



Handbook

Halling Primary School

Forest School Handbook





Forest School staffing

Mrs Claire Coleman – Level Three Forest School Leader

Miss Emma Donovan – Level Three Forest School leader

Mrs Tara Fitzgerald – Level Three Forest School Leader

Leading adult will take personal mobile phone up to the FS area to ensure contact can be made at all times with the main office.

Mission statement

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers our children regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in a woodland environment, nurturing an understanding and respect for natural places. Participants experience nature at first hand through play and a series of engaging and achievable tasks. The forest school experience brings learning to life and improves the children's ability to work co-operatively while offering the opportunities to take risks make choices and initiate learning.

Halling Primary and Forest School will instil a love of the great outdoors. Inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences will develop self-esteem, confidence and responsibility. The use of the woodland setting, the various real tools and the natural resources will bring learning to life, creating an understanding of the balance of nature and the finite resources around us. Identifying individual learning schemas to enable the children to learn most effectively and promote success. Planning for every child in the early session stages, and then letting the children lead the sessions through their own interests. Taking informed, self-calculated risks and choices to ensure their groups safety,



developing sympathy and empathy to the group around them. Working as part of a team to solve problems, fostering communication and negotiation skills are just a few of the skills that we promote.

Mrs Claire Coleman, Miss Emma Donavon and Mrs Tara Fitzgerald are our Forest School Leaders. They are assisted on every visit by at least one other member of staff, the same staff member on each day to ensure continuity for the children.

Our aims are:

- To provide ways of acquiring useful life skills in an outdoor environment
- To provide a safe environment in which children can take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning.
- To help children appreciate, comprehend and show stewardship for the natural environment.
- To develop self-esteem, tenacity and a positive outlook to learning through the completion of small achievable tasks.
- To meet the needs of children with all learning styles.
- To develop social and group working skills.
- To enable children to be independent, self-motivated and considerate.
- To be genuine to the forest school ethos and approach.
- To cultivate a secure, happy and welcoming environment.
- To provide stimulating and varied learning activities appropriate to the child's needs and phase of development.
- To help each child foster self-esteem, confidence, independence, self-control and interpersonal skills
- To provide an opportunity for individuals to develop, to learn and to have fun with deep meaningful play



Forest School principles

Forest School is a process which builds on an individual's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. It is organised and run by a qualified Forest School Leader within the school and is offered to our reception year group weekly. Forest School maximises the learning potential of our woodlands through frequent and regular experiences throughout the year; helping to promote an understanding, appreciation and care for the environment.

Environmental Impact

We care about our woodland and understand that any activity carried out here will have an impact on this environment. We wish to keep this to a minimum and have a Woodland Management Policy in place. Continuous assessment and appropriate action and management will help keep the impact to a minimum and allow the enjoyment for all. For further information regarding our management plan, please see the full Woodland Impact Assessment on page 16.

Policies for Forest School

The following policies are the minimum requirements for the safe running of Forest School sessions. **They are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them.** All members of staff and volunteer helpers have a duty to follow these policies and should be familiar with their contents.

Health and Safety

Forest School based within the grounds of Halling Primary School; adheres to the main Health and Safety Policy. Full details can be accessed through reading the policy, but a summary is given below:

- We ask you to be responsible for your own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by what you do.
- We ask you to take individual responsibility to follow health and safety procedures and work in accordance with instruction and training you have received.
- You must co-operate with supervisors and managers on health and safety matters.
- You must not misuse or recklessly interfere with anything provided to protect your health, safety and welfare.
- We ask that you promptly report any unsafe conditions or practices.
- You must use work equipment and personal protective equipment in accordance with instruction and training you have received.
- We ask that you support us in achieving our health and safety targets
- You must play your part to maintain a safe and healthy workplace/environment
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Risk Management and Risk Assessment

Risk-Benefit management is a fundamental part of life and is a skill needed for young people's safety and well-being. The staff have a duty of care towards young people. However, this does not mean, not trying new activities. Therefore, we have responsibility not only to keep young people safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves. Getting Ready – Managing Risk (From Council for Learning Outside the Classroom) Risk management is all about identifying and managing any significant chance of harm.

