



Forest School Handbook



PICCOLLAGE

Introduction

Forest School is based on a fundamental respect for children and young people and for their capacity to instigate, test and maintain curiosity in the world around them. It believes in the child's right to play, the right to access the outdoors and in particular a woodland environment. Forest School also believes children should experience risk and the vibrant reality of the natural world along with the right to experience a healthy range of emotions through all the challenges of social interaction, in order to build a resilience that will enable continued and creative engagement with their peers. It is an approach to education that makes use of the outdoor environment to create a unique learning vehicle.

Forest School sessions provide increasingly diverse opportunities for children to benefit from a supportive curriculum that can help children build positive values and attitudes about themselves, learning and the environment in which they live. Children are given appropriately challenging and achievable tasks that build their confidence, skills and independence and are given the time to thoroughly explore their thoughts, feelings and relationships. This time and reflective practice develops inter- and intra-personal skills, which are well documented as being directly linked to learning skills.



Our key school values are kindness, honesty and respect. Forest school teaches and encourages our school values and much more.

Activities

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of participants. Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations

Risk Management Policy

Carrington Forest School aims to develop children's self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. In order that these aims can be met, the Forest School Leader will:

- Consistently apply the five-step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School activities:
 - Look for hazards
 - Decide who could be harmed and how
 - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done
 - Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits or observations
 - Review assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change, which may affect the rigour of the assessment) and revise if necessary
- Prior to each Forest School visit checks will be carried out by the Forest School Leader prior to a day's activity, as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practical. The findings will be recorded on the Daily Risk Assessment form.
- Complete an Activity Risk/Benefit Assessment for every activity to be undertaken at Forest School.
- Ensure all staff and volunteer helpers have read the relevant Site and Activity Risk Assessments prior to a session.
- Move activities indoors if, in the opinion of the Forest School Leader, weather conditions such as high winds or the threat/occurrence of electrical storms make work outdoors unsafe.
- Inform staff, volunteers and children of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further.
- Involve staff, volunteers and children in risk assessment, as appropriate, as part of learning.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and children are aware of the emergency procedures for the Forest School site.
- Be responsible for teaching children adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.

- Ensure children and adults will have access to drinking water during sessions.
- Ensure a nil-by-mouth policy is adopted in all Forest School sessions, except for food cooked as part of a fully risk-assessed Forest School activity.
- A Forest School Level 3 practitioner must be present if tools are used or lighting fires.

Forest School Behaviour Policy

- Not attending a Forest School session should not be used as a punishment for inappropriate behaviour in the classroom.
- If a pupil is posing harm to themselves or others during a Forest School session and needs to leave the area, the walkie talkie should be used to call for extra adults to assist. Always ensure the correct ratio of children to adults remains in Forest School.
- Ensure fully charged mobile phone is taken to the site at the start of each session.
- Children should be reminded of the behavioural expectations at the start of each session.
- Sessions should have a positive atmosphere to encourage appropriate behaviour.

The role of adults in Forest School

- Create a positive environment that encourages caring and acceptable behaviour towards each other, the environment and our equipment.
- Be a positive role model for everyone in Forest School.
- Be aware that everyone needs to be safe.
- Give praise.

The role of children in Forest School

- Listen carefully and follow instructions especially those about safety.
- Behave in caring and acceptable way towards each other, the environment and our equipment.

Carrington Infant School Forest School Rules

- Stay inside the blue boundary rope, fence and gate. Do not go outside of the Forest School area without an adult.
- Do not go inside the fire circle without checking it is OK to do so. If we have a fire it could be very dangerous to be inside the circle.
- No Pick, No Lick. Do not pick anything in Forest School or put anything near your mouth. Some plants and berries are poisonous!
- Try not to stand on any of the plants growing in our Forest School area. Lots of insects live or lay their eggs on these plants.
- Be careful of prickly plants and stinging nettles. They will hurt if you touch them.
- Only climb trees if an adult has said it is OK.
- Be kind to nature and your classmates.
- Have fun!!!!

Fire Policy

- Mobile phones should be taken onsite at the start of each session.
- All children and adults must be made aware of the importance of entering and exiting the fire circle correctly.
- Fires and the use of kelly kettles are an important part of Carrington Forest School.
- Only level 3 qualified Forest School practitioners (Mrs Barron, Mrs Booth or Mrs McIntyre should lead sessions with fires and/or kelly kettles and be present at all times until the fire has been safely extinguished.
- Leaders will explain to participants the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat.
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood. Those in smoky areas will be encouraged to move to less smoky areas.
- Fires will only be lit in a suitable defined space, following the Forest School guidelines.
- All participants will be given clear guidelines about how to behave and move around the area when the fire or kettle is lit.
- A lit fire will be supervised by an adult at all times, as will all cooking activities.
- Related safety equipment, including heat-proof gloves, a fire blanket, a burns kit and water will be kept within close range of fires.
- All fires should be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of a session.

Siting of use of Fires

- Clear away litter.
- Check suitability of site – no overhanging branches, flints, peat.
- Check wind direction.

Poor Weather and Shelter Policy

At Carrington Forest School, sessions will go ahead in all weather conditions with only a few exceptions:

- Strong winds that make woodland areas hazardous for use due to falling debris.
- Very wet and cold conditions where hypothermia is a real possibility.
- Risk of lightning.

Exposure to the elements is part of the wonder of nature and therefore an integral part of Forest School.

In inclement and/or cold weather we will use the large shelter to enable us to take cover.

In the summer the trees in the forest will provide good sun cover. Also the large shelter provides shade.

Clothing Policy

As part the ethos of forest school is “There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.” If appropriate clothing is provided, all children can enjoy Forest School in all weathers. The only exception to this is high winds and lightning.

