



Forest School Policy

This policy was written by	Rachel Gowshall January 2024
Review cycle:	Annually –Review due - January 2025

Inspired by scriptures.

Job 12:7-9

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; 8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. 9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?”

Philosophy

Forest School is a unique program of holistic, practical, and hands-on learning in an outdoor environment. It allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. This fully supports our mission statement ‘we care, we share, we Learn’ We are caring for our environment, we are sharing our space with the fauna, flora and each other and we are learning the importance of cherishing the natural world and environment.

It also embraces our Christian values –

- Friendship
- Trust
- Hope
- Respect
- Thankfulness
- Courage

This policy allows everyone at Holy Trinity to work together in an effective and thoughtful way. Using our core values and the Forest School ethos we strive to create an environment in which the children can thrive and achieve.

Mrs Rachel Gowshall will lead the sessions and holds a level 3 Forest School lead qualification and is level 3 outdoor first aid trained. This means she is well equipped to deliver the Forest School curriculum staying true to the Forest School ethos in a knowledgeable, safe and creative way.

Any supporting staff and volunteers will undergo the appropriate selection process and will be subject to the enhanced DBS checks.

Aims -

Our aim at Forest School is to have respect for our children and young people in their ability to investigate, test and explore the natural world around them. We believe all children have the right to play and the right to access the outdoors. Our aim is to provide a safe, guided environment where children can assess risk, experience a healthy range of emotions and create connection to the wonderful natural world around them. Building resilience and skills that they can take into everyday life.

What is a Forest School?

A Forest School is a child led outdoor education which allows children to visit and explore natural spaces and to help build and develop social and technical skills not only to help support their education but to give them valuable life skills in resilience, compassion, and confidence.

The Forest School approach –

1. It should be long term, regular and continuous.
2. Learning takes place in woodland or an outdoor space, no matter what the weather.

3. Forest School takes a holistic approach, building self-esteem, confidence, and resilience.
4. It should give children the opportunity to take risks, carefully overseen by the Forest School lead.
5. Learning is child led and sessions are run by a qualified practitioner.
6. Forest School offers opportunities not set activities.

All children learn through exploration and play that is purposeful. Every child at Holy Trinity will have opportunities to attend several Forest School sessions during their time here, from EYFS to year 6.

Forest School activities

Sessions will take place over a term in small groups (dependent on adult/child ratios) and will last approximately 2 hours a week. The sessions will involve practical activities with the aim to build up the children's skills and resilience week by week.

All sessions are planned by the Forest School leader, Forest School promotes child led learning, therefore opportunities are set out and encouraged but ultimately children have the freedom to explore their own interests and initiate and direct their learning.

Forest School promotes the use of natural resources to stimulate imagination. Activities can include, but not limited to:

- Tree investigation and identification
- Climbing and balancing
- Natural art
- Shelter building
- Using knots and lashings
- Woodwork using Forests school recommended tools
- Creating habitats for the flora and fauna
- Fire lighting
- Animal tracking
- Bug hunts
- Collecting, sorting and identifying what shares our site
- Team games

Where possible our sessions will be curriculum linked, keeping inline with the Forest School ethos. All lessons will incorporate the PE curriculum in the planning.

Our Forest School site

Our Forest School site is nestled in the corner of the school grounds. It includes a pond area, meadow, a small group of trees, polytunnel and some raised beds. Our aim with the input from our children is to develop all these habitats and encourage wildlife to our site.

Our outdoor classroom offers a space to sit and discuss ideas and to reflect after each session.

We will be visited by Mrs Gowshall's guinea pigs, Pepper and Patch and by Mrs Wiley's chicken Daphne. A risk assessment will be in place for their visits.

To support the children in assessing risks Forest School sessions will encourage,

- Identifying and learning about different flora and fauna on site.
- Learning to respect the habitats of wildlife we share the site with.
- Observing animals and their behaviours.
- Leaving deadwood in place.
- Care and maintenance of the site, not only collecting any litter but maintaining the trees and shrubs.
- Leaving no trace.

Legislation and policy for Forest School

Holy Trinity Primary school sits with in the Lincoln Anglian Academy Trust and is subject to the policies of the school which can be found on the school website. [Policies | Holy Trinity CofE Primary School \(holytrinitytattershall.co.uk\)](#)

All staff and volunteers are asked to read the following polices in relation to Forest School:

- Health and safety policy
- First Aid policy
- Risk assessment policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Equality and diversity policy
- Behaviour policy
- Forest School handbook.
- Health and safety policy
- Confidentiality policy

These can be found on our school website - [Home | Holy Trinity CofE Primary School \(holytrinitytattershall.co.uk\)](#)

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools' adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts.

