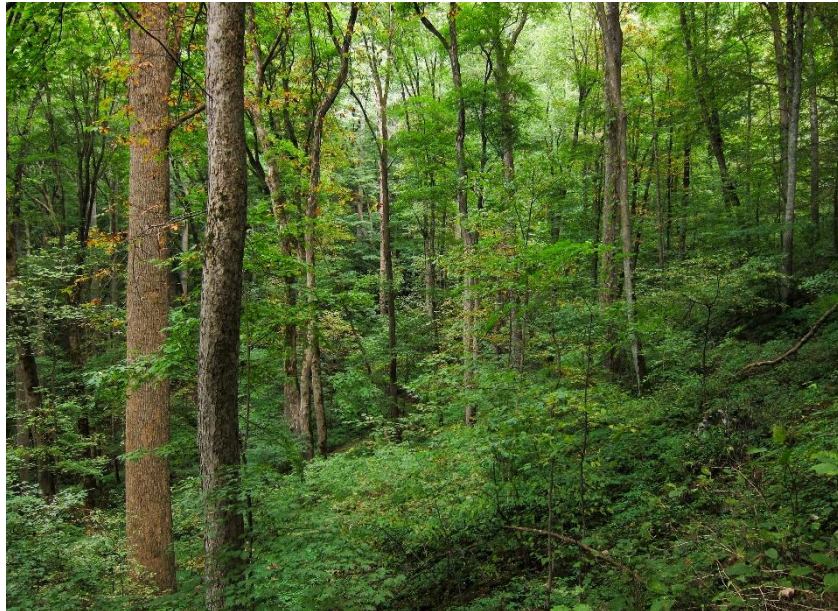




# Forest School Handbook



**John Blandy  
Primary School**



## John Blandy Primary Forest School

### Vision Statement

Forest School is child led outdoor learning in a natural environment. We aim to inspire children to explore and engage with nature, nurture their personal development and support them to learn new skills. We want to ensure the children are given opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

### The Forest School Associations Six Principles

**Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.**

At John Blandy School we ensure that children involved in Forest School will go throughout the school year to give them the opportunity to witness the changing seasons for themselves. In 2019/ 20 one cohort has been identified for Forest School and it is planned that half a class will be taken out each week, so the children will experience Forest School every fortnight. Careful observation of how the children play, what excites and engages them and what learning is being initiated will help inform planning. Adaptions throughout sessions will be essential because following the learners' interest is key to the Forest School ethos. Learning will regularly be reviewed with careful thought about how learning can be moved on which will be evident in planning.

**Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.**

Forest School at John Blandy School takes place in a small wooded area at the back of the school field. We will be considering ways in which to expand and develop the space throughout the year. The learners will help develop the are with us.

**Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners**

We aim to promote holistic development by giving everyone involved **time**. Time to enjoy nature, time to be able to talk, time to follow their own interests. Positive praise will be an important tool in helping the



learners develop their confidence and independence. Practitioners will recognise and praise creativity and independent thinking.

Before we can develop these attributes, we will need to ensure that the learners basic needs are met, for example we will ensure they are suitably dressed to keep them warm and safe. We will have a snack and warm drink to ensure they aren't hungry or thirsty. Once these needs are met and everyone is happy and feels secure then they will be able to take risks and build resilience.

**Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.**

Learners will be taught how to be safe in the environment but encouraged to take risks where appropriate. Once the learners have demonstrated they understand boundaries and risk, then the use of fires and tools may be introduced.

**Principle 5: Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.**

The school is committed to the training and professional development of staff. Following the Leaders successful completion of the Level 3 course, the school then intends to train support staff. The Leader will ensure a high adult ration for sessions including staff and helpers. The Leader will ensure that adults feel confident in their role of supporting learning by providing planning, modelling and dialogue. The Leader is also committed to CPD and reflective practice.

**Principle 6: Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning**

Play and child-initiated learning will be celebrated and valued. Learners will be given time to explore and develop ideas. The practitioners will act as facilitators providing resources and ideas only where appropriate.



## Behaviour Policy

At John Blandy Forest we aim to uphold the school's value and follow the school's behaviour policy and anti-bullying policy, which can be found here <https://www.johnblandyprimary.org.uk/policies/>

In the first Forest School session, children become involved with the setting and understanding of Forest School to ensure their safety. At the beginning of every session a quick recap of the rules is reinforced by the children.

