pay particular attention to the following:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Health and safety policy
- Behaviour policy

Safeguarding Statement

Heygarth Primary School is committed to the safeguarding of all pupils in our care.

To that end, all staff, governors and volunteers will help keep our children safe by:

- Adhering to the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Providing a safe place for our children to learn and develop
- Ensuring that our behaviour does not make any child or member of the school community, uncomfortable or leave us vulnerable to accusation
- Having the children's physical, emotional, and personal safety at the forefront of all we do.
- Immediately notifying the Safeguarding lead of any concerns, however trivial they may seem, in order to pull together a picture of any potential safeguarding issues.

All staff employed by the school, and volunteers who work in school for a set minimum of time as outlined in official guidance, will be subject to DBS checks. References will be sought and safer recruitment procedures adhered to at all times.

Confidentiality

It is important never to repeat anything overheard or witnessed in school. If there are any concerns regarding a child/children please discuss with the designated teacher. A copy of the Confidentiality Policy is available

Equality and diversity:

We operate under the School's policy on Equality and Diversity namely:

Equal Opportunities Statement: We promote equality and the building of a democracy

in which all members have rights and responsibilities, and the same opportunity to benefit from, and take part, in the education provided by the school - within and beyond its premises. Diversity is valued as a rich resource that can contribute to the learning of all pupils and staff.

Disability Statement: Heygarth Primary School is proud to be an inclusive school. We offer access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils regardless of disability. We strive to ensure all pupils can access, educationally and physically, all learning opportunities within and beyond the school. We aim to ensure that all users can access key learning areas, and will ensure that no user experiences any discrimination or reduced entitlement to learning due to being unable to physically access areas of the school.

As with any additional needs the school works closely with parents and appropriate outside agencies to ensure equality of access for all.

Every Child Matters: This Effective Learning policy demonstrates how we aim also to meet the five outcomes outlined in the document 'Every Child Matters - Change for Children 2004' (DfES publication - 1088-2004, version 1.0); namely:

1. Be healthy
2. Stay safe
3. Enjoy and achieve through learning
4. Make a positive contribution to society
5. Achieve economic well-being

Behaviour protocol

Forest School aims to:

1. Build self-esteem, independence, motivation to learn whilst always maintaining a safe environment
2. Promote awareness, respect and care for other individuals and for the natural environment
3. Reinforce collaborative behaviour
4. Develop continuity of expectations and of approach to behaviour management both at Forest School, in school and beyond
5. Develop awareness of acceptable behaviour and responsible behaviour in an outdoor environment
6. Develop in both children and adults a pride in their achievements.

In order that these aims are achieved, certain standards of behaviour must be sustained and reinforced across school.

Supporting the Children to Listen and Engage during Forest School sessions.

- Use words children understand.
- Use the child's name if you know it. If not, ask what it is.
- Make eye contact and get on the same level as the child.
- Speak calmly.
- Look and sound confident and be firm.
- Be friendly - smile!
- Have fun within limits.
- Listen to children - remember they learn by copying!
- Always do what you say you are going to do.
- Where appropriate take a child to the side and talk to them on a 1:1.
- When in Forest School use "1, 2, 3, come to me" to get the attention of the children or use stop sign if this is more appropriate.
- Explain why you are doing something.
- Apologise to a child if you are in the wrong. You earn their respect by showing you are prepared to do this.

Health and Safety

The Forest School Health and Safety Policy is an addendum to the School's Health and Safety Policy and does not change the school's position on health and safety matters set out in the original document.

In order that Forest School sessions may be run safely, the Forest School Leader will ensure that:

- At least one appropriately qualified first aider is on-site.
- Establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment by: Establishing, maintaining and evaluating appropriate procedures, policies and risk assessments, as set out in the Handbook
- Ensure the provision of sufficient information and instruction for all adults so that they can contribute to their own health and safety and that of the children they are working with
- Establish and be utterly familiar with, all emergency procedures including the reporting and recording of procedures
- Ensure that risk assessments and pre-site visits take place before children are permitted on to the site. Risk assessments will be held in the master Forest School file.
- Ensure alternative plans are in place should a planned activity be compromised by health and safety concerns
- Investigate any accidents and use information gathered to inform future risk assessment and policy making
- Teach all members of the party to maintain their own and others health and safety by

involving them in the risk assessment process at appropriate opportunities

- Maintain the legal adult-child ratio
- Ensure that safety equipment is in good working order and is used appropriately
- Assume responsibility for the maintenance of the First Aid Kit, Kit Bag(s) and any tools brought into the Forest School area.