Forest schools conduct four types of risk assessment:

- **Generic Site** — this should consider all four layers within woodland.
- **Generic Activity/Experiences** — this should consider all the aspects of activities/experiences, including creative experiences, games and tool use. Once correct procedures, such as safe tool use has been established these generic activity risk assessments become part of the standard operating procedures
- **Daily** — includes weather, wild factors and any changes noted on the day. This can include assessments on individuals attending the session. This should be carried out by the Forest School Leader prior to a session. The children should be encouraged to conduct a generic site risk assessment with their leader on arrival at the environmental area.
- **Ongoing Active** — involves leaders' judgement during the session in response to changing situations.

First aid

There must always be a first aid trained person, who is responsible for all aspects of health and safety and carry out all medical equipment checks as detailed below.

Contents for emergency / First Aid kit

The kit needs to be regularly checked and re-stocked –An accident book is also present and will be completed as necessary. The kit should contain the following items, paying due consideration to the size of the group:

- Gloves/antiseptic wipes
- Micro-pore tape/wound closures
- Accident book
- Tough cut scissors/tweezers
- Swabs /plasters /eye wash burn ease (Large and small)
- Bandages (cotton, in various sizes)
- Safety pins/cling film/gaffer tape

Emergency Procedures

Medical information and emergency contact details for all in group are available in the main School Office, including adult helpers and leader of sessions.

What to do in an accident

Child is assessed by trained outdoor first aider and treatment is given as appropriate.

Accident logbook is completed and parents/carers are informed on return to class.



What to do in a serious incident

- Child is assessed by first aider and first aid is administered as appropriate and emergency services are called by staff as seen fit.
- Office informed (on site) and additional support sought.
- The additional helper will walk towards point of vehicular access to direct emergency services to site.
- Forest School Leader to stay with casualty and rest of group.
- Serious incidents are logged in the serious incident logbook and the school and parents/carers are informed as soon as this is possible.
- As standard practice all incidents where the emergency services had to be called out are formerly reviewed with Ms Taylor (Head-teacher), site team or any involved adults to review practice and provide quality assurance. (See also Legislation section)



Weather checks and other considerations

A local forecast will be checked prior to taking the children into the Forest School site, trying to leave cancellation as late as possible. Below is a short outline of conditions that may lead to a cancellation of a session

Forest School weather risk assessment

All risk assessment to be assessed 30 minutes prior to session beginning then continuously checking during session.

Weather Condition	Reason to Continue	Reason to Cancel
Snow	Snow has settled and children have arrived prepared for session in snow.	Snow still falling, freezing and slippery conditions. Parents to be called if snow fall increases.
Rain	Light rain, forecast is good.	Heavy rain, forecast to continue, possible flooding.
Wind	Light Wind	High wind. Danger of falling branches and trees.
Thunderstorm and Lightning	Low rumbles of thunder heard in the distance. Clear skies.	Rumbles of thunder grow louder. Bolts of lightning visible in the distance.
Heat	Medium heat. Children wearing sun protection. Keep to shaded areas.	Too hot. Risk of sun stroke and heat exhaustion.

Check children's clothing before start of any sessions, particularly on cold days.



Cancellation procedure for a timetabled session

Having conducted a daily site risk assessment or in cases of severe weather where it is obvious that a session cannot take place inform class teachers accordingly of the cancellation. Children will then attend normal class lessons.

Toileting Procedure

Children are toileted before leaving school building.

Children can return to school with an adult as necessary through the playground and into the EYFS building.

Safeguarding Children Procedure

Please follow Schools Safeguarding Policy – available online and in the main school office. Below is a brief outline.

Who is responsible?

Any concerns should be communicated to Forest School Leader as soon as possible. They will then follow the standard procedure of informing the possible signs Injuries (bruising, bruised eyes, fractured or broken bones, burn or bite marks) Continuous “accidents” An unlikely (or no) explanation for an injury, a continual pattern of accidents or injuries or if a child is saying that something is hurting.

