

Forest Schools Handbook



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1) What is Forest School?

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

2) What are the aims of Forest School?

Forest school provides every child with opportunities to acquire and develop the Lingleaze Learner Values that they need to become life-long learners. At Forest School pupils are encouraged to be creative, enthusiastic and risk taking in their learning.



3) What activities does Forest School offer?

Our activities will take place in small groups of 5-6 children at a time.
Examples of Forest School activities include:

- *Woodland management and nature exploration*
- *Scavenger hunts*
- *Building dens and other structures*
- *Imaginative play*
- *Using tools*



4) What are the benefits of Forest School?

Forest school helps to:

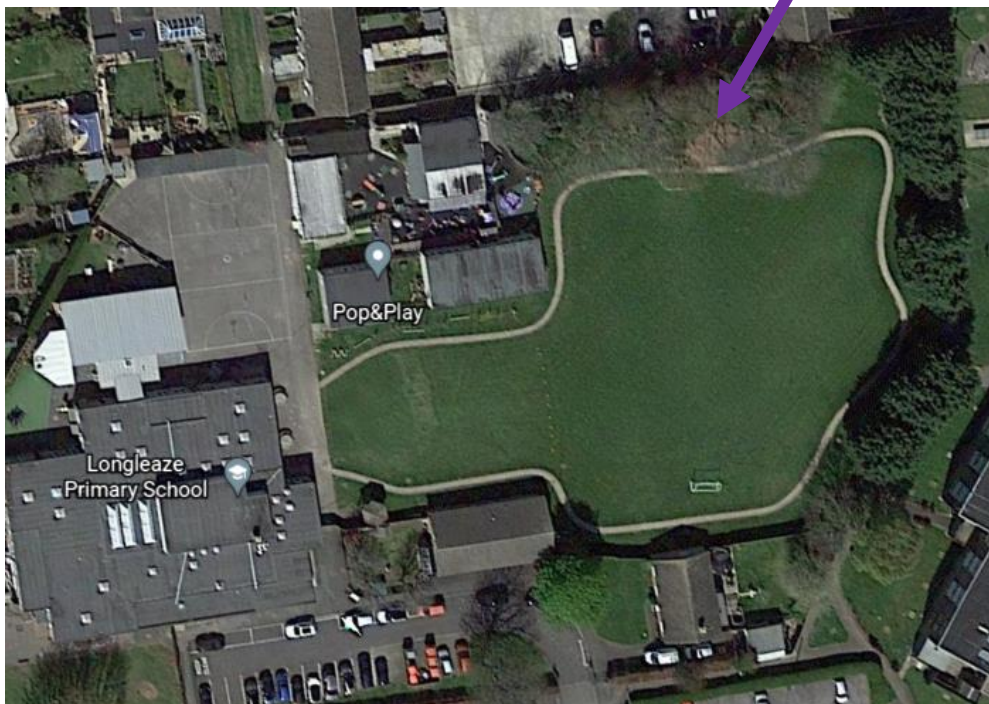
- *develop self-regulation skills*
- *build resilience (the skill of coping with risk and failure)*
- *create a sense of achievement*
- *increase motivation and concentration*
- *improve problem-solving skills*
- *expand vocabulary and develop communication skills.*
- *build positive relationships with adults and peers.*
- *improve wellbeing and mental health.*

5) Where does Forest School take place?

Forest schools takes place in the wooded area adjacent to the school field and Longleaze Pre-School.

The site is part of the Longleaze Primary School grounds. It is easily accessible from inside the school KS2 playground. There is no other access. It is a small woodland area with a mixture of flora including ferns, bramble and nettles. A fenced area surrounds the site.

