Little Oaks Forest School at Mablins Lane CP School
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 local woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland learning.*

*Forest School Association (FSA)*

Forest School has developed from the Scandinavian approach to learning where children ages 3-7 attend a kind of kindergarten in an outdoor, usually wooded setting.

In 1993 a group of nursery nurses from Bridgewater College in Somerset visited Denmark to look at their preschool system. They were inspired by the outdoor, child centred and play led pedagogy and set up their own Forest School in the creche. In 1995 the college developed a Tech in Forest Schools aimed primarily at early years practitioners. Links were made with the UK’s heritage of outdoor learning and courses were soon offered around the Uk.

In recent years there has been a large growth in Forest Schools, particularly in nursery education, but also in primary and to a lesser degree in secondary. Learning at Forest School is a holistic way of learning. Activities at Forest School are child led and children have the freedom to play and learn in a natural outdoor setting. It has been seen to have a positive impact on the behaviour of children who struggle to concentrate in the classroom. At Forest School they are engaging with practical, hands on tasks with great success. Children have improved social skills, interact better with their peers and with adults and have improved problem solving skills. Those with conditions such as ASC and ADHD, are achieving great success and it is helping them to make bonds with adults.

At Forest Schools children learn how to take risks and that there is a consequence to every action. We live in a risk averse culture where we are always telling our children to be careful. Where this certainly has its place, at Forest Schools we point out hazards to children but leave the participants to manage their own risk. This raises their confidence and self esteem. Learners can feel greatly empowered when they have successfully lit a fire, or used a knife or bowsaw.
2. Our Forest School

Mablins Lane children have been experiencing Forest School for a number of years with Cheshire Wildlife Trust at their sites at Astbury Mere and their new site at the Quinta Nature Reserve near Holmes Chapel. The benefits to the children have been so great we took the decision to set up our own Forest School here at Mablins Lane.

It is a new undertaking and the site is still very much in development. We have many plans and within the next 12 months it is anticipated that we will have planted nearly 200 trees, naturalised some of the area with native wild flowers and have a permanent covered campfire area. We hope to improve the pond area as well and use it regularly as part of our Forest School.

We currently have 2 members of staff training to be level 3 Forest Leaders. They have both completed their First Aid for Forest School certificates which specialises in outdoor first aid. In addition one is a full first aider in school.
3. Forest School Opportunities and Experience

Activities at Forest School are many and varied and could include the following:

- Making clay faces
- Story telling
- Team games
- Field games
- Pond dipping
- Art activities from natural materials
- Mini beast hunts
- Bird spotting
- Tree identification
- Tool use
- Problem solving
- Construction games
- Fire lighting
- Campfire cooking
- Rope and knot skills
- Sensory activities
- Shelter building
4. Equipment at Forest School

- All Forest School equipment will be stored in a safe secure place
- Tools will be kept in a locked store and removed only when required. They will be counted out and counted back in.
- Fire lighting equipment will be kept in a locked store and removed only when required
- Forest School leaders are responsible for the maintenance of equipment
- Should equipment become unsafe it will be disposed of and replaced
- We will supply all equipment needed for Forest School
5. Emergency Action Plan in the event of a serious accident that requires the assistance of the medical services

In the event of a serious accident at our Forest School site the following action plan will come into force:

• A designated leader will care for the casualty, administering first aid.
• Emergency services to be called by second adult.
• Office staff to be telephoned in order that gates can be unlocked allowing the emergency services access to the site.
• Second adult will reassure and care for the rest of the children.
• If the situation is so severe it requires a further adult to assist, the school office will be telephoned requesting urgent assistance.
• The remaining children to be taken inside by office staff and offered reassurance.
• School office to telephone casualty’s parents to notify them of the incident.
• If unable to contact parents, FS leader to accompany casualty to hospital.

School address and telephone number is:
Mablins Lane Community Primary School
Mablins Lane
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 3YR

Grid Reference SJ696579

Nearest accident and emergency dept is:
Leighton Hospital
Middlewich Rd
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 4QJ
Tel 01270 255141
6. Fire policy

**Location**

There is a purpose built fire pit at Mablins Lane School situated to the front of the pond area.

**Positioning of children and adults**

- Logs for seating are positioned around the fire pit at a distance of 2 metres from the fire.
- Children and adults must not cross the fire circle even when the fire is not lit.
- Children and adults must ask permission to enter the fire circle.
- To access the seating, children and adults must walk around the outside of the logs, and when given permission, step over them and sit down immediately.
- Should some one want to change position, then must ask for permission, and when given stand up and step over the log they were sitting on and walk around the outside of the circle.

**Lighting the fire**

- Fires are lit using dry tinder, sticks of various sizes and logs to keep them burning. A fire steel will be used to light the fire.
- When adding wood to the fire, a fire glove must be worn to prevent burns.
- If children are permitted to tend to the fire they must be supervised 1:4 by an adult. An individual risk assessment will be carried out should we feel a higher child; adult ratio is required.
- Anyone tending to the fire must adopt the respect position: kneel with one knee on the floor, the other leg bent with the foot on the floor.
- The wind direction will be monitored by Forest School leaders to prevent smoke getting into eyes.
- Should smoke get into eyes children will be advised to sit down/remain sitting on the logs, turn their face away from the fire, close their eyes and count to 30.
- Once lit, an adult will remain with the fire at all times.

