

Fulwell Infant



Forest School  
Handbook

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# What is Forest School?



Forest School is a long-term outdoor learning programme that takes place in a woodland or natural environment. It provides children with regular opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of, and connection with, the natural world while learning how to care for and respect the environment.

At Fulwell Infant School, Forest School sessions are largely child-led, allowing children to follow their interests and curiosities while exploring the outdoors. Through a holistic approach to learning, children develop creativity, independence, confidence, and problem-solving skills through hands-on experiences and play.

As part of their Forest School journey, children take part in a range of activities, including den building, knot tying, nature exploration, tool use, and, where appropriate and under close supervision, fire-lighting activities. Through supported risk-taking, teamwork, and exploration, Forest School helps children build resilience, social skills, self-esteem, and a lifelong appreciation of the outdoors.

At Fulwell Infant School we are fortunate to have a variety of natural outdoor spaces rich in plants and wildlife, providing the perfect environment for children to learn, play, and explore.



# *The Benefits of Forest School*

Forest School offers children a wide range of benefits that support their learning, development and wellbeing.

## **Wellbeing and Mental Health**

Spending time outdoors in natural surroundings can help children feel calm, relaxed and happy. Forest School provides a peaceful environment where children can unwind, explore and enjoy being in nature.

## **Confidence and Self-Esteem**

Children are encouraged to make choices, try new activities and challenge themselves at their own pace. Achieving new goals helps build confidence and a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

## **Physical Development**

Forest School activities help develop both fine and gross motor skills. Whether children are building dens, climbing, tying knots, digging, or creating nature inspired art, they are constantly strengthening their coordination and physical abilities.

## **Resilience and Independence**

Children are encouraged to take on new challenges, solve problems and persevere when things do not go to plan. This helps them develop resilience, independence and a positive attitude towards learning.

## **Social and Communication Skills**

Working together on activities encourages children to share ideas, listen to others and collaborate as part of a team. These experiences help develop communication skills, friendships and confidence when interacting with others.

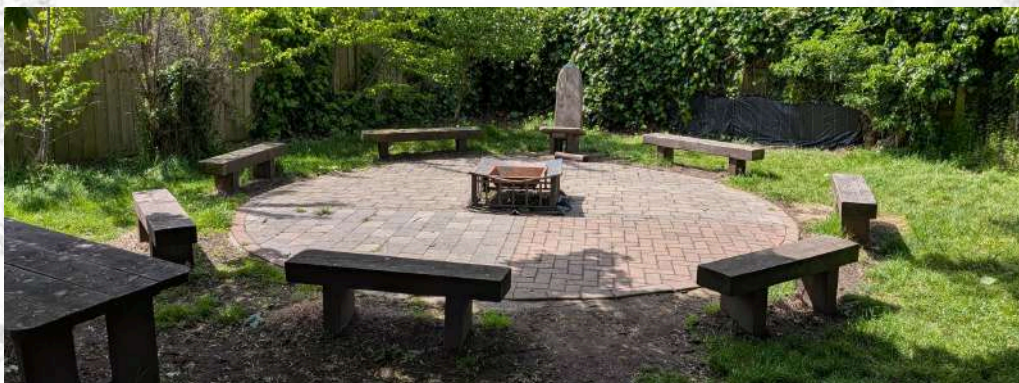
## **Environmental Awareness**

Through hands-on experiences in nature, children learn about local plants, wildlife and habitats. They develop an understanding of how to care for the environment and recognise the important role they can play in protecting it.

**Most importantly, Forest School helps children develop a lifelong love of learning, adventure and the natural world.**



# Forest School Ethos



At Fulwell Infant School, our Forest School programme is guided by a set of core principles that place children, nature and learning at the heart of every session.

Forest School is much more than an occasional outdoor activity. Children take part in regular sessions throughout the year, allowing them to develop confidence, skills and a strong connection with the natural environment over time.

