

Harrow Gate Primary Academy

Forest School Handbook



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What is Forest School?

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, which offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

Forest School has a developmental ethos shared by thousands of trained practitioners around the world, who are constantly developing their learning styles and skills to support new and imaginative learners. Its roots reach back to the open-air culture, friluftsliv, or free air life, seen as a way of life in Scandinavia where Forest School began. It arrived in the UK in 1993 and has grown from strength to strength since then.

The process helps and facilitates more than knowledge-gathering, it helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to try stuff out and take risks. Forest School inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of how a learner fits within it.

Our approach to risk means that learners constantly expand on their abilities by solving real-world issues, building self-belief and resilience. We believe that risk is more than just potential for physical harm, but a more holistic thing, there are risks in everything we do, and we grow by overcoming them. Forest School therefore, helps participants to become, healthy, resilient, creative and independent learners.

The Forest School Association

The Six Key Forest School Principles

What is quality Forest School?

Quality Forest School is delivery which holds to all six key principles that shape and govern the Forest School ethos. There are many forms of outdoor education and all have enormous value, however, Forest School is unique in its reach, delivery and effect. These six principles are:

1. Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
4. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
6. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

(See appendix for principles and criteria for good practice)

Core Beliefs

It is only when we see the 6 principles working together do we truly see the value of Forest School. Underpinning our principles are some positive core beliefs. These can be summarised as, learners are all:

- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- entitled to experience regular success
- entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

Forest School Agreements

In forest school, we don't have 'rules'. We create agreements with each group of learners that they frame using positive language. We use 'We will' instead of 'don't'.

In our introduction for forest school session (a minimum of 6 sessions) we work with the groups to decide on agreements that will enable us to have a fun and safe time outside. We want to spend the maximum time available outside and the children understand that it is important to follow the agreements to minimise lost learning time.

We have the following four mantras in forest school:



Forest School Agreements

“Don't pick, don't lick, be careful with your stick.”

“Be kind to others, to yourself and to the environment.”

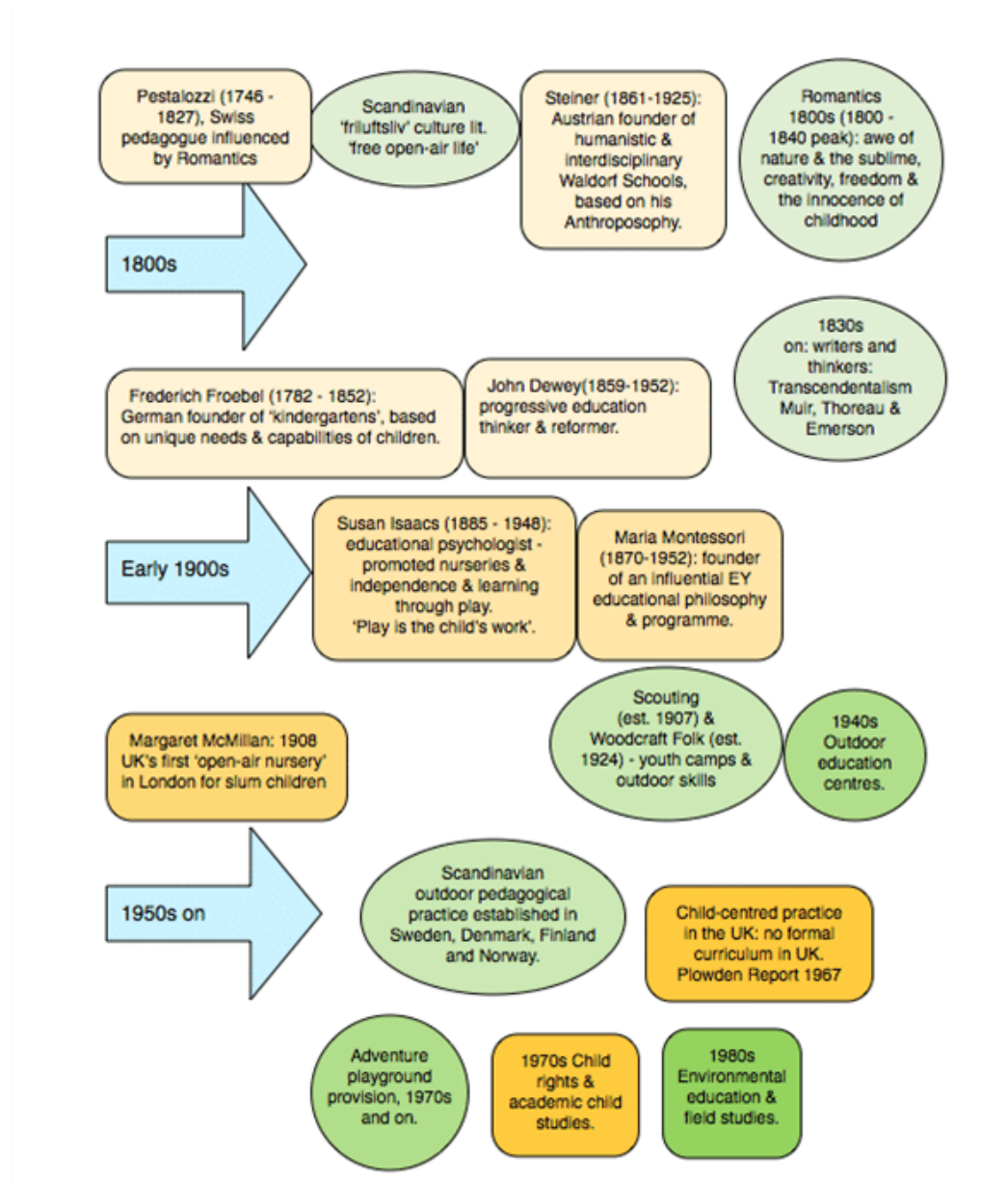
“Leave only footprints.”

