

CARLYLE FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK



2023

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Next review Due July 2024

Our Vision for Forest School

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)

At Carlyle Infant and Nursery Academy, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and inspiring child-centred approach.

The Forest School Principles and how they link to our setting:

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions and aims for children to visit in blocks of at least six weeks over two or more seasons. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process.
2. It takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment – we are lucky to have a lovely wooded area within the school grounds.
3. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. We will offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.
5. It will be managed by the Forest Schools team lead by Level 3 qualified Forest School Leader: Simon Wallace. The other key members of the team are: Miss Chloe Parker and Mr George Selby, trainee L3 Leaders and Mrs Elizabeth Ward, Teaching Assistant. The academy head teacher and senior designated safeguarding lead is Mrs Laura Besenzi.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

Forest School ethos

At Carlyle Infant Academy we are committed to the ethos of Forest School and aim to:

- Fulfil every child's potential
- Develop an appreciation of the natural world and their place within it
- Foster a love of learning that creates independent and confident learners
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment
- Promote children's self-esteem
- Encourage independence
- Promote respect for each other and for living things
- Provide appropriate adult: child ratios
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community

Forest School Behaviour Policy

In Forest school sessions we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Carlyle. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. We spend time celebrating good choices, kindness and personal responsibility. We highlight individuals and groups for praise during sessions and in reflection times.

Clear expectations are set, are known to the children and shared by all adults.

When a child's choices go against the ethos of Forest School, the school expectations or our forest school rules, this often provides an opportunity to tackle issues through discussion and reflection. By engaging children in discussion many valuable lessons about empathy and respect can be taught.

As a rare final resort, in more extreme circumstances, where behaviour threatens the wellbeing of children or others, and children do not respond to a verbal warning, they may be returned to school. This would be discussed with parents at the end of the day.

Academy expectations:

- **Be Kind** (kind words, hands and feet)
- **Be Safe** (keep themselves and others safe)
- **Be Ready** (ready to learn, listen, act)

Our rules and routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy. Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session. These include:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful with that stick'
- Respect for plants, trees, animals and each other
- Returning to the meeting point whenever called
- Staying within the designated areas at all times
- Close adult supervision and strict safety guidelines for: campfire activities, using tools, tree climbing, rope work, food preparation, shelter building.

Adult Role:

All adults at Forest School model appropriate behaviour and safe practices, whilst interacting with the children and each other; boundaries are shared, promoting positive reinforcement and choices and consequences discussed. They will:

- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times
- Carry out necessary risk assessments
- Create a positive learning environment, based on each child's needs
- Encourage good relationships, based on respect for each other
- Promote, honesty, politeness and kindness through example
- Use encouraging language and show appreciation of each child's contributions
- Ensure fair treatment and equality for all attending, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, in line with the school's Equality Policy.

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.

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’

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

When attending sessions, children should have:

- Long sleeves
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches
- Waterproof jacket and over-trousers or dungarees
- Long socks and wellies
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, extra socks, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Children should arrive at school in their Forest School clothes and may bring school uniform, in a bag, to change into after the session.

All Forest School Kit should be named.

Poor weather procedures

Forest school sessions will take place in most weather conditions. Exposure to the elements is part of the experience and if dressed suitably should not be a problem.

Where necessary we will erect tarps and temporary shelters to protect from rain or sun.

Strong winds, thunder storms and extreme cold temperatures may risk the child's safety and in these conditions, the Forest School leader would decide not go ahead.

Forest School Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy operates in line with the whole school policy, a copy of which can 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.

Safeguarding at Forest School

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Carlyle Infant and Nursery School's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

A summary of the policy is included below:

- Every child has the right to be kept safe from danger and learn in a safe and secure environment
- All staff involved in Forest School hold relevant DBS checks
- All Forest School staff attend regular safeguarding training
- All concerns and disclosures are confidential and will only be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and necessary agencies, if appropriate.

In the case of a disclosure during a session

Adults in Forest School should be aware that some children may be more likely to disclose a safeguarding issue in the setting.

Guidance on handling a disclosure:

1. Stay calm and listen. 2. Go slowly. 3. Reassure them that they have not done anything wrong. 4. Be supportive. 5. Do not promise anonymity. 6. Gather essential facts. 7. Tell what will happen next. 8. Report to DSL. 9. Make accurate notes as soon as possible and save to school CPOMS system.

Carlyle Infant and Nursery School safeguarding lead: Mrs Sarah Curtis (Principal).