Behavioural indicators include:

- A child who is very reluctant to return home
- A child who is resistant to going home with one family member
- Self-harm, self-destructiveness
- Persistent aggression or violent play
- Sudden shift in moods / withdrawn

Dealing with disclosure

Disclosure refers to a child talking about what happened, where, when, and with whom. If a child wants to tell you about something which is clearly both sensitive and difficult, it is important that you are able to make it possible for them to do so, particularly as this may be the first time they have attempted to talk about their experience.

Do

- Remember that it is not your role to establish proof or gather evidence
- Make time to listen to the child
- Try to avoid the need for the child to repeat possibly embarrassing details
- Only ask open-ended questions – do **NOT** lead
- Be honest about the implications of confidentiality; the child must know that you will have to pass the information on to get them the help they need.
- Allow the child to lead the conversation
- Take the child seriously, acknowledge that they were right to tell, and are not responsible for what happened
- Make notes as soon as possible after a disclosure
- What to report in the event of concerns



- Any concerns should be communicated in as much detail as possible to the Forest School Leader who will then follow policy procedures as soon as possible.

Activities and Games in Forest School

General Safety

All Forest School sessions are carefully planned and risk assessed by the Leader. Forest School is a long-term child-led, educational process that promotes, observes and explicitly supports the social, emotional and physical development of children in a woodland environment.

Games and Activity Safety/Forest School Ethos

All games and activities are risk assessed by the Leader, see appropriate activity "Key to supporting the child's progress is an acknowledgement of the role of the Leader as a "significant other" who can encourage the development of self-esteem through appropriate matching of activity to a child's preferred learning style. The development of the role of the "significant other" occurs through the long-term relationship that is built up over the duration of a Forest School programme. This relationship is founded on the twin principles of risk and trust. The successful matching of activities to a learner's preferred discovering style occurs through continual detailed observations and evaluation of a child's learning and behaviour over the duration of a Forest School programme." Forest Schools (Knight 2013)

Tool Safety and Tool Operating Procedure

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the safe usage and maintenance of all tools. Tools are always checked and counted before each session, at the end of a session the tools are recounted and the tools are maintained as outlined below. Safety boots should be worn at all times by adults using tools. Children may need to wear safety gloves (provided) for certain activities. This will be identified in the activity risk assessment. Tool training and assessment of individuals should always take place prior to working with tools. Always risks assess tools, working area and activity. Establish a clear script for passing tools, as outlined under use of loppers and secateurs below and establish clear rules for accessing tools.

Tool bag contents

- Tool caddy bag
- 7 pairs of children's safety gloves
- 7 potato peelers
- 5 hammers
- 1 Bow saw
- 5 hand saws

Fire Protocol including Fire Management and Safety

- Establish a fire area and train young people on how to approach and leave before lighting a fire.
- Site your fire carefully; avoid tree roots, peat soil & deep leaf mould, rough ground etc. Always clear to bare earth.
- Don't light in windy or tinder dry conditions.
- Have at least 1.5m between fire surround and seating logs.



- Seating logs should have emergency escape routes between them.
- 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. **Never leave a fire unattended.**
- Fix fire surround and seating to avoid accidents.
- Have water and fire blanket available to extinguish the fire. Also hang a fire blanket near the fire.
- Have a bucket full of fresh water for immersing a burn.
- If young people have fires restrict flame height to equivalent of your knee.
- Only use dead wood and explain habitat dead wood. Reduce smoke with dead wood use.

Camp Fire Cooking Procedure

- Risk assess working area and activity.
- Food hygiene regulations should be followed.
- Carry antiseptic wipes or 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 or potato peeler 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, roll up or fasten loose clothing.
- Inform parents/carers of planned activity and gain permission.
- Check 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.



