

# CARLYLE FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK



**2023-2024**

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**Next review Due February 2025**

## **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 Carllyle 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 5-6 weeks. 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.

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 Carllyle 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

## **What do we do there?**

Forest School allows children to be a part of a variety of outdoor activities and encourages children to learn about the natural environment as well as developing key social and emotional skills. Some of the activities the children will be a part of are:

- Den building
- Use and practice of a variety of knots
- The identification of plants and animals
- Exploration of the natural world
- Natural art and design
- How to look after the natural world
- Use of sustainable resources within the Forest School
- Safe use of tools to support learning
- Different seasons/what happens in each season
- Developing key social and emotional skills; e.g spiritual development, health and wellbeing
- Playing in the outdoors
- Taking risks in a safe way
- Building relationships/supporting each other
- Achieving manageable tasks individually and in a group

## **Routine in Forest School**

Forest School will run on a weekly basis with each class in KS1 having a 5-6 week block. EYFS will utilise Forest School as a part of 'Welly Wednesday'.

The children will arrive at the Forest School and sit in the benched circle so that learning for the session can be introduced. This learning can range from simple team building activities to den building or craft activity. The children will then have an opportunity to play in the forest with one adult being a Learning Leader, while the other adult introduces and delivers an activity to a group of children.

All children will have the opportunity to play and take part in a structured activity.

The children will be required to care and maintain the area with support, as well as ensuring they are maintaining and using equipment in a safe way. The children will also be encouraged to use a Wellie wash to ensure clothing and resources are clean, dried and ready for the next use.

## **Forest School Behaviour Policy**

In Forest school sessions we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Carllyle. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. We spend time celebrating good choices, kindness and personal responsibility.

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 are taught.

As a rare final resort, in more extreme circumstances, where behaviour threatens the wellbeing of others, children may be returned to school.

### **Academy expectations:**

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

### **Additional Forest School expectations:**

- 'Three whistle' Blow and '123 Where are you' rules and routine in place.

### **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 and adhere to 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.

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.

### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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 Nursery 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](mailto:AWoodhouse01@theharmonytrust.org)

### **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.

### **Visitors**

The Forest School site is a secure area within the School grounds and is private land owned by the school. There should not be any visitors to the school grounds unless arranged by prior appointment. In the case of trespassers, the Forest School Lead will address the issue and report to the Head teacher.



All visitors must report to the School Reception before entering school. This is to ensure that all visitors are signed in and have been allocated a badge. The office staff will then take any visitors to the appropriate staff members

## **Register**

A register must be taken to the forest each session to ensure a headcount can be taken when required.

## **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
- 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
- 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.

## **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:**

- We take the health and safety of the children and adults extremely seriously. If in the unlikely event a child cannot be found, the Leader and supporting staff must take the following action:
- The Forest School Leader shall be informed immediately.
- Activity for the rest of the group shall be suspended in order that up to two members of staff, including the Forest School Leader if appropriate, may be released to conduct a search which shall last no more than 10 minutes.
- The remaining children will be given a low risk activity to complete, within the circle area by the remaining adults, being mindful not to increase any anxiety in the group.
- If, after the ten-minute search, the child has not been located, the Forest School Leader will phone 999 and alert the police.
- School office will be informed so that they can contact the child's parents or adult's emergency contact and inform them of the situation.
- Staff should corroborate details of the situation, including last known position of the missing child or adult and any timings. These will be recorded on CPOMs and shared.

## **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:**

- Water for washing is available in forest school at all times
- 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
- 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 to
- 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.

### Play policy

We are committed to supporting the importance of play, both indoors and outdoors, and the value of risk taking. Practitioners support children's play throughout the session taking into account the age, interests and individual needs of the child. We provide provision in which children can play in a safe and secure environment. Transitions between daily activities, where possible should not interrupt the children's play experiences and routines in the afternoon are flexible.

Children are encouraged to make choices and think critically through independent play in on a one to one, small group or larger group. Each adult is responsible for providing play opportunities, on location at the setting and when off site.

Play is children's work. Free play, including outdoors as this is integral part of the curriculum, is a fundamental part of a child's day in EYFS. Through play children can explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate knowledge already gained to help develop new skills for now and in the future. It is essential for keeping children healthy and reaching important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones. It also helps children to manage anxiety and become resilient.

Outdoor play is an integral part of the curriculum and play. It offers opportunities for children to develop their large and small muscles, experience an environment that is different to the inside of the nursery. Guidance on supporting high quality play within the environment includes:

- *Having adequate time to explore and play in the outdoor area.*
- *Finding out about the living natural world and how to look after it appropriately.*
- *Using natural and man-made materials to build, shape, assemble on both large and small scale.*
- *Having space to run and move in a variety of different ways to support gross motor movement*
- *Providing adequate space for children to use and explore*
- *Taking manageable risk*



## **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/wpcontent/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 and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

### **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
- 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
- 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.