### John Blandy Forest School Rules

- Walk within the Forest School Area
- Keep everything out of your mouth
  - Stay within the boundary set
    - Do not throw anything
    - Drag sticks behind you
      - Care for nature
- Ask an adult before you use a tool and follow the tool rules
  - Have FUN!
- Always wash hands following a session.

It is important that the adults involved try to help children understand the importance of these rules, and support children in understanding that these rules keep themselves and others safe.



## Communication Strategy

- Class Teachers -The Forest School leader is responsible for evaluating each session and feeding this information back to the Class Teacher where relevant. Any behavioural issues will be dealt with by the Forest School leader but fed back to the Class Teacher for their information.
- Site Manager - The Forest School leader will inform the Site Manager of any hazards or concerns about the Forest School site. The Forest School leader will inform the Site Manager when a fire is to be lit in Forest School. The Forest School leader will confirm Fire Safety arrangements with the Site Manager. The Site Manager will communicate any hazards on the site or around the perimeter before a session commences. The Site Manager is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Forest School site and its perimeter.
- Head Teacher - The Forest School leader will regularly update the Head Teacher on the progress of the Forest School sessions and will ensure the safety and well-being of the children at all times.
- Helpers/Assistants - The Forest School leader will introduce themselves to any helpers or assistants before the sessions begin. An overview of the ethos of Forest School will follow, and the Handbook will be given to them for their perusal. The helper/assistant will be responsible for acquainting themselves with the procedures and protocol in the Handbook, and will sign to confirm that they understand their roles and responsibilities. The Forest School leader will familiarise the helper/assistant with the planning for the session ahead. The helper/assistant will feed any observations back to the Forest School leader at the end of the session so that planning for the next session can be informed.
- Parents/Carers - The Forest School leader will send letters to parents/carers of children who it is felt would benefit from participating in Forest School sessions. This letter will inform them of the benefits of Forest School learning and why the school feels that it is an important aspect of our school curriculum. It will detail the sorts of activities the children will take part in. The letter will also outline the necessity of providing appropriate clothing and footwear for these sessions. Parents. Parents who require further information will be invited to contact the Forest School Leader, who will happily provide this. Parents will be asked to sign and return a consent form giving specific consent for their child to take part in the Forest School sessions.
- Wider school community – Forest School Leader will keep and maintain a section on the school website giving full information concerning Forest School provision at the school. Regular updates and interesting stories and pictures will disseminate using school newsletters and social media. (In accordance with school policies.)



## Equality

This policy operates in line with the whole school policy, a copy of which can be found on the school website or obtained from the school office.

- No child or adult will be discriminated against on any grounds including gender, age\*, background, race, religion or ability including SEND.
- Wherever possible, adjustments will be made to accommodate children with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues. This may include additional adult helpers, adapting the site if physically possible or adapting activities.
- All participants should feel that their experiences and contributions are worthwhile, so raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Forest School is a child led experience and wherever possible the children will be allowed to follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the woodland environment.
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\*Due to curriculum and practical reasons, the younger children in the school will initially attend Forest School on a regular basis.



## Health and Safety

At John Blandy Primary School the Health and Safety of staff, children and visitors is our primary concern. The following policies in this handbook are in addition to the main school's policies and do not replace them.

Please see John Blandy School's Health and Safety policy:

<https://www.johnblandyprimary.org.uk/policies>

The Policies in this handbook are the requirement of the safe running of Forest School.

Forest Schools is held on the school premises, within the forest area at the back of the school field. It is attended by children from the school. It is covered by the Faringdon Academy liability Insurance, which also covers the main school. Insurance Policy number : ?

The forest school leader is responsible for the safe running of Forest School therefore, has a duty of care for the children. However, all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe. Before a session commences all staff involved in the sessions have access to activity plans and risk assessments associated with the activities.

## Accident and Emergency

It is vital that emergency procedures are adhered to. These are in place to safeguard pupils and adults alike. If a serious incident takes place, it will be essential to carry out an investigation promptly.

Should a serious incident or accident occur, the Forest School Leader will ensure the safety of other participants by gathering the group at the fire circle.

