

Forest School Handbook



Kinsale Infant School

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1. What is Forest School and the forest school ethos

The forest school concept originates from Denmark and was aimed at pre school children at the beginning. It was discovered that children that attended the forest school started their journey into formal education with strong social and communication skills and had higher self confidence in their abilities.

“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees”

Some of the forest schools key principles and their benefits are:

- Forest School is a long term exercise that involves regular sessions in an accessible natural environment over a long period of time. Regular observations and joint work between learner and facilitators should demonstrate progression of learning.
- Forest School has to take place in a woodland or natural space so the learner develops an awareness and respect for the natural world.
- Forest School helps to promote the holistic development of all individuals involved linking their experiences to their home and school life.
- Forest School gives learners the opportunity to take supported risks tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.
- Forest School is run by a qualified Forest School practitioner with high ratio of learners to staff. A Forest School leader should be reflective and see themselves as a learner also.
- Forest School uses a range of learner led processes and empowers the learner to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

2. Health & Safety aspects for Forest School

We will be doing our forest school sessions in a designated area of the Kinsale Infant School field. The area will be marked so learners know where it is and before each session the boundaries are set so all learners are aware of where they can learn and explore. There will be a Forest School leader Mrs Emma Secker supported by Mrs Gemma Leeper, our forest school assistant. All children that attend will have had a consent form sent home for parental permission for them to participate. As it's a new site we will plant and develop the environment over time.

Insurance

Covered by the county council insurance.

Staff ratio

There will be a maximum of 1:8 all staff and volunteers will be CRB checked according to school policy.

Risk management

Risk management and risk assessment will be carried out by forest school leaders.

A site risk assessment will be undertaken each week and a daily risk assessment and check is made before each Forest School session at our site.

In addition, an activity risk assessment will be established prior to any activity that may require it. These will include: whittling, cutting wood, shelter building, fire lighting and cooking on an open fire, and palm drilling. Specific additional risk assessments will be undertaken for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires them.

There are five steps to risk assessment we will follow:

- We look for potential hazards such as litter, damaged branches, animal waste,
- We decide who might be at harm and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate to minimise potential risk or should more be done.

- Record the findings
 - Review the action and revise if necessary.
- (See Appendix 1 for risk assessment of site)

First aid

Trained staff will be available during the session (Miss Kerry Fisher) and within school grounds in line with the school policy. First aid kit will be taken on site for every session. (See appendix 2 first aid essential equipment)

Accident & emergency

Most emergencies will be resolved by the designated first aider or by the leader removing the group from any potential threat. In case of serious incidents one member of staff will alert the school who would contact emergency services. Then the following procedure will take place.

- Secure safety of whole group from any further danger. By stopping activities when safe. Gather group by using a tambourine as a signal and leading them back into the school through tiger class.
- First aider will attend the casualty with the remaining adult. First aid will be administered and any treatment recorded.
- Emergency services will be contacted by the school office who will meet the vehicle at the entrance to the school.
- The school will contact next of kin as soon as possible during/after the incident.
- Incident report and first aid book will be filled in.

Cancellation

If the weather is windy the leaders will look at the weather predictions for the day, if the wind speed is between 32-42 miles per hour the session will be cancelled for health & safety issues. If there are sudden changes in the weather such as high winds or thunder storms the group will be evacuated accordingly. If the session is cancelled for any other reasons the class teacher will inform the learners.

Toileting

Due to the location of the site and being based on the school grounds learners will be able to use the school toilets accompanied by a member of staff through the reception class door. (Tigers class)

Parental consent & Photos

This will be obtained via a letter outlining what forest school is and routine of sessions. (See appendix 3 example letter)
Consent for use of photos will be included in letter to parents.

Tools

During our forest school sessions it will be necessary to use a range of tools including peelers, knives, mallets, loppers and bow saws. The following guidelines will be followed when using tools

- All tools when not in use will be kept secured away in a locked location.
- Before each session the tools will be checked by the Forest School leaders for signs of damages and to check the working order before the learners use them.
- Correct and safe use of tools will be demonstrated to staff and learners. (including “blood bubbles” 3 points of contact on the floor)
- They will be introduced to the group when they are deemed ready by the Forest School leaders.
- They will be used 1:1 with the Forest school leader’s supervision.
- Children will only be able to access the tools with an adult supervising.
- Children will be supervised if they need to walk to put away a tool.
- Gloves will be available for children if deemed necessary. (see appendix 4 for children’s tools instructions)

Fire

Fires will be lit in a designated area within the site within a fire circle. There will be a trained adult present when the fire is lit and when the embers are still hot. The fire will always be attended by an adult. A fire blanket, bucket and first aid kit will always be present near the fire. Heat resistant gloves will be available to adults to use. Learners will be allowed in an allocated area and will have clear rules about keeping a safe distance from the fire. (See fire policy)

Food Hygiene and Campfire Cooking

Leaders will be responsible for hygiene. Leaders and learners will wash hands before preparing/cooking/eating food. Jerry cans with fresh water and soap will be provided. Clean areas will be used such as a tray or a plate to prepare the food. All food will be stored in air tight containers and only clean equipment will be used to prepare food. All equipment and waste must be cleared away to maintain a clean site.