**Cooking on the fire**

- All cooking to be done by a Forest School leader, or if a child is permitted to cook they will be supervised at a minimum of 1:4.
- Fire gloves are to be worn when lifting pans, Kelly kettles etc.
- All food to be thoroughly cooked before being consumed.

**Extinguishing the fire**

- If possible allow the fire to burn down as much as possible before being extinguished.
- Extinguish the fire carefully and slowly with water.
• Mix the water with the ash until sure it has been extinguished.

Safety
• A burns 1st aid kit to be present at all fires
• A bucket of water to be present at all fires
• Hand washing water & antibacterial gel to be present if food from the fire is to be consumed.
• Long hair to be tied up at all time.
7. Procedure for use of tools

Tools are an integral part of Forest Schools when the leaders deem their use appropriate. The tools we may use are potato peelers, knives, drills, bow saws, loppers and bill hooks. To ensure safety for all the following guidelines are in place.

- Tools will be maintained to ensure their safety
- Tools will be kept in a designated safe place
- They will be counted out and counted back in
- A tool safety talk will be given whenever a new tool is introduced
- Tool use will be demonstrated by competent Forest School leaders
- Tool users will be supervised 1:1 in the first instance and until competency can be demonstrated
- All tools to be kept safe when not in use: knives to be sheathed, loppers closed, and the cover placed on bowsaws
- Children are not to walk around with uncovered tools eg unsheathed knives
- A glove is to be worn on the helper (non tool) hand when using tools (except loppers)
- A guide to the safe use of tools is kept with the risk assessments in a separate file
8. First aid procedure

At Forest School we recognise that due to the nature of the activities children may have some minor bumps and scrapes. The following are in place to care for the children in such instances:

- Both Forest School leaders are trained in First Aid for Forest Schools. One is also a full first aider in the school setting.
- A fully equipped first aid kit is kept in a designated place at Forest School sessions.
- The kit is checked before every session to ensure it is complete.
- Any items removed are replaced at the end of that session.
- All items are checked 3 monthly to check for expiration dates.
- If fire is to be used that day a burns first aid kit will be present in a designated place.
- First aid incidents will be recorded in the Forest School first aid book.
- All head injuries will be recorded and parents notified via a head bump letter. A head bump sticker will be worn by the child so that other adults in school are aware.
- If a child has an accident requiring urgent hospital treatment, an ambulance will be called. Parents will be informed. A Forest School leader will accompany the child to hospital if a parent cannot be contacted. If a child needs hospital treatment a Cheshire East Accident/Incident Report form will be filled out and filed in school and with CEC.
9. Clothing policy for Forest School at Mablins Lane School

Because Forest Schools will take place in ALL weathers (except high winds and thunder), a clothing policy has been devised for the safety and comfort of all children. Clothing will get dirty so children must be sent in old clothes, or those you don't mind getting dirty.

In winter children need:
Wellies with warm socks or walking boots.
Waterproof/warm coat
Waterproof trousers
Jumper or fleece
Warm hat
Gloves

As a rule wear lots of thin layers which can be removed if necessary.

In summer children need:
Wellies, walking boots or enclosed shoes (no sandals)
Long trousers
Sun hat
Sun screen to be applied before coming to school
Waterproof coat if rain is likely
Waterproof trousers if rain is likely.

School does have some waterproof jackets, waterproof trousers and wellies. These can be lent to children if necessary.
10. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy for Forest School at Mablins Lane School

- At Forest Schools, appropriate provision will be made to overcome barriers to learning and ensure all pupils with SEN can access, as far as possible Forest Schools.

- If necessary activities will be differentiated in order to include the young person with SEN.

- If necessary, to be able to include a child with SEN, additional adult help will be on site e.g. a teaching assistant with specialist knowledge of the child’s needs. This TA will also be familiar with the Forest School ethos in order that she can amend her practice accordingly.

- Parents will be fully informed of the activities their child will be doing at Forest Schools and encouraged to discuss any concerns they may have.

- The Forest School leaders will liaise closely with school staff to be fully informed of the SEND child’s educational needs.

- The Forest School leaders will feed back to the child’s class teacher their progress, especially if something has gone particularly well or badly.

- The Forest School leaders will have full regard for Mablins Lane School’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities policy.
11. Risk Assessments

- The Forest School Site and all activities have had full risk assessments.
- As part of these the site is checked before every session for any additional hazards.
- These will then be assessed or removed as appropriate.
- All risk assessments are reviewed on a regular basis.
- If an individual child, for medical or behaviour needs, requires an individual risk assessment, this will be completed before beginning the Forest School programme.
- All adults attending Forest Schools will read the risk assessments before accompanying the children.
- All risk assessments are kept in school and can be viewed should anyone wish to.