“Take only what you need and use all of what you take.”

We learn these mantras as a group and recite them at the beginning of a session. Children then apply them in different situations and that language is always used.

History of Forest School

Forest School in the UK may seem a fairly new movement. In reality it is based on a rich heritage of outdoor learning going back at least to the 19th century. Philosophers, naturalists and educators in Europe and the UK such as Wordsworth, Ruskin, Baden Powell, Leslie Paul (who founded the Woodcraft Folk in 1925), Kurt Hahn (who founded Gordonstone and was the inspiration for our first outdoor education centres), Susan Isaacs and the Macmillan sisters all laid the foundations for what is known as Forest School today. During the 1970s and 80s our education system moved toward a more teacher/outcome-centred approach in an attempt to improve numeracy and literacy, in particular, and we had the introduction of the national curriculum. Somewhat in response to this, there was a growth of 'alternative' educational models in the 1990s and it is in this context that Forest School emerged.



Early Antecedents to Forest School in the UK (Mel McCree 2012)

Forest School at Harrow Gate Academy

'If we take care of the natural world, the natural world will take care of us.'

Sir David Attenborough

'I have learned you are never too small to make a difference.'

Greta Thunberg

Intent

At Harrow Gate Primary Academy, our ethos of Forest School is based on a fundamental respect for all children to instigate, test and maintain their curiosity about the world around them. We want all of our children to be protectors of their planet who challenge decisions that do not align with the future of their world. Our hope is that the children of Harrow Gate will be the guardians of nature.

Forest School further enhances the creative, enquiry based learning that already happens within the classroom. Children develop their emotional intelligence, social skills and self-esteem with a belief of every child's right to access the outdoors, risk-taking and the reality of the natural world. Through challenge and collaborative working, children are able to build resilience, social skills and develop a sense of self. They will connect with the natural world which is vital for their health.

Implementation

Children in Nursery, Year 2 and Year 5 take part in weekly forest school sessions for a minimum of one hour. A qualified forest school practitioner will always run a session with a minimum of one other staff member. The children lead their own learning and sessions will be planned based on what the children are interested in. There are many opportunities for children to apply their curriculum knowledge when outdoors such as science and Geography and practitioners and children naturally make links to the curriculum. Play and curiosity is at the heart of forest school and our children enjoy being outside.

Children bring their own outdoor clothing, but have access to spare clothing and footwear.

There is a forest school changing area, where waterproof clothing is provided.