All children should wear the following:

- **Wellington Boots** – thick socks are advisable in cold weather, as wellington boots offer poor insulation or old trainers in dry weather.
- **Long Trousers** – in all seasons children wear long trousers and in winter or very wet weather the children should wear the insulated waterproof trousers.
- **Long sleeved top** –both in summer and winter, to keep warm and to protect from scratches, bites and sunburn.
- **Layers of clothing appropriate to the temperature and season** – in winter the children will need at least three layers to keep warm.
- **Waterproof top and trousers** – these are part of our school uniform. Do not wear waterproofs in very hot weather.
- **Hat** (for sun or warmth depending on the season) and **Gloves** (not mittens) in winter.

In summer, sun cream should be applied before school.

Tools Guidance

Using a range of tools will be necessary in many of our activities and is an important part of our work as it enables pupils to develop new practical skills that help develop self-confidence. Carrington Forest School aims to ensure that all people participating in sessions with tools do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Tools that may be used include potato peelers, bow saws, loppers, knives, bill hooks, drills, hammers, digging tools and mallets. The following guidelines are to be followed when using tools:

- The Forest School Leader will check all tools are fit for continued use before the session.
- Only tools that are in safe working order shall be supplied for use.
- Correct and safe use of sharp tools will be demonstrated to all staff and participants.
- Tools should be counted when handed out and counted back in again when finished.
- All groups are to be supervised closely by competent leaders until pupils are deemed competent to work with limited supervision.
- Tools should be kept in a designated safe area when not in use - none should be left unattended outside this area.
- All knives will be closed/ sheaved immediately after use and placed in locked box.
- Saw guards will be replaced immediately after use.
- Walking around with open/ unmasked tools will not be permitted.
- Safe working distances and suitable ratios must be maintained at all times.

All group members will wear suitable boots/shoes and outdoor clothing for the activity they take part in. Where any cutting or felling is taking place gloves should be worn for handling nettles etc.

Guidance on Knife Use

- Designate a specific zone for those using knives.
- Always carry knife with sheath firmly on/locked shut.
- Always pass knife with sheath/lock firmly on and in demonstrated manner.
- Always keep knife in sheath/locked when not in use.
- Leader to count knives out and back in and they will be kept in a locked box.
- Ensure participants have had demonstration before use and leader is confident of participant's ability, including grip and body position.
- Knife work is always supervised by a responsible adult.
- Each person to sit well out of reach of others.

Food Hygiene & Eating

- All children to be encouraged to go to the toilet before attending Forest School sessions. As our site is on school grounds, if a child needs to use the toilet during a session, they will be able to return to school, supervised by an adult, who will ensure the child washes their hands afterwards.
- Children will be reminded of the 'No Pick, No Lick' rule at the start of each session.
- All participants on activities will be encouraged to wash their hands with water and soap, which will be provided, before handling food (eating or preparing).
- During some sessions, we may cook items such as marshmallows over the fire. At least one member of Carrington Infant School will hold a current Food Hygiene Certificate (Mrs Booth) and will ensure that safe procedures are undertaken accordingly.
- Food brought onto or prepared on site that isn't eaten should be put in designated bags and taken back to school and disposed of correctly.
- Any litter on the ground to be put into designated bags and disposed of properly on school premises.
- No food or litter to be burnt on fire.
- Waste liquid containing scraps of food or other contaminants, including left over drinks should be poured into a hole which is dug away from the main site and filled in at the end of the session.
- Following these guidelines will minimise any detrimental impact on the environment. It will prevent vermin such as rats and will also teach the children respect and responsibility for their surroundings.

Safe Lifting

Forest School activities can be physically demanding for participants and staff, for example when handling heavy objects, so it is wise to be aware of best practise. One of the greatest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly, please refer to the school manual handling policy.

Here are some tips:

- Think and plan where and how you are going to move an object before you lift.
- Keep the load close to your waist and the heaviest side of the load next to your body.
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward if possible.
- Ensure a good hold on the load, hug it close to your body if possible.
- Avoid bending your back, only bend at your hips or knees if possible.
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways especially if bending at the back.
- Keep your head up and look ahead, not down at the load once it is held securely.
- Know your limits - don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage without help.
- Put the load down if you need to adjust it.
- Where possible, use ropes to drag objects such as trees.

Toileting

- Encourage everyone to use the toilet before coming on site.
- The area at the end of Forest School is used only in emergencies. A screen can be used to provide privacy and a toileting bag placed at this location.
- Ensure that children are supported by two DBS checked members of staff.
- Wet wipes and cleaning gel can be used. All wet wipes should be placed in bags and disposed of offsite.

Toileting kits contain:

- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes and cleaning gel
- Nappy bags
- Small trowel
- Tarps to make a modesty screen
- Spare pants and jogging bottoms

Equipment Check List

First Aid Kit

Mobile Phone

Fresh Water – water carrier

Cups

Hand Washing Kit

Mascot

Whistle

Tissues

Inhalers

Clipboard and Pen

Snacks

Camera/Ipad

Rubbish Bags

Paper Towels

Session Evaluation Form

<p>Session Date</p> <p>Number of Pupils</p> <p>Year Group</p> <p>Overview of session</p>	
<p>Learning and development of the group</p>	
<p>General feedback from group</p> <p>Input & ideas for next session</p> <p>Changes to following sessions</p>	
<p>Safety issues that arose during the session or near misses</p> <p>How issues were dealt with</p> <p>Recommended changes to policy or procedure to ensure issues are mitigated</p>	
<p>First Aid Kit used</p> <p>Accident Log Made</p> <p>What needs re-stocking</p>	
<p>Completed By:</p> <p>Signed:</p> <p>Date</p>	