Forest Schools



6) Forest School Risk Assessment

	<i>Hazard</i>	<i>Harm</i>	<i>People at risk</i>	<i>Existing measures/new measures</i>	<i>Who will do it and when</i>
1.	nettles and brambles	stinging	all	clear pathways. Help children to identify them. Children to wear long trousers.	Leader prior to visit
2.	tree roots and stumps	tripping	all	clear walkways, inform all to take care in the woods.	All-on visit
3.	tree branches	branches falling, hurting parts of their head depending on height	all	pre-visit and continuous risk check, remove hanging dead wood. Remind children of risks.	Leader prior to and on visit
4.	sticks	hitting, poking in the eye	children	inform children of rules, use a stick no longer than your arm	Leader on visit
5.	Bees, wasps	stings	all	Check area for nests, avoid contact	All-on visit
6.	tools	cuts, grazes	all	Tools stored away from premises, used on a one to one basis, separate risk assessment for each tool available in	All-on visit

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7.	boundaries	escapees	children	Children informed of boundaries, staff supervise the boundary	All-on visit
8.	Animal or bird excrement	Going in hands and mouth	all	Stay away from that area safety talk wipes-hand sanitiser	

Emergency Arrangements

Serious Accident: Seek additional help, provide first aid, call ambulance 999, and inform parents/carers. Return all other children into the classroom, keep them calm with stories and songs. Write an accident report form, assess risk assessment and make new adjustments for the future.

Minor accident: Provide first aid, complete accident report form, inform parents/carers, assess risk assessments and make adjustments for future.

Weather change: make dynamic risk assessment, return to classroom.

Safety Advice

Clothing: long trousers and long sleeves, warm clothing in cold weather, waterproof clothing in wet weather. Hats and sun cream in hot weather. Spare clothing available in the classroom.

Communications: mobile phone or walkie-talkies.

First aid: woodland first aid kit to be taken for each visit.

Food and drink: wash hands/sanitize before eating, sit for eating and drinking, take snack and drink, take wet wipes and kitchen roll.

Children's safety advice: remind children of rules being in the woods.

Staff safety advice: discuss any concerns before each visit. Consider the weather, environment, and site.

Personal protective equipment for working at Forest School.

- *First Aid Kit.*
- *Emergency Procedures.*
- *Medical information for each individual and Emergency Contact details for every member of group (adults and children)-at school.*
- *Risk Assessments.*
- *Communication Devices-walkie-talkie.*
- *Clean water.*

7) Daily Operating Procedures

What to do before the session:

- *Check that all risk assessments are in place, particularly the check list*
- *Assess the site for new hazards*
- *Set up activities*
- *Take up and check equipment*
- *Prepare snack and drink*
- *Ensure that there is correct staff/client ratio and that all staff are familiar with this handbook.*

Before walk up:

- *Register children*
- *Check children are appropriately dressed*
- *Ensure children have water bottles*
- *Make sure children have been to the toilet*
- *Do head count of children*
- *Remind children of the rules and Forest School's code of conduct.*

What to do during the session:

- On-going risk assessments to be carried out by the Forest Leader;
- Carry out regular head counts, particularly when entering and leaving site;
- Observe and evaluate.

What to do after the session:

- Head count
- Tool Check and tools maintenance.
- Evaluation for next session the learning is reviewed and evaluated.

8) Our 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 explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment.

Boundaries:

Before each session begins children are made aware of how far they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If you lose sight of a child shout '1,2,3, where are you?' The children have been taught to respond '1,2,3, I'm here' through games that are practised regularly.

Toilet:

Since our woodland site is within the school grounds children will be using the school toilets. They will be encouraged to go before entering the site. Otherwise an adult will accompany the child.

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. Adults should always model safe lifting. 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, modeling appropriate knot tying and modeling 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.

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. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

9. Weather Watch

The Forest School leader will check the weather forecast before every session to ensure that the planned activity remains safe. Messages will be sent to parents if additional clothing is required or if a change of venue is planned.

10. Forest School Staff and Responsibilities

Longleaze Forest School is delivered by Mrs Dimitra Vourla.

The leader of Forest Schools is Mrs Sarah Rignall.

If you wish to find out any more about Forest Schools, please contact the school office.