In September 2022, we have more members of staff undertaking the forest school training and we will then extend forest school to year groups 1, 3, 4 and 6.

Impact

Forest School has a positive impact on our children's social, emotional and mental health. Children learn about the natural environment and develop a love and appreciation for our planet. They learn skills in problems solving, communication and building positive relationships. We have found that time in the natural environment improves their capacity for learning when back in the classroom.

Forest School Activities: What to Expect

Where to find us

Most of our Forest School activities will be held within the school grounds in our newly created Forest School Site or in the Wildlife area. Occasionally, we may visit Hardwick Dene Nature Reserve or organise Forest School themed visits.



Activities at Forest School

At Harrow Gate we offer a broad and balanced curriculum to develop the whole child. Forest School will offer the same broad range of experiences designed to develop the whole child; physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and morally. We aim to challenge and support the children to become independent resilient learners who enjoy trying out their ideas, working together with their peers to solve problems and conquer challenges.

Some of the challenges might include:

Shelter building	Using tools
Fire lighting	Forest art
Using a Ghillie Kettle	Planting and harvesting
Carving and whittling	Team games and free play
Looking after wildlife	Building bird boxes
Group games	Drama / Telling and listening to stories
Looking closely at wildlife / Bug hunts	Cooking on an open fire
Pond dipping	Learning knots
Rope and string work	Building bug homes

Forest School Code of Conduct

Health and Safety

Our Forest School Code of Conduct is relevant to all participants, adults and children and is framed to create a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Boundaries: During their first Forest School session children will learn where the physical boundaries for activities are and any no-go zones. Each group will work together to generate some agreements for safe and happy learning and children will understand that they are expected to follow them. This will include an agreed call back sign to enable speedy return if needed or wanted by the Forest School Leader.

‘1,2,3 where are you?’ ‘1,2,3 I’m here’ is what we call out.

Entering the Forest School site At Forest School we learn to respect the world around us. When we enter the site we will be aware that we share the space with plants, birds and animals and we need to work in a way that will not damage or harm anything. Toileting Children will be encouraged to use the toilets before a session starts. They may go to the toilets by using the side door at any point if they need to just as they do during outside PE lessons. Younger children will be supervised by an adult leaving and returning to Forest School.

The Fire Circle: For everyone’s safety, **no one is allowed to walk or run across the fire circle** even if there is no fire lit. We use flour to mark out our circle and children sit on the stools around the outside. A fire pit is often used in place of a fire on the ground. If anyone wants to move around the circle or change places, they must step out of the circle and walk around the outside. **Children will then be invited to approach** the square for cooking or fire lighting but **only under adult supervision.**

Fire Lighting: A fire **can only be lit if our fire safety equipment is present and correct.** The Forest School Leader will **always** take the lead during fire lighting. All helpers will be briefed prior to a fire lighting session to set out protocols. **A lit fire will never be left unattended.** Open fires will only be lit within the flour circle or in the fire pit. ‘Forest School volunteers/helpers are also advised to read the Fire Risk Assessment on Page 17 for more safety information’

Collecting wood: Wood is collected for fire lighting from the forest school area or children will bring in sticks from home. We look for four different sizes of wood: mice, rats and cats tails (matchstick, pencil and wrist sized). We try to use freshly fallen wood to protect creature habitats.

Collecting natural materials: Natural materials are collected for art, sculpture and woodland craft. Children are encouraged to look for the materials themselves but leaders will supervise to check that nothing harmful is gathered. Children are not allowed to eat anything gathered on foraging trips without adult supervision. Carrying larger materials Children will be taught how to lift, roll drag or pull heavier materials safely using hands or ropes, keeping a straight back and bending the knees. Team work is encouraged.

Mantra: take only what you need and use what you take.

Digging: When investigating the environment, children may carefully move logs or stones to look for insects, taking care not to harm the creatures or destroy their habitat. They can dig under the soil using their fingers or small sticks but they may not use tools to dig deep holes. Deeper digging opportunities will be included in the planting activities.

Using tools: Children will be taught the correct way to use tools at Forest school. This will include the use of safety equipment, like gloves or goggles, posture and awareness of others around them. Some tools will have a marked zone for their use. All tool use will be under strict adult supervision. Forest School Page 17 volunteers/helpers are also advised to read the Tools Risk Assessment for more safety information.