Our Forest School programme:

- 🌿 Encourages children to build a meaningful relationship with nature.
- 🌿 Supports the development of the whole child, including their social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills.
- 🌿 Provides opportunities for children to take age-appropriate, supported risks in a safe environment.
- 🌿 Is led by qualified Forest School practitioners who are committed to providing high-quality outdoor learning experiences.
- 🌿 Follows a child-centred approach, enabling children to learn through exploration, discovery and play.
- 🌿 Creates a welcoming community where every child is valued, supported and encouraged to succeed.

Through these principles, Forest School nurtures confident, resilient and curious learners who develop a lifelong appreciation of the outdoors and the natural world.

For more information about the Forest School approach and its benefits, please visit the **Forest School Association**, the UK professional body for Forest School: [www.forestschoollassociation.org](http://www.forestschoollassociation.org)



## *Who Supports Your Child in Forest School?*

At Fulwell Infant School, Forest School sessions are led by our qualified Forest School Leader and supported by school staff who know the children well. Together, they create a safe, nurturing and engaging environment where every child is encouraged to explore, learn and develop at their own pace. We aim to ensure that all children feel valued, listened to and supported throughout their Forest School experience. By following children's interests and natural curiosity, we provide meaningful opportunities for learning, discovery and personal growth while helping them develop a positive connection with nature.

### **Meet Our Forest School Leader**

**James Routledge** - *Level 3 Forest School Leader*

### **Responsibilities of the Forest School Leader:**

Our Forest School Leader is responsible for:

-  Planning, organising and leading Forest School sessions.
-  Ensuring all activities are delivered safely and in line with Forest School principles and school policies.
-  Supporting children's learning, wellbeing and development during sessions.
-  Working closely with teaching and support staff to meet the needs of all children.
-  Maintaining and preparing equipment and resources.
-  Monitoring children's progress and celebrating their achievements.
-  Encouraging children to take managed risks, develop new skills and build confidence in the outdoor environment.

Our aim is to provide every child with a positive, enjoyable and memorable Forest School experience that helps them grow in confidence, resilience and independence while fostering a lifelong appreciation of the natural world.

# What Should my Child Wear?



To help children stay safe, comfortable and enjoy their time outdoors, we ask that they come to Forest School dressed appropriately for the weather conditions.

## Recommended clothing includes:

- ✿ **Sturdy footwear or wellington boots.** If possible, we ask that children bring a pair of wellies to school on their allocated day.
- ✿ **Long-sleeved tops and long trousers** to help protect against scratches, stings and insect bites.
- ✿ **Warm layers**, including hats, scarves and gloves during colder weather.
- ✿ **A sun hat or cap** during warmer weather, with sun cream applied before school or brought in for children to apply themselves where appropriate.
- ✿ **Waterproof clothing.** The school can provide waterproof puddle suits; however, children will still need their own coat and wellies.

For some activities, additional safety equipment may be required. Any specialist protective equipment, such as kneeling mats, cut-resistant gloves for tool use, or heat-resistant gloves, will be provided by the Forest School Leader.

By wearing the right clothing, children can enjoy Forest School in all weathers, making the most of every outdoor adventure throughout the year.

# Staying Safe



## **Risk Management**

At Fulwell Infant Academy, children's safety is always our highest priority. Forest School activities are carefully planned and risk assessed to ensure children can explore, learn and challenge themselves in a safe environment. We believe that taking managed risks is an important part of children's learning and development, helping them to build confidence, resilience, and independence. Our Forest School risk assessment can be found on our school website.

## **Safeguarding**

We are committed to keeping every child safe and supported. All Forest School sessions are led by trained staff, with the Forest School Leader and supporting adults present throughout to supervise activities and promote children's wellbeing. Our safeguarding and child protection policies are available on the school website. Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mrs W. Angus with Ms F Kelly and Miss S Dickinson qualified DSLs.

## **Health & Safety**

Our Forest School Leader holds outdoor first aid training, and additional members of staff are also trained in first aid. The woodland area and planned activities are checked regularly, and risk assessments are completed before each session.

When food is used as part of a Forest School activity, staff are fully aware of any allergies or dietary requirements within the group. Appropriate food safety procedures are always followed, and ingredients that may pose a risk to children with allergies are not used.