Risk Protocol

During Forest School sessions, we encourage our children, in a safe and structured way, to take risks. Children learn by their mistakes and by being free to make them in a comfortable and safe surrounding. When appropriate children should be encouraged to "have a go" at an activity, take a risk and learn from their experiences.

We have a legal duty to carry out Risk Assessments but this does not mean that children have to miss out on a whole load of adventurous activity and fun! If the risk or potential harm from the activity is acceptable or can be managed/minimised and the benefits for the value in the activity outweigh the risk then that activity should be allowed.

If risk in children's lives is eliminated then not only do their environments become sterile and boring but children will not want to be part of it. They will go and find the fun elsewhere or create their own, which could result in unwanted behaviour.

Children also need to learn how to assess risks and be responsible for their own safety, and this can be done by involving children in discussing an activity, highlighting what the risks are, how the risks can be reduced or substituted and what are the fun elements they will get out of the activity that outweighs the risks that are left. This exercise of consultation and participation with children also creates an equal relationship where children and young people feel they are listened to, their contribution is valued and that they are not constantly beholden to adults in the setting for the adults to give them the go ahead to do everything. They have a stake in the process too.

There are three main areas to think about once an activity has been identified

- Acknowledge what the benefits are - what benefits will the children gain? This could cover areas such as *increased confidence, sense of achievement, freedom, physical development, contact with nature, trying out an activity that is usually seen as adult, social skills, fine motor skills/sharing skills*. The lists goes on and remember to involve the children and if possible think about getting comments from parents or other people that may come to your setting.
- What are the risks - this needs child and adult input as you are looking at the obvious risks as well as the ones that are not so obvious. Many heads of mixed ages are better than one. You then need to think how you can remove or minimize the risk and how this will be communicated to staff, all children [being aware of the individual needs of the children] and the parents.
- Put safety measures in place that you have identified and record this - this will cover the likelihood of the risk happening, who could be harmed and what you are doing to reduce/eliminate. It will also need to record what to do if an accident/incident does occur.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to parents

Forest School

Dear Parents & Carers,

In addition to all of the fun and exciting learning opportunities we give to our children in (*insert class here*), from this half term, the children will begin to participate in Forest School and this will run a (*insert day here*) from now on.

We will be going out in nearly all weathers (high winds, extreme coldness or thunder and lightning are all that will stop us!) as the Forest School theory is that there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing!

Please could you send your child into school EVERY (*insert day here*) in appropriate clothing that can get wet and muddy as this is the likelihood after a great forest school session. The children will need at least a waterproof coat, hat, wellies (which should be kept in school - please see other letter) and plenty of warm layers for Winter Forest school. In the summer months the children will require a cap and long trousers and the application of sun cream.

The first Forest School session will run on (*insert day here*). If you have any queries or questions regarding this please do not hesitate to contact school who will be more than happy to provide further information.

Many thanks in advance for your support,

Forest School Leader

Appendix 3: Example planning form

Date:
Group:
Location:

The 5 minute Forest School plan

...print and scribble away!

What is the **THEME**?

How does it fit in to previous or future sessions?

Objectives

How will you differentiate these activities?

What sequence could your activities follow?

Activity 1



Activity 2



Activity 3



Activity 4

Health and safety issues?



What tools or equipment will you need?



Opportunity for reflection?

Appendix 4: Forest School Safety Checklist

Forest School Safety Sweep

Environmental hazards will be reviewed prior to every Forest School session and signed off by the Forest School Leader and assess immediate risk. All safety sweeps will be recorded and filed by a Forest School leader.

Safety sweeps will be recorded and stored in the main Forest School Folder.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Date: | Time: | Weather: |
| Name of Forest School Leader: | | |

| Checklist | Yes/No | Comments: |
|---|--------|-----------|
| Fallen branches | | |
| Low/broken branches | | |
| Protruding thorns | | |
| Brambles/Nettles | | |
| Slippery areas | | |
| Broken glass/Needles | | |
| Vandalism/intruders | | |
| Weather effects (ice, snow, residual water, localised winds, fog etc.) | | |
| Standing water (depth and cordoned off or not) | | |
| Boundary line/fence | | |
| Base camp | | |
| Tool area roped off | | |
| Emergency ruck sack (fully equipped first aid kit and emergency medicine as required) | | |
| Equipment ready | | |
| Spare clothes | | |
| Phones fully charged | | |
| Water barrel | | |
| Excrement -fox/dog (removed) | | |

| |
|---------------------------|
| Other hazards identified: |
| Action taken: |

Appendix 6: Accident reporting form



Forest School First Aid Form



Child's Name: _____

Class: _____

Date of accident:

Time of accident:

How did the injury occur?

First Aid treatment provided:

Member of staff: _____