Tree climbing: Climbing trees is a good opportunity for children to learn to manage their own risks. They will be shown how to climb safely, checking the ground below for sharp objects, looking for a safe path of ascent and descent, numbers in the same tree and which trees are suitable for climbing. Children are permitted to reach their own limits to a maximum of 1.5 metres. Adults will supervise tree climbing activities and ensure that children are wearing appropriate clothes and shoes. The Forest School leader will assess the trees to check for rotten or broken branches.

Sticks and stones: Throwing sticks and stones is not permitted at Forest School. Children may pick up sticks shorter than their arm to carry pointed down to activities. Longer sticks must be dragged behind them. Stones can be dropped but children must check what is underneath before dropping them.

String, ropes and knots: Children will learn a useful selection of knots for different uses. Adults will supervise activities where ropes are tied to trees for tarps or shelters. Safety tapes will be used if ropes are considered to be in dangerous locations. Children are also shown how to use ropes and string to move or carry materials.

Eating and Drinking: Children will be encouraged to bring their water bottles with them. Anti-bacterial hand wash, wipes or sanitiser gel will be provided for hand washing before eating or drinking any snacks during Forest School. This will include food the children have cooked on the fire. Food allergies will be noted as part of the risk assessment for the cooking activity.

Leaving the site at the end of each session: there will be a short time of reflection before the participants leave the site. All personal belongings must be taken away, any craft created can be taken home, and the site must be left clean and tidy ready for the next group.

Our equipment: The Forest School leader will organise an Emergency Bag and a Kit Bag for every session. The contents for each bag may vary depending on the group, activity, time of year and weather conditions.

Essential items that should be included in the Emergency Bag are:

- ✓ First Aid Kit (regularly checked and restocked as necessary)
- ✓ Burns kit
- ✓ Emergency procedures list
- ✓ Medical details and emergency contact details for all participants
- ✓ Mobile Phone
- ✓ Accident sheets
- ✓ Emergency whistle
- ✓ Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for individual to carry it themselves) clearly labelled with parental consent
- ✓ Drinking water

Other items which may be included in the Kit Bag could include:

- ✓ Wet wipes, hand gel
- ✓ Spare clothing
- ✓ Sun cream (parent consents)
- ✓ Flask of hot water
- ✓ Hot chocolate sachets
- ✓ Chocolate or sugary food
- ✓ Roll mat and blanket
- ✓ Bivi bag or emergency shelter
- ✓ Torch The Forest School leader will organise the equipment and tools needed for each session including tools, ropes, tarps, food, kitchen implements and fire lighting kit.

At Forest School children can learn a great deal from their mistakes and enjoy risky play activities and challenges. Learning to respect risk and danger through play will help them to cope with risks and hazards later in life. They will learn how far they can go before they feel unsafe, they will learn to understand their limits, they will gain the confidence to be able to say “No thank you, that’s enough for me,” without feeling pressurised by their peers.

The safety of all participants is of paramount importance to us. All of the activities have been fully risk assessed to minimise the dangers. These are included in the handbook. All adults participating in Forest School are required to read the risk assessments and protocols. We regularly review and update the risk assessments as required.

A site risk assessment is carried out before each session to look for natural or foreign hazards in the environment. Individual risk assessments will be made for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires it. The Forest School leader in each session holds a Level 3 Forest School Practitioner certificate.

Using and Storing Tools

Using a range of tools in Forest School helps children to develop physical skills and how to manage risks safely. Tools may not be used at every session and they will only be used for particular purposes appropriate to the age and level of skill of the child. **Tool use will always be supervised by a level 3 qualified forest school practitioner. The maximum number of children using tools at one time will be four, or fewer dependent on age and the risk assessment.**

Tools used will include: peeler, knife, secateurs, bow saw, palm drill, hand axe

The Forest School leader will ensure that tools are stored, maintained and transported safely. Tools will be kept packed away until needed.