For more information see the academy website and Safeguarding policy:

<http://www.carlyleinfantnurseryacademy.co.uk/safeguarding/>

Confidentiality Policy

All forest school staff and volunteers must adhere to the Carlyle Academy confidentiality policy. All are expected to maintain professional standards of confidentiality about anything seen or heard within sessions. A summary:

- Staff should avoid being 'drawn' into discussions which relate to Forest School matters or matters regarding a child, group of children or their families. If there are any concerns in this matter please refer them to Mrs Laura Besenzi, Headteacher.
- Details relating to children are confidential and should only be shared with staff, as part of their professional role or with the parents/guardians of the child in question.
- No child's personal details will be given out over the telephone until the validity of the request has been ascertained.
- Unconditional confidentiality should never be given.
- If an adult receives external information that leads them to believe there is a child protection issue, they should refer this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Adults should be sensitive when discussing an individual child's behaviour in the presence of another child.
- No adult should enter into detailed discussion about a child's behaviour, abilities or progress with other children or their parents.
- We follow and adhere to all of the GDPR regulations.

Volunteers

Everything that volunteers see and hear (particularly in relation to children's, welfare or levels of work) must be held in confidence and not shared with others outside of the school. If volunteers have any questions regarding anything they see or hear in school, or they have concerns about the well-being of a child, they should speak to the Forest School Leader or the school Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Medical and personal information

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and kept confidentially in line with the school's GDPR policy
- Only trained staff will apply first aid to children and adults attending; volunteers must make staff aware if they are approached by a child needing care
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

Photographic and Video permissions

- As the sessions are on school grounds, within the normal school day, the permissions, or otherwise, provided to school will apply for forest school sessions.
- Mobile phones should only be used for emergency purposes.

Assessment and Reporting Arrangements for Forest School Sessions

During Forest School sessions, children will be observed and assessed in an unobtrusive way as within the classroom. Evidence will be gathered using photographs, videos and written observations. All staff involved in Forest school will be responsible for gathering evidence; volunteers would be asked to feedback to the Forest School Leader.

Information gathered will be used to plan activities and next steps for the children and to help judge the success and impact of sessions. Observations may also be shared with parents.

Observations

- Trained staff will be required to undertake observations and assessments of the children attending, as part of the curriculum and wellbeing scales.
- Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity; this must be in strict confidence.

Health and Safety Policy

Risk Management Summary - Risk Benefit

The Forest School concept originates in Denmark, originally aimed at pre-school children, where it was found that children who had attended forest school then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. Carlyle Infant Academy pupils will be engaging in motivating and achievable tasks and activities appropriate to their year groups throughout the academic year and in almost all weathers, with the appropriate footwear and clothing. By enabling the opportunities of working with tools and through play, we will support our pupils to widen their knowledge of, and empathy with, the natural world at the same time as working at different levels within; a team, their own abilities, and managing their individual risk within the natural environment.

Forest School Risk Assessments

We have a General Forest School activity Risk Assessment specific to our site at Carlyle Infant and Nursey Academy. This is shared with all staff and visitors who take part in Forest School activities and Woodland Explorer sessions (whole class). The policy is updated regularly. The responsibility for keeping the risk assessment updated is with the Forest School lead Simon Wallace.

For further information regarding site or generic risk assessments at Academy level contact Alison Woodhouse at AWoodhouse01@theharmonytrust.org

Staff Training

Forest School sessions must be led by a staff member trained to a level 3 who can oversee the development and delivery of the sessions.

Level 3 is designed to qualify the participant to become a forest school leader, who is able to set up and run a forest school programme. Level 3 covers how to facilitate groups in a learner-centred way, and how to manage a forest school site sustainably. It also covers the practical skills required of a forest school leader.

Fire Protection

There is an additional Risk Assessment specific to activities involving fire. For a brief summary see page 12 of this handbook.

Academy Fire Risk Assessment are in place and are reviewed bi- annually with a trust operational review completed annually.

Personal Safety

Participants in activities, including children, have a responsibility for the safety of themselves and others. Everyone is expected to follow safety instructions, and act responsibly.

Insurance

Forest school activities within the trust are covered by the insurance arrangements of Harmony Trust, to find out these details please contact Sharon Costello Chief Finance Officer.

Communication Strategy

Clear communication is essential for the smooth running of Forest School. Children and adults need to listen carefully to rules, boundaries and instructions, linked to safety procedures and activities. There will always be time for questions or comments from children and adults.