The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers.

Safeguarding statement

Holy Trinity Primary School is committed to safeguarding all pupils in our care; therefore the safeguarding of our pupils is everybody's responsibility. Staff, local authority, and volunteers will keep our children safe by:

- Adhering to the schools Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Providing a safe space for our children to learn and develop.
- Having the children's physical, emotional, and personal safety at the forefront of what we do.
- Immediately notifying the DSL (Mrs Stephanie Liley) or deputy DSL (Mrs Donna Kaynes, Mrs Nicole Brown or Ms Vicky Wise) of any concerns or disclosures.

All staff and volunteers in school will be DBS checked. References will be sought in line with the safer recruitment procedures.

Forest School sessions are led by a trained Forest School lead with a member of support staff.

Everyone involved will be fully briefed on health and safety and all relevant risk assessments will be carried out, copies of which can be found in the school office along with the policies.

Any concerns about a child's physical or mental wellbeing will be shared with the DSL or a deputy who will follow the school's safeguarding policy. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

Healthy and Safety in Forest School

Forest School ethos encourages children to take responsibility for their own risks in a carefully managed environment. This means thorough teaching of skills needed to complete certain activities and a well maintained, safe site to do so.

A site risk assessment will be carried out along with a risk assessment for activities such as fire and tool work. These will be kept in the school office.

A first aid kit and a burns kit will be kept on site and leaders will hold an accredited level 3 outdoor first aid certificate.

In case of an accident requiring further assistance access to scholar pack will be available which holds the emergency contact information. A mobile phone will be carried in sessions.

Equality and diversity in Forest School

During Forest schools all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued. As with any additional needs the school works closely with parents and appropriate outside agencies to ensure equality for all. Reference to our Equality Information and Objectives Policy and the Trust policy on Equality & Diversity Policy. This Policy must read alongside 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

Behaviour in Forest School

At our Forest School we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Holy Trinity. In order that these aims are achieved the staff members will work with unconditional positive regard towards the children. Expectations will be revisited each session and positive praise given for following the school values and rules.

When a child's behaviour threatens the safety of themselves, or others and they haven't responded to verbal encouragement they may be asked to leave the session and return to school.

All behaviour that doesn't fall in line with our school values and expectations should be in the first instance reported to the Forest School lead who will take the appropriate action in line with the Behaviour Policy and Forest School ethos.

The loss of Forest School sessions is not to be used as consequence of poor behaviour in school, this is in line with Forest School ethos. This does not include behaviour that may cause injury or harm to the pupil or others.

Policy and procedures for lighting fires at Forest School

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place: ·

- The fire within the site will only take place in the designated fire pit area and children will all sit within the fire pit circle on the provided log seating.
- Children and adults taking part in Forest School sessions will only be able to enter or leave the fire pit area by the designated entrance and exits, children will be reminded of this prior to each fire session.
- When the fire is lit walking or running within the seating circle is not permitted unless the adult lighting the fire has given authorisation.
- If it is required for the children to move closer to the fire for cooking, they will wear protective gloves, all hair must be tied back, and any loose/dangling items of clothing tucked in or removed.
- Children will be supported on either a 2:1 or a 1:1 basis apart from when using kebab sticks to toast with the ratio of children to adults will be 4:1.
- Water, fire blanket or sand will be available within the fire circle to put the fire out and fire gloves will be available nearby for adult and child use.
- The fire will always be lit by a trained or insured member of staff unless, we are carrying out a learning activity where the learners are practicing using flint and steels.
- A lit fire will never be left unattended and will be always monitored by a member of staff from within the firepit area.
- A burns kit will be on site at all times and checked each time before the lighting of the fire.
- At the end of each session the fire will be extinguished by allowing it to die down and then pouring water/sand on to it. A fire sign will be hung on the entrance of the outdoor classroom to make others entering the site aware that it may still be hot.
- In the case of burns first aid will be administered by the Forest School lead or another member of our first aid trained staff. Parents will be notified by text or telephone that this has taken place and CPOMS will be updated. Where needed, an ambulance will be called, and our accident and emergency procedures will be followed.