Together, these measures ensure that children can enjoy exciting outdoor experiences while learning safely and confidently in nature.



# Our Outdoor Spaces



We are very fortunate to have a range of wonderful outdoor spaces that provide children with exciting opportunities to learn, explore and discover. Our Forest School site includes a variety of natural environments, from our meadow area and woodland spaces to our dedicated fire pit area.

These unique outdoor settings allow children to experience nature first-hand, develop new skills, build confidence and take part in a wide range of engaging activities throughout the year. Every session offers new opportunities for adventure, creativity, problem-solving and exploration, helping children to develop a deeper connection with the natural world.



Woodland



The Meadow



Adventure and Play



Fire Pit



The Maze



Bug Hunting



# Using Tools Safely



Using tools is often a favourite part of Forest School and gives children the opportunity to develop confidence, responsibility, and practical skills. Before using any tool, children are taught how to handle it safely and understand the rules for its use.

To ensure everyone's safety:

- ✚ Children are shown how to use each tool correctly and are reminded of the safety rules before activities begin.
- ✚ Tools are used under close supervision from the Forest School Leader and supporting adults.
- ✚ Depending on the activity, children may work individually, in pairs, or within a small group.
- ✚ A '**Safe Circle**' is used whenever tools are being handled. This clearly defined space helps children maintain a safe distance from one another while working.
- ✚ Participation is always encouraged but never forced. Children are supported to engage at a pace that feels comfortable for them.
- ✚ All tools and equipment are thoroughly checked before and after each session to ensure they are safe and in good working order.

Through careful supervision and clear guidance, children learn to use real tools responsibly, developing valuable life skills while enjoying hands-on learning in the outdoors.

# Using Fires Safely



Learning how to build, light, cook on and safely extinguish a fire is an exciting and memorable part of the Forest School experience. These activities help children develop confidence, responsibility and an understanding of how to manage risk safely. As with all Forest School activities, careful safety procedures are always followed to ensure children can learn in a secure and supportive environment.

Children are introduced to fire activities gradually, allowing them to build the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to work safely around a campfire. Over time, they may have the opportunity to help build a fire, cook simple foods and learn how to safely extinguish a fire under close adult supervision.

To ensure everyone stays safe:

- 🌿 Children are taught clear campfire safety rules and are expected to listen carefully to instructions at all times.
- 🌿 Participation is encouraged but children who are unable to follow the safety expectations may be asked not to take part in fire activities for their own safety and the safety of others.
- 🌿 The Forest School Leader remains present and supervises the fire area throughout the activity.
- 🌿 Appropriate safety equipment and first aid resources are always available.
- 🌿 A clearly marked '**Safe Circle**' is established around the fire. Children learn how to approach, move around and leave the fire area safely and responsibly.
- 🌿 Fires are only lit when conditions are suitable and activities have been fully risk assessed.

Through these carefully managed experiences, children learn to respect fire, understand its uses, and develop important life skills in a safe and enjoyable outdoor environment.



# More Experiences in Nature...



Every Forest School session is unique, with activities changing throughout the seasons and following the children's interests and curiosity. Some of the exciting experiences we offer at Fulwell Infant Academy include:

- 🌿 Den building
  - 🌿 Map reading and trail following
  - 🌿 Leaf printing and natural art
  - 🌿 Outdoor obstacle courses
  - 🌿 Learning about local plants, animals and habitats
  - 🌿 Water exploration activities
  - 🌿 Nature-inspired crafts
  - 🌿 Outdoor games and team challenges
  - 🌿 Mini-beast hunting
  - 🌿 Caring for and supporting local wildlife
  - 🌿 Imaginative role-play, such as *"A Day in the Life of a Squirrel"*
  - 🌿 Forest bathing and mindfulness activities
  - 🌿 Reflection and storytelling around the fire circle
- ...and much more!

Through these engaging experiences, children develop confidence, resilience, creativity, independence, teamwork and a lifelong appreciation of the natural world. Every visit to Forest School brings new opportunities for adventure, discovery and learning outdoors.