In cases of emergency the Forest School Leader or other trained adult will administer first aid to the casualty. They will inform the school office who will alert parents and/or emergency services if necessary. They will inform the head teacher if the incident requires further medical treatment.

If an accident occurs to a pupil, member of staff or visitor that requires help in addition to first aid e.g. Fire, Ambulance and Police then the LA must be informed of the circumstances as soon as possible. An accident form will be completed and a copy faxed to the LA.

In the event of serious injury (this includes amputation, serious burns, acute illness, fracture, loss of sight or consciousness, or if detained in hospital over 24 hours, or death); the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must be informed. These notifications are a legal requirement



## **.Cooking and Food Hygiene**

- During snack time or cooking activities, food hygiene regulations will be adhered
- Children will wash and dry hands and sit around the fire circle
- Drinking water will be supplied.

## **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)**

As a school we have a duty of care under the COSHH regulations 2002 to prevent any participants at Forest School sessions coming into contact with substances hazardous to health.

At Forest School we will avoid using any substances that have a risk of being hazardous to health.

We will only use liquid hand soap for handwashing.

## **Extreme Weather**

The Forest School leader will check the weather forecast before the start of a session. In the case of high winds (25mph+) Forest School sessions may be cancelled for Health and Safety reasons. Appropriate clothing will ensure that Forest School sessions can take part in all weathers; to give children the opportunity to experience the seasons. In the case of very cold weather sessions may be cut short for participants well-being.

## **Fire Safety**

Campfires are a highlight of Forest School and will only be used once the children have been introduced to the safety procedures and the Forest School leader is confident; they can participate with as little risk as possible to their health. Fires will be lit in a fire bowl in the semi-permanent fire site.

### **Fire Safety Rules**

1. Ratio of **1:8 + Forest School Leader**
2. Fire area is surrounded by a boundary of at least **[30cm]** from the fire pit.
3. Children will sit on tree stumps outside this boundary.



4. When the fire is in use children are not permitted within the fire circle unless they are invited by the adult.
5. Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
6. Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
7. If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
8. Ensure water is available for extinguishing.

### **Safety and Responsibility**

1. Only adults are permitted to light fires, unless children are under the supervision of the Forest School Leader.
2. Fires will be lit using steels and flint or matches
3. No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
4. No plastics are to be burnt.
5. If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with adult supervision.
6. Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.

### **Extinguishing**

1. All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
2. Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
3. Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
4. At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

### **First Aid**

First Aid Level 3 Forest School Leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid. A First Aid Kit is always available on the Forest School site. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that the First Aid Kit is brought onto the site at the commencement of the session and returned to school after each session.

In cases of minor injury, such as cuts and grazes the Forest School Leader will administer first aid and complete a first aid note for the injured person to take home.



## **Insurance**

Faringdon Academy and its staff are all insured to carry out Forest School activities on the John Blandy School site providing all the risk assessments and procedures are adhered to.

## **Manual Handling**

Forest School can involve the manual handling of heavy objects, for example moving large branches when den building. It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader and all staff to ensure their own safety and that of pupils. When lifting heavy objects; staff should follow HSE Manual Handling guidance.

## **Risk Management and Assessment**

Forest School encourages participants to take risk and risk assess activities themselves, so that children learn how to manage risk safely. However, the Forest School leader has a responsibility to keep all participants. Therefore, it is important that the below risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed.

**Site Risk Assessment** - Before a site is used a risk assessment will be carried out by a Forest School Leader. The site risk assessment will be approved by Mrs S Thompson or S Elliot (Co-Headteachers) and updated as and when there are any permanent or seasonal changes to the site which are not recorded on daily site assessment below.

**Daily Site Risk Assessment** – A daily site risk assessment (safety sweep) will be carried out before the site is used to ensure that there are no changes to the site which could cause harm. This should be taken with extra caution following high winds and other bad weather. It should be carried out by the Forest School leader who will make the decision whether PPE should be worn when carrying out checks. Following the daily site risk assessment the FS leader will carryout anything that is needed to make the site safe (e.g. remove any hazards, mark off any unsafe areas). At the same time will consider specific circumstances which make it appropriate to cancel a Forest School Session.