Lighting a fire – A briefing will be given to all staff members by the Forest School lead prior to lighting the fire. Prior to lighting it must be confirmed that all safety equipment is in place. Fires will only be built within the fire pit and the Forest School lead will oversee the fire.

The fire circle – An open fire will be lit within a firepit. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 2.0m from the fire square. There will be an entry point and an exit point to the fire pit. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There is no running within the fire circle. No items must be

carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. Even when the fire is unlit, we will treat it as if it is lit.

Managed Fire Risk Assessment - A risk assessment has been prepared for fires based around this method of management. However, as with any risk assessment this be reviewed and modified as appropriate and dependant on individuals involved and conditions.

Medical and Emergency Contact Details - All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the school office.

Risk Assessments and Risk Management Risk assessments are in place to cover the following: Forest schools Site Assessment, Fire activities, tool work, guinea pigs and chicken. A copy of these risk assessments can be found in the school office.

Risk assessment guidelines – A site risk assessment is undertaken at the start of each day by the Forest School leader and a check is made prior to every Forest School session.

In addition, an activity risk assessment will be completed for any activities that may require it. This may include but are not limited to, whittling wood, shelter building, cooking on an open fire and palm drilling.

Specific risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or behaviour requires one.

Risk assessment process –

- Look for potential hazards.
- Decide who may be at risk.
- Think about harm and worse outcomes.
- Evaluate current level of risk and what preventative measures we can take.
- How to minimise risk.
- Re- evaluate the level of risk once precautions are in place.
- Create the risk assessment and add to the folder.
- Inform all adults in the group of the risk assessment and make sure they have read and understood it.
- Regularly monitor and review each risk assessment and amend where needed.

Promoting a balanced approach

Key message: ‘Play is great for children’s well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool’. Managing Risk in

Play Provision –A Position Statement by the Play Safety Forum. Children’s Play Council, 2002. (Supported by the HSE- 2012)

At Holy Trinity Primary School, we encourage our children, in a safe and structured way, to take risks. Children learn by their mistakes 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, so children do not miss out on fun and adventurous activities. 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 the activity should be allowed.

Through the Forest School ethos, children 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 and how the risks can be reduced or substituted .This exercise of consultation and participation with children also creates an equal relationship where children and young people feel they are listened to, have a feeling of independence, ownership and that their contribution is valued. By participating in this process all stakeholders will have collective accountability and responsibility towards the management of risk.

Safe Use of Hand Tools Policy

The use of hand tools is an integral part of the Forest School experience.

Before using tools with groups of children the tools will be introduced, their use explained and then children will receive instruction as to how to use them safely. Good practice will always be demonstrated by the Forest schools Leader. A tool script, called ‘Tool Talk’ is used when introducing new tools. The form of script is easily adapted if other tools are introduced.

The following tools are amongst those most likely to be used with children as part of our Forest School sessions.

- Bow saw
- Loppers
- Stick peeler
- Sheath knife
- Mallet
- Hammer
- Palm drill

Tools are used under close supervision. With KS2 children this is with a maximum of 1:4 ratio. When tools are initially introduced, or children are younger the ratio will generally be

closer to 1:2 until participants have shown a reasonable level of confidence or where the ratios will be up to a maximum of 1:4

The Forest School leaders will be responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools. When not in use the tools are stored in a secure, locked setting within the Forest School site.

A full list of all tools is kept with the tools and a separate list carried when tools are taken out on site.

Further tool safety checklist:

- All tools will be returned to the toolbox and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest schools Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced.

Basic risk assessments have been completed for each tool. Risk assessment for Tools will be reviewed regularly and modified as appropriate dependent upon the individuals involved and specific conditions.

Food policy

Staff will check children do not suffer from food allergies or that other reasons, such as religious reasons, do not permit individuals to handle or consume certain food types. Information about allergies and permissions can be found on Scholar pack and a copy should be kept in the Forest School folder. This will be reviewed and updated each term.

All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest schools:

- Everyone should wipe or wash their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in airtight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste are cleared away.
- All food waste and litter will be placed in bag and put into the staff room bin.

Emergency Procedure Policy

All participants will be briefed in what to do in case of emergency. A Forest School Call will be used as a signal to stop what you are doing and will be silent and wait for instructions. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the

injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised.