Fire safety kit contents

- Fire safety glove (plus instructions)
- Whistle
- Box of cotton wool balls
- Petroleum jelly
- Fire strike
- Wooden skewers
- Bucket for water
- Tea towel
- Extendable metal forks

Lost or Missing Person Procedure

- Children are instructed that they have to stay within the Forest School area which strictly means that no children are to exit via any of entrances/exits.
- They know to immediately gather around the adult if the whistle is blown three times.
- A sweep of the Forest School area is to be carried out immediately by the extra adult. All children to be counted.
- A five-minute interval is immediately timed by Forest School Leader.
- School Office to be informed immediately by adult or a responsible child as office is on site and within 50 Metres.



Positive Behaviour

- In line with our school policy, we teach the children that when in Forest School; we have to follow certain rules to keep us safe. Primarily our tasks should be small and achievable at a level suitable for the child.
- Forest School behaviour expectations
- Listen when adult is talking
- Take turns when talking with your peers, listen to what they have to say
- Keep to the Forest School boundaries agreed with leader
- Be aware – keep yourself safe – look around you – take care
- Keep your friends safe too
- Use kind words and always be polite
- Be patient with each other, everyone learns at different rates
- When behaviour becomes challenging reference will be made to Halling Primary School's Behaviour Code as agreed by the Staff, Parents and Children.
- Behaviour that the Forest School Leader deems dangerous will result in the child being excluded from the session immediately.



Equal Opportunities

Halling Primary Schools Equal Opportunities Policy includes:

- All children will be given the opportunity to participate in all Forest School activities regardless of age, ability or gender.
- The Forest School programme promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of self sufficiency.
- All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued and nurtured.
- Forest School activities and the use of Forest School equipment will offer children the opportunity to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.
- Children with exceptional needs will be admitted to the Forest School programme after consultation between parents, School Staff and Forest School Leader.
- The Forest School programme will recognise the wide range of special needs of children and will consider what part it can play in meeting these needs.
- All children should be adequately dressed to ensure that they are able to take part in all Forest School activities; therefore, the Forest School programme will supply appropriately sized personal protective equipment. Halling offer full waterproof clothing and rigger gloves for use with tools.



Daily Operating Procedure

Procedure to follow before each session

- Forest School Leader to check that all risk assessments are in place, particularly the daily risk assessment and carry out appropriate tasks.
- Check appropriate clothing, group aware of hazards.
- Forest School Leader to ensure that there is correct staff/child ratio and that all staff are familiar with this handbook.
- Register to be completed by Forest School Leader.
- Forest School Leader to complete equipment check prior to each session.

Procedure to follow during the session

- An ongoing risk assessment of the weather, behaviour, safety and activities will be carried out by Forest School Leader.
- Head count

Procedure to follow after the session

- Site must be left with no rubbish or equipment or remains of campfire.
- Tool check, reflection time, closing circle, evaluations
- All resources returned and stored in Clare Coleman's office in a secure, locked cupboard within the EYFS building.

Volunteers check list

Name	Status	DBS	Handbook read	Signature

Risk /Benefit

While there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. Recognition that taking risks is an important part of the learning and development it still needs to provide a safe and supportive environment in which the children can learn about the risks. Consequently, a risk/benefit analysis will be used in the assessments for the activities.

The environmental area risk assessment will include:

- All significant hazards will be identified, and action taken or precautions put in place to reduce the risk to a safe level.
- All staff in the area will have access to the ongoing risk assessments and will be made aware of their duty to report any other hazards or potential hazards that they think the leader should be made aware of.

There are 5 steps to a risk assessment

- Look for the hazard, windblown trees, litter and flood water.
- Decide who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or amended.
- Record the finding
- Review and revise as necessary.

Insurance

Kent County Council and its staff are all insured to carry out Forest School activities on the Halling site providing all the risk assessments and procedures are adhered to.

Legislation

- Ensure that all equipment involved in accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by any investigators.
- Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record of all the facts, events and times retain this record, and if possible, take photographs.
- Interviews only with witness present.
- Report incidents in the first aid log.
- Incidents resulting in admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours 0845 3009923.
- First aid kits to be replenished and checked every 6 months.
- Any incidents or near miss must be subsequently investigated by Ms Lisa Taylor (Head teacher) or School site team and existing controls amended as necessary.

