



Forest School Handbook





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What is Forest School?

Forest School is an inspirational learning experience that promotes confidence and self-esteem through hands-on activities in nature. At our school, these sessions take place both on-site and at Alma Park Wood, within walking distance.

This approach places the child at the centre of learning through regular, long-term sessions in a woodland setting. It supports play, exploration, and supported risk-taking, aiming to foster self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, communication skills, independence, and confidence.

The 6 Principles of Forest School:

1. Long-term Learning: Regular, frequent sessions in a natural setting, involving planning, adaptation, observation, and reflection.
2. Connection with Nature: Learning occurs in a woodland or natural environment to build a relationship with the natural world.
3. Holistic Development: Promotes the overall growth of resilient, confident, and independent learners.
4. Supported Risk-Taking: Encourages appropriate risks based on the environment and individual capabilities.
5. Qualified Leaders: Forest School is led by trained practitioners who continually enhance their practice.
6. Learner-Centred: Focuses on creating a community for learning and personal growth.

Intent

Forest School aims to develop resilient, confident, and creative learners while fostering a love for the local environment. We aim to inspire children to care for nature and encourage sustainable practices. All participants are seen as unique, capable, and entitled to experience both success and appropriate challenges.

With support from The Woodland Trust, a special space has been created at Alma Park for our learners to engage in Forest School activities.

Location

Belmont Community Primary School, Harrowby Lane, Grantham, NG31 9LR

enquiries@belmont.lincs.sch.uk

01476 567939





The Team / Staffing

The Forest School Leader

Mrs Pallier (Teacher at Belmont and qualified Level 3 Forest School Leader)

The forest school lead will be supported by one or more teaching assistants from the class of the children going. All adults are members of staff at Belmont Primary School, and all hold an up-to-date DBS. While on site, it is the responsibility of all staff members to oversee all the children's safety and wellbeing.

Risk Management

We believe children learn to stay safe by trying new things. Forest School gives children the chance to do exciting, unpredictable things, like climbing trees or balancing on logs. This helps them learn to adapt to risk taking and overcome fears.

Following the Forest School ethos, we encourage children to work together and support each other as they try new things. By seeing their friends be brave, children are more likely to try something new too. This builds confidence and a sense of achievement.

Our job is to make sure that the children in our care are safe and feel safe while they are exploring. We carefully assess both the area and planned activities for level of risk so we can manage it effectively and support the children in their learning journeys. This way, the children can have fun taking risks and learning, without getting hurt.



First Aid

With the safety of our children being of the most utmost importance, the forest school leader has completed a paediatric First Aid course. We always have a first aid kit on site with us, which is fully equipped to support giving first aid in the outdoor environment. Other supporting members of staff have training in specific areas to support their class children's needs.

In the event of an accident, a log will be made in the accident book and parents /headteacher will be notified (according to our school health and safety policy).

In the event of an emergency, emergency services will be called, and parents notified immediately.

Administering Medication

All children's regular medications should be administered before or after attending forest school session. Inhalers and epi-pens to be taken out to forest school sessions. In the event of the medication being required in an emergency, a designated (trained to administer) member of that class team should keep the medication with them.

Emergency Action plan	
Injured child or adult	Injured Forest School Lead (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead 1 shouts SUPPORT to notify other adults what is happening. • Lead 2 brings first aid bag then gathers children to keep them away from the incident and calm. • Lead 1 carries out first aid, lead 2 calls emergency services and school office if required. • Office to notify parents/guardians and give child's relevant paperwork to the emergency services when they arrive. • Office staff waits at the entrance to lead in emergency service (when appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other adult shouts SUPPORT to notify other adults what is happening. • Adult to bring first aid bag. • Other supporting adults gather children to keep them away from the incident and calm. • Lead 2 carries out first aid, identified support staff calls emergency services and school office if required. • Identified support staff goes to the entrance to lead in emergency service (when appropriate)

Weather

In Forest School sessions, we like to experience all weathers. So long as it is deemed safe, we will carry on.

The only time we don't go to the wildlife area is:

- If there are strong winds and hail which may make the area dangerous due to lose branches and falling debris.
- If there are electrical storms.