Leaders will be responsible for any cooking.

Transport to and from the site

As the location is on the school site the learners will be able to walk to the allocated area with supervision.

Lost or Missing Child/children

As the sessions are taking place within the school grounds all children will be within the safe boundaries of the school. If a child does become lost the school office will be notified and will follow procedures in place at school.

This will be prevented by:

- Clear boundaries will be set and made known to the group
- The group will be counted in using a group list
- The group will be encouraged to be responsible for themselves and each other by informing leaders if they notice boundaries being breach.

3. Equal Opportunities

In our Forest School, we are committed to equal opportunity for all and we create an environment in which people feel equally valued, regardless of their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability.

We aim to provide all our children with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement.

We will:

- Ensure equality of access for all children
- Employ a range of styles, including collaborative learning, so that children can value
- Working together seek to involve all parents in supporting their child's education
- Take account of the performance of all children when planning for future learning
- And setting challenging targets make best use of all available resources to support the learning of all groups of children.

Our teachers ensure that our children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Appreciate and value the differences in others o
- Take responsibility for their own actions
- Participate safely, in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs o are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success o
- Use materials that reflect a range of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and linguistic needs, without stereotyping
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles o
- Have challenging targets that enable them to succeed o
- Are encouraged to participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Forest School does mean Forest School FOR ALL. We ask that both parents and children think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware that they are likely to take home muddy and wet clothes after a Forest School session. We encourage a level of risk-taking, always under close adult supervision, and actively foster friendships and collaboration

between all children and adults. Forest School activities are always designed to produce success and enjoyment, even when this appears to be of a transitory nature. The outdoor environment is an environment to which we are all entitled and Brown Bear Forest School strongly believes that the experiences we will have there will linger in the memory for years to come. Children with medical needs or disabilities will be helped so that they can take part fully in each Forest School session. Those children with challenging behaviour will be risk assessed and may need one to one supervision, but their entitlement to participate in Forest School remains the same

4. Health & Safety Policy

Kinsale Infant Schools Health and Safety Policy sets out clear statements of intent regarding the Whole School's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School and the School Site. Provided below is a list of additional points and measures which relate directly to our Forest School sessions.

- The trained and named qualified forest school leader will be in charge of the sessions. (Mrs Emma Secker and Mrs Gemma Leeper)
- The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.
- All adult helpers MUST sign and date a form to show that they have read and understood this handbook and the risk assessments appropriate to the session in which they are helping. They must sign and date the form stating that they comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School (code of conduct).
- The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry and take a first aid kit into the site at every session.
- The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every trip into the School's Forest Site.
- When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1 there is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the

ratio can be 1:2. The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.

- The Forest Leader is responsible in training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
- The Forest leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

5. Safeguarding

Kinsale Infant School has a clear comprehensive safeguarding policy which applies to all forest school sessions. All staff and volunteers should read and adhere to the guidelines set out in the school policy. Kinsale Infant School sets out the following safe guarding aims which are:

To ensure every child who is a registered pupil at our school is safe and protected from harm. This means we will always work to:

- Protect children and young people at our school from maltreatment;
- Prevent impairment of our children's and young people's health or development;
- Ensure that children and young people at our school grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- Undertake that role so as to enable children and young people at our school to have the best outcomes.

This policy will give clear direction to staff, volunteers, visitors and parents about expected behaviour and our legal responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children at our school.

Our school fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect children from harm and supporting and promoting the welfare of all children who are registered pupils at our school. The elements of our policy are prevention, protection and support.

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, parents, governors, volunteers and visitors.

Note: During forest school sessions children may feel more confident and secure therefore may disclose information about themselves or their lives. It's important that all safeguarding issues are logged using the Kinsale Infant School 'Recording Form for Safeguarding Concerns'. There will be a safeguarding folder for forest school sessions kept with this handbook.

6. Daily Operating Procedure

Before each forest school session a site risk assessment will be carried out by the forest school leaders Mrs Emma Secker and Mrs Gemma Leeper. Planned sessions will also if required depending on the type of session will be risk assessed. Sessions will be an hour and a half long and all activities will be based on the children's interests. A snack will be available as well as drinking water. Adults will observe and document on either post it notes or register. Each session will begin with all children and adults sitting on the tree stumps playing a name game. An adult will do the register as all are sitting. Safety and boundaries are talked about each session as a reminder to all children and a reminder of activities we are doing. Some activities will be set out but depending on children's interests resources can be accessed from shed near site. After session regroup on tree stumps and talk about what we have enjoyed doing and what the children would like to explore. Children are walked to and from tiger's class.