Tool Rules

Before and after a session the leader will check:
Are tools in good, working order? Tools will be checked for damage and durability.
How many? Tools will be counted out and counted back in.
Are the tools secure? Tools will be kept in suitable containers; Peelers, knives, axes and secateurs in a locked tool box, Bow saws in a kit bag, drills in a small container.
When tools are being used:
The Forest School leader will give a safety talk before tools are used.
Children must never help themselves to the tools.
All tool use, carrying and collecting will be under adult supervision.
Children must walk when carrying tools.
All participants need to be aware tools are in use.
A safety zone must be established around each user, at least one arm's length between users.
All tools used under adult supervision. Ratios depend on age. 1:1 for EYFS 1:2 for KS1, 1:4 for KS2. Axes will always be 1:1

On Site Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk	People at risk	Measures to be taken	Responsibility and timescale
Waste/litter	Glass, drug use, metal cans	All	Pre-visit check and continuous monitoring. Children to only pick up rubbish using litter pickers and inform adult if they see something hazardous. Remove and dispose of safely following school procedure for waste disposal.	Site manager daily Leader prior to and during visit
Animal droppings	Contamination and disease	All	Pre-visit check and continuous monitoring. Sign to say No Dogs on school property. Remove and dispose of safely following school procedure for waste disposal.	Site manager daily Leader prior to and during visit
Boundaries	Escaping children Public entry	Children	Ensure the gates are closed to EYFS area. Ensure safe supervision on way to and from site following guidelines on School Risk Assessment Policy. Inform children of boundaries, staff supervise boundaries when in site. Staff to be aware of members of the public walking along the footpath. Children to be reminded of Stranger Danger	All on visit
Fences	Broken fences falling on person	All	Check fences are intact and safe especially after stormy weather – replace as necessary	Site manager daily Leader prior to and during visit
Trees	Falls	Children	Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present. Leaders to support children to manage their	Site manager daily Leader prior to and during visit

			own risks and stop when they feel unsafe.	All on visit
Tree branches	Branches falling Children falling due to branch breaking	All	Pre-visit check and continuous risk check to look for dead wood hanging in trees, dead branches and damage to trees. Remove hanging dead wood Remind children of risks. Annual check by Tree Safety Company	Leader prior to and during visit All on visit
Tree Roots and stumps	Tripping and landing on them Falling off stump	All	All participants reminded to walk around with care under the trees Show new participants the exposed roots and inform of danger Remind children to take care on tree stump and look before leaping off	Site manager daily Leader prior to and during visit All on visit
Tree sticks	Hitting Poking Scraping	Children	Establish safe stick rules. Sticks for playing = arm length maximum Sticks for den building to be dragged to site check around before lifting	Leader prior to and during visit All on visit
Tree Sawdust	Saw dust in eyes	All	Wear safety goggles when cutting especially on windy days. First aid kit to include eye wash tubes Leader to flush eyes immediately and follow school first aid policy.	Site manager daily Leader prior to and during visit All on visit
Berries and other seeds on flora	Poisoning	Children	Inform children not to pick and eat any berries without an adult present. Remind children not to put anything in mouths. Wash hands carefully before eating.	All on visit

Fungi	Poisoning	All	Remind all participants to “Look, don’t touch” at any fungi, toadstools or mushrooms.	All on visit
Nettles other weeds	Stinging Allergic reaction	All	Make participants aware of nettles and other weeds Keep central play area clear of nettles and weeds All participants to wear long trousers	All on visit
Bees, Wasps Mosquitos Ticks	Stings, bites	All	Check area for nests – Avoid contact with bees/wasps Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present. Call 999 if anaphylactic reaction to sting. Administer anti hystamine Children to wear long trousers. Parents reminded to check for ticks after visit	Leader prior to visit and all on visit Guidance for parents re ticks in communications
Fire	Burns Fire out of control	All	Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present. School safety policy adhered to and safety procedures followed. Fire only in two allotted fire locations.	Leader prior to and on visit.
Fire Lighting	Fingertip burns from matches Sparks in eyes		Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present. Fire lighting on a one to one basis or in small group dependant on age and activity. Strict supervision by all staff Children taught safe and correct methods of lighting fires First aid – eye wash	