Our Forest School leaders are responsible for checking the weather forecast and will do so before each session.

It is really important that the children are dressed appropriately for all weathers to ensure that they are comfortable, dry, warm and ready for adventure!

As a school, we request that parents provide their children with the most appropriate clothing. Please see a list of recommendations below.

Cold and Wet Weather	Hot Weather
Warm and waterproof coat	Waterproof jacket (cagoul / pack a mac)
Layers – long sleeved tops / jumpers	Long trousers
Waterproof over trousers	Walking boots / trainers
Long trousers	Sunhat
Hat, scarf, gloves	sunscreen
Walking boots / wellies	Water bottle



Toilets and Hygiene

All children are asked to use the toilet before leaving school. If a child needs the toilet whilst in the wildlife area, they are sent to the KS2 toilets. The children are free to use the toilet as and when they need to. Any children requiring further support will have members of their class team there to assist them in line with the schools Personal Care Policy.

Tools

Throughout our forest school sessions, we introduce the use of tools once we are secure in the fact (from observations) that our children are safe to use them. All tool use within forest school are risk assessed. Tools are maintained and kept safe to use by the forest school leads. They are stored in school in a lockable cupboard in a locked tool box. The tools are carried to the wildlife area and are never left unattended in the vicinity of the children. All tools are fitted with safety covers (where applicable). When using the tools, the Children are taught how to hold, use and store the tools safely using the forest schools tool talk and all children are supervised closely on a small ratio basis (no more than 1:4 dependant on the level of risk of the tool)

Safeguarding

To ensure that children are kept safe, all of the forest school sessions will be planned, resourced and directed by the forest school leads. Forest School Lead will be trained to a level 3 Forest School leader level and supporting staff will be trained TA's who work with the children in their classroom groups therefore knowing how best to support the young person to keep them safe and enable them to get the best from the experience.

Any safeguarding issues seen by an adult during forest schools or a disclosure made to an adult by a child will be reported as soon as we return to school to the designated safeguarding lead, adhering to the school safeguarding policy.

Fires and cooking

At some point in the children's experience, fire will be introduced into their sessions. This will only take place if the leads feel the children will be safe and able enough (through initial observations). All fire activity is risk assessed and children working with fire will be kept on a small ratio of no more than 1:4 depending on the child's ability.

All fire activities take place in the designated fire pit area on site and the children will be taught to move around the area safely (even when a fire isn't lit). Once a fire has been lit, the area will be watched by one of the Forest School leads and they won't leave the area until the fire has been extinguished.

During all fire activities, children will be taught about health and safety, and there will always be a burns kits in the first aid bag and a bucket of water next to the fire.

In the event of cooking with fire, all children will be guided to wash their hands before handling food. All food preparation tools will be used correctly and safely and food will be handled hygienically before and after cooking. Once finished, the site will be cleared of dirty pots (washed and put away in the correct boxes), food waste and rubbish placed into a rubbish bag and taken back to school to be put into a bin.

Once finished, the fire must be properly extinguished by the Forest School Lead and the embers spread and dispersed. The forest school lead won't leave the fire until the embers have stopped burning.





Equal opportunities

All children will be given the opportunity to engage, participate and thrive in Forest School sessions and activities, regardless of their abilities, gender or special educational needs. Each Forest School session is carefully planned by the Forest School leader, looking at initial observations and taking into consideration every child's needs and abilities. Activities are resourced accordingly to support with communication and understanding and practical sessions adapted to allow all children to access.

Behaviour and Antibullying Behaviour

During all forest school sessions, children are expected to adhere to the Belmont School Rules:

- Be respectful
- Be responsible
- Be ready to learn

It is the forest Leads and supporting staff's responsibility to support with children's behaviours ensuring that it is not unsafe. The children will receive initial guidance and subsequent reminders on safe behaviours within the woodland. Safe behaviours should be modelled by the adults and addressed with praise for the children who are demonstrating it. If unsafe behaviours are exhibited by the children, it should be addressed by an adult explaining why the behaviour is unsafe. If the behaviour continues, the Lead may decide to stop the child from continuing with any activities that could be deemed higher risk. Any behaviour deemed to be bullying will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the school policy.