The role of the Forest School leader

- The Forest School leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School leader will always have the safety of the children first.
- The leaders will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments.
- The leaders will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.
- The leader will always carry an emergency pack.
- The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The Forest School leader will update CPOMS and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Cancellation of Forest School sessions

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunderstorms, or during periods of extreme cold or heat. Instead, leaders will adapt sessions appropriate for the classroom.

The Forest School Leader will make the decision to continue with Forest School or postpone due to bad weather.

When it is wet a shelter will be built immediately by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area that is available from the start that can be used.

Forest schools may not be able to go ahead if there are not enough adults to attend the session. If no replacement adult can be found, then the session will be cancelled. The session may also be cancelled if the Forest School leader/s are unable to attend. Campfires cannot take place without a qualified Forest School leader.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT:

- First Aid Kit (See contents list, contents review record)
- Emergency Procedures
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Devices - school radio and mobile phone.
- Emergency Life Blanket
- Accident forms
- Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled – staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)
- Appropriate Clothing

- Fire blanket
- Burns kit

Other Possible Equipment:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet wipes, hand gel • Sun cream (parental permission required) • Spare Clothing • Thermos of hot water • Chocolate/sugary food • Plastic bag • Roll Mat and Blanket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torch • Bucket of water • Emergency fire kit • Knife • Emergency shelter • Tick remover
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Clothing Requirements for Forest school

No person will be permitted to go to Forest School without appropriate clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold, keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes, that fits appropriately for comfort, and that meets any religious requirements.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session.

<p>Winter</p> <p>Vest or T-shirt Long sleeved top Jumper Waterproof coat Socks Trousers Waterproof trousers Wellies Hat, gloves and scarf.</p>	<p>Summer</p> <p>T-shirt or top Light trousers Socks Trainers, shoes or Wellington boots. (Sandals and flip-flops are not suitable.) Sunhat Sunglasses (if required.) Please note that shorts are not advisable for Forest School sessions, where a child has brought in shorts, they may be limited in the activities that they can take part in.</p>
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We work on the principle that “**there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing**”, but staff must be aware of how children in their class react to different weathers and how this affects their sensory processing.

We do have a limited selection of spare clothing and waterproof clothing, but this will need to be matched to the child prior to the session and checked for suitability. Ask our staff for help.

Toileting Considerations

All children will be required to visit the toilet prior to the session. Children needing to use the toilet during the session will have access to the toilet off the staff room and will be allowed to go on their own. EYFS children will have a buddy system in place.

Training needs

Training needs will be identified and addressed within the school’s financial constraints. In addition, we will endeavour to ensure all members of staff are made fully aware of all available and relevant training provision and information.

Monitoring of the policy.

The effectiveness of the above policy and our practice will be evaluated every year. Rachel Gowshall, in consultation with the senior leadership team will carry this out.

This Forest School policy has been written by Rachel Gowshall, in agreement with the Executive Head, Head of School, Staff and Governors of Holy Trinity Primary School. It will be reviewed annually.

Review date February 2025

Appendix

1. Designated Person Responsibilities

Forest School Leader: Rachel Gowshall

First Aider 1: Rachel Gowshall

Safeguarding lead: Mrs Stephanie Liley

Deputy Safeguarding leads: Mrs Donna Kaynes, Mrs Nicole Brown and Miss Vicky Wise.

2. Insurance Requirements

Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School,
Curzon Estate,
Tattershall,
Lincs,
Ln44LD

Telephone - 01526 343997

Email - enquiries@holytrinity.laat.co.uk

Letter to parents



Dear Families,

Your child has been chosen to take part in mindfulness Forest School sessions, this intervention will support children to build on their skills with confidence, resilience, friendships and wellbeing. These sessions will begin after half term and will be held on Fridays during the school day.

Kit List

We will go out in all weather, rain or shine. Appropriate clothing is essential for the children to get the most out of each session. Getting muddy and messy is highly likely so it's not recommended that children bring best clothes in their kit. If your child doesn't have appropriate kit this may result in them being unable to take part in the session.

Autumn/Winter

- Welly boots or waterproof walking boots
- Warm, waterproof coat with a hood
- Trousers (ideally waterproof)
- Jumper
- Spare pair of socks
- Gloves/hat/scarf

If you have any questions about Forest School please don't hesitate to get in touch with Mrs Gowshall, through Class Dojo or via the office.

I give permission for my child
mindfulness sessions.

to attend the Forest School

Name

Signed