Cooking	Burns to mouth Burns to hand when handling pan, tinfoil, cooking stick	All	Leader with Outdoor First Aid always present. Cooking on a one to one basis or in small group dependant on age and activity. Strict supervision by all staff Children taught safe and correct handling of cooking implements Gauntlets/gloves provided	All on visit
Inappropriate behaviour	Disruption to the activity. Physical harm to self Causing accidents to others Deliberate harm to others Compromise of safety rules eg by fire or with tools	All	Follow school behaviour policy Use radio to call for SLT	Adults SLT
Tools	Cuts Grazes Amputation Puncture wounds	All	Tools stored away from site. Tools taken to session kept in in locked storage until needed. Used on a one to one basis or in small group dependant on age and activity. Strict supervision by all staff Children taught safe and correct use of different tools. Separate risk assessments for tools in handbook.	All on visit

Ropes	Burns Whipping injuries	All	Remind children and adults to use gloves when using ropes to hoist or drag. Remind all to take care when ropes are thrown, eg. over branches when den building. Children reminded to take care if skipping or twirling with ropes to avoid injury to others.	All on visit
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Accident and Emergency First Aid

The Forest School Leader is first aid trained and holds the Emergency First Aid at Work Level 3 qualification and the Forest School First Aid Certificate which covers outdoor first aid and emergencies.

The Forest School Leader carries an Emergency Bag to all activities which includes an outdoor First Aid Kit and Burns Kit. There is always a first aid kit in the forest school potting shed.

Emergency Procedure

If there is an emergency where a child or adult is seriously injured, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The Forest School Leader will attend to the injured child/adult giving first aid
2. A helper will communicate with the school office and call 999. The school office will communicate with parents.
3. An adult will blow the whistle to stop all activity on the site.
4. Children will know from practising to gather by the FS sign at the entrance.
5. An adult will check the headcount and lead other children indoors or to safety.
6. An adult will get additional help whilst one adult supervises children indoors. Another adult will return to help the Forest School Leader.
7. The site manager / available adult will open all gates and direct ambulance to FS site.
8. Parent/carer will be informed to meet ambulance at the hospital.
9. Counselling will be provided if needed for the remaining children.
10. Review the activity and the Risk Assessment will be revisited and amended if necessary.

Weather

The Forest School leader will check the weather forecast before every session to ensure that the planned activity remains safe. Messages will be sent to parents via School Dojo if additional clothing is required or if a change of venue is planned.

If it is thunder and lightning, the session cannot go ahead.

Children must have the correct clothing and be warm enough when it is cold. Their feet must be warm. When sunny, children must have sun cream and a sun hat.

A shelter must be erected to provide either shelter from the air or shade from the sun.

If there are high winds, the shed doors can pose a risk and must not be opened by the children. Trees are only small but should still be considered as a risk. Relocate to school field if there is a risk of any falling. There will be no fire lighting in windy or gusty weather.

Risk Benefit Assessment

Risk v Benefit: The benefits from engaging in Forest School activities are numerous and compelling, for the children, for the staff working with the children and for the school as a whole. Providing the safety procedures listed above are put into place to manage the potential risk, making the risk level low for all activities, the benefits outweigh the risks by far.

We have a risk benefit assessment template for staff to use when planning activities that have an element of risk. Children can be part of the planning session and it is useful for them to identify risks, think of how to minimise risk and also for them to think about what they can learn from risks.

Location: Harrow Gate Primary Academy			Name:			Date:			
Description of site activity: Woodland Play activities, den building,									
Hazard	Harm	People at risk	Existing preventative measures	Probability 1-5	Severity 1-5	Rating 1-25	New preventative measures	Who? When?	Benefits
Exploring the site	Bruises and grazes from trips or falls, eye level branches	All users of Forest School but particularly children	Awareness talks. Site management – removal of eye level branches	3	2	6	Continue to share safety information with users. Carry equipment to remove any obstructions	Forest School Leader – ongoing risk assess	Hands on learning about nature Health and wellbeing from being outdoors Developing a respect for nature
Waste, dog poo, general rubbish	Ingestion, cuts scratches	All Forest School participants	Daily risk assessments by FSL	5	2	10			
Nettles, brambles	Stings and	All Forest School	Making participants aware of their surrounds and not to touch nettles or brambles	4	1	4			

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.



Health and Safety
Executive

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks¹ and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: 'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

¹The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose duties on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

Planning