Guidance on knife and tool use

- Correct and safe use of all sharp tools will be demonstrated to all staff and children.
- Tools will be counted out and back.
- All will be supervised closely by leader and assessed competent to use such tools.
- Tools will be kept in a designated safe area when not in use, not to left unattended. (These are stored in Clare Coleman's office in a secure, locked cupboard)
- All tools will be handed out once in the designated tool area.
- Walking around with unmasked tools will not be permitted. Safe working distances, suitable ratios and competence abilities will be always adhered to.
- Suitable boots/shoes and outdoor clothing will be worn. Gloves suitable for the tasks will be provided and must be worn.



- Designate a specific zone for those using tools.
- Always carry potato peeler in the correct, safe manner
- Always pass peeler in the demonstrated manner.
- Keep in tools bag when not in use.
- Leader to count out and back.
- Ensure all children have had demonstration before use including how to grip, body positions, working area, and leader to assess individual's competency and knowledge of knife drills.
- Tool work is supervised and distraction free.
- Each person to sit well out of reach of others and establish "Blood Bubble" procedure.

Hazardous Plants and Fungi

Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the children and adults in attendance.

- The sap and hairs from some plants can cause rashes and blistering when in contact with the skin, or after the skin is exposed to sunlight.
- Most rashes are caused by stinging nettles; this plant is well known and distinguishable and will be pointed out.
- Serious poisoning from the ingestion of leaves, berries or fungi rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, the Forest School Leader will disallow all children from foraging and eating anything.

If a member of any group is exposed to hazardous plant or fungi, so that they have a reaction the leader must be informed and appropriate first aid administered. If



the nature of the reaction is deemed more serious, the appropriate emergency procedures will be taken.

Biting & Stinging Insects

Insect bites and stings can be common, particular in spring and late summer, and usually cause some minor irritation. In rare cases, people can have a serious allergic reaction that requires immediate medical treatment-if this is the case then the emergency procedure will be followed, and the first aider will take charge. Any prior knowledge to suggest that a particular individual will have an allergic reaction the Forest School Leader will be informed, and a check of any self-administered medication (in date) will be carried out. Ticks are known to occur in the area and appropriate advice and checks will be given.

Moving and handling

Safe Lifting Forest School activities are physically demanding for the children and staff, heavy objects, tree trunks etc are moved and carried. So, it is wise to be aware of best practise, to avoid back injuries and manual handling principles are followed:

Think and plan where and how object is to be moved

- Keep load close to waist and the heaviest side next to body
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart
- Take a good hold
- Avoid bending your back
- Avoid twisting
- Keep head up and look ahead



- Clear path/put load down if you need to adjust it/ move smoothly
- Do **NOT** lift above chest
- Always ask a friend or adult to help if the load is too heavy
- Pull object along the ground holding at your waist if it is too heavy to lift or no support is available

Action plan for Forest School development and sustainability

Objective	Action	Method	Result	Time frame
To purchase tools and equipment needed to enhance provision	To create a list to outline items needed and a wish list. Approach the head teacher (LT)	Discussion with Head/manager	Items purchased and agreed more will be brought	ongoing
To identify perimeter	Display visible markers	Discuss with LT/site team	Identify safe space	One month
To train additional staff	Approach LT to provide additional training from a provider. In house training for every TA and teacher during staff meeting and for myself to shadow/train all teachers during sessions.	Meeting held with head LT, KS 1 & 2 leads	All staff to be trained in house but 1 person from each year group from an outside company before 2025	Ongoing
Introduce and set up a second Forest School site on school grounds	Arrange a meeting with LT caretaker and CC	Propose intended space/site	Second site has been agreed	3 years
Order trees to sustain current site and build second site	Apply for tree packs funding	Apply online with support of LT and CC		3 years minimum but an ongoing project to introduce new wildlife, plants etc..