**Activity Risk Benefit Assessment** – When planning activities for Forest Schools, any hazards associated with that activity, that are at risk of causing harm, should be considered. These should be recorded on an activity benefit assessment with suitable control measures taken to control and minimise the risk. Due to the nature of Forest Schols the children may come up with a new



activity during a session and therefore reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the activity is safe. An activity risk benefit assessment form will be completed asap following that session. If the benefits for the children outweigh the risk after safe measures have been put in place then the activity will be deemed safe and appropriate.

## **Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School**

### **General rules for tool use:**

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- All tools should be signed out when in use
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

### **Knives:**

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area
- Knives should be used away from the body
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

### **Bow-Saw:**

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Guard is in place when not in use
- Use in a designated area away from others
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand
- Use a saw-horse where possible with the bow saw.

### **Loppers:**

- Children must be supported 1:1 by the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Use in a designated area, away from others
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use
- Loppers must only be used above the ground if possible.



### **Ropes and Knots:**

- All equipment to be regularly checked for fraying etc.
- Children should not wrap rope around their bodies
- Children should be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots
- If tying between trees, the rope should be able to be seen and not cause a trip



## **Forest School Staffing and Ratios**

Staffing ratio for Forest School are one adult per eight children, plus the trained Forest School Leader. A group of 15 children will have at least 3 adults at all times to ensure safety.

The Forest School Leader on a one to one basis, will oversee all activities that involve making fire or using tools. Two other members will then be able to ensure the safety of the remaining pupils.

## **Helpers and Volunteers**

These will follow all the same procedures as set out in the School Policy for Volunteers.

We welcome parents/carers/family members and helpers from our local community into our school as they have a wealth of experience and strengths that can help with the education and experiences of the children.

The role of a Forest School Volunteer when working outdoors is often more rigorous than what is expected of them in an ordinary classroom situation. It is important that volunteers understand that they cannot be a passive adult in the group, but they have a responsibility under the guidance and direction of the Forest School Leader to ensure that guidelines, risk assessments, procedures and policies are followed at all times. Ultimate responsibility lies with the Forest School Leader, but they will be expected to contribute to the safety and well being of the group at all times.

Before any volunteer begins a Forest School session, the Forest School Leader will meet with them to go through all guidelines.

It is important that all volunteer helpers are happy in what they are doing, so a review will take place after the first week to ensure that they would like to continue with the role. This discussion will also enable them to demonstrate any strengths that they may have to be able to contribute to sessions.

All volunteers will need a DBS check.

## **Guidelines for all Volunteers**

- All should sign in at the school office on arrival before coming to the Forest School Site.
- Volunteers will be told that the disciplining of children is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader
- When escorting children to the toilet, volunteers should not go into the toilet – even if the pupil requests help. The volunteer should find a member of staff to assist
- Volunteers should become familiar with the Forest School Handbook and Procedures



- Volunteers should take part in pre session briefings from the Forest School Leader
- Volunteers should promote the ethos of Forest Schools to raise self-esteem and confidence
- Volunteers should assist in monitoring children in activities
- Volunteers should assist children with their kit when needed
- Volunteers will only be accepted when they have read and signed to say they agree to the policies and procedures within the Forest School Handbook.

## **Transport**

As the Forest School Site is on school grounds transport is not an issue. We will walk down to the site carrying out resources in a trolley. During 2020 a building site will be on the school field. We may need to access the site through the building site. Arrangements to access the site will be made Kier Site Manager before the session.

## **Welfare**

### **Forest School Clothing**

Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy roads.

'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing'

Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating; children and adults need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session.

In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved tee shirt
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and jacket
- Long socks, wellies or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Children should arrive at school in their school uniform and bring other items, in a bag, to change into for the session.

All Forest School Kit should be named and brought into school on the morning of their session. We ask parents to provide appropriate clothing for



sessions. We are funding raising to be able to purchase our own school set of waterproofs for Forest School. In the meantime, we are collecting spares to ensure no children miss out.

### **Toileting:**

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school
- A member of staff who is DBS will take the children back to school if they need to go during a session

### **Snacks**

Snacks and drinks will be provided at all sessions to ensure the learners needs are met and they can thrive at Forest School and take advantage of all of the learning opportunities.

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

PPE will be provided when using tools. We ask that parents provide suitable footwear and clothing for sessions.