- Any staff or volunteers attending Forest School must meet prior to the session starting, to review health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a walkie-talkie for communication with the school and a mobile phone for emergency use only
- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website
- Parents will receive general information letters before sessions begin
- A member of the forest schools team will always be happy to answer any questions parents may have about the sessions, generally, or relating to their child.
- Rules will be discussed and practised in the classroom setting
- St. Giles School also run forest school sessions with small groups of children in the grounds of Carlyle Infants School. They, or any other third party users, are responsible for carrying out their own risk assessments prior to activities and communicating these with ourselves.
- Communication with any other third party accessing the Carlyle woodland about forest schools issues will be with the forest schools team and/or the head teacher.

Contact Numbers

Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the school office at the earliest opportunity.

Emergency Action Plan

In the event of a serious accident on Forest School site that requires the assistance of the emergency services:

1. Secure area - remove hazards if possible.
2. Alert staff - call group back to safe area.
3. Qualified first aider allocated - other adult to call for emergency services and confirm to first aider that this has been done.
4. Administer first aid procedure as necessary
5. Ensure rest of the group remain calm and not panicked.
6. When possible remove the rest of the group to the school building or fire assembly point in the field.
7. Continue with first aid, wait for emergency services, notify parent as necessary.

In the event of the Forest School Leader being seriously injured:

1. The second member of staff will always hold a relevant first aid qualification.
2. Walkie talkie school to immediately allocate: one member of staff call to emergency services via mobile phone and go to the incident; and another member of staff to collect the children and return them to their class.
3. Administer first aid procedure as necessary
4. Continue with first aid, wait for emergency services, and notify emergency contact as necessary.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing:

1. Gather children, check the register and identify which child/children are missing.
2. Inform the most senior member of staff at the School by walkie talkie.
3. Check all gates are secure.
4. Children return to their class while available staff are dispatched to search all areas the child may have gone.
5. If there is any likely hood a child may have breached to boundary fence, or a child is not found within 2 minutes of searching the area, police to be called.
6. Staff will continue to search and regroup to re-assess after 10 minutes.
7. Staff dispatched to search must remain in contact with the group leader.
8. Inform Police on 999 and hand over all relevant details of the child/children.
9. Call the parents to inform them and let them know what is being done.
10. Inform Social Services (where necessary) and Chair of Governors •
11. After the event, the team will reflect on the incident and the procedure to see if anything can be learned from the process and if any measures can be taken to improve arrangements.

Forest School Hygiene Policy

Toileting:

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school
- The woods will not be used for this purpose
- When necessary, children will be able to use the school toilets.

Hand Washing:

- Whenever possible, soap and water will be used for handwashing at snack time
- Disposable paper towels will be used for drying and bagged for disposal
- In some cases, when children have not been getting soiled hands, antibacterial hand gel may be used
- Anti-bacterial gel will be available throughout the session as required

Snack time or cooking:

- During snack time or cooking activities, food hygiene regulations will be adhered
- Children will wash and dry hands and sit on the base camp benches, logs or tarpaulin when consuming any food or drink
- Drinking water will be supplied.

Forest School Waste Policy

- All waste/litter created by Forest School, and any waste/litter will be collected for appropriate disposal.
- The Forest School Leader will provide waste containers.
- Raw fruit and vegetable waste should be collected separately and taken to the compost bin.
- All waste produced or found on site during the Forest School session will be placed within the waste containers.
- At the end of the Forest School session the Forest School Leader will remove the waste containers for appropriate recycling/disposal.
- A small amount of waste water is created at Forest School, from hand washing and washing up.
- Solid debris is removed from the water for disposal in the waste containers. The waste water is then disposed in the woodland over a wide an area as possible, so it will evaporate quicker. If a fire needs to be extinguished the water will be used for this purpose.

For more information about Health and Safety at Carlyle Infant and Nursery Academy see the Health and Safety policy: <http://www.carlyleinfantnurseryacademy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Health-and-Safety-Policy-May-2018.pdf>

Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School

General rules for tool use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment outlined in 'tool talks'.
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools at school
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oil, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult
- 'Tool talk' carried out before any tool is used.

Palm drills / softwood hand drills

- Children will be supported 1:2 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Use in a designated area away from others
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand
- Ensure the piece of wood being drilled is securely placed on a stable log or bench

Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably 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 an adult preferably 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 hazard.

Fire Activities

- Fire activities only take place under the supervision of a qualified level three Forest School leader.
- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.

We also hold an additional full risk assessment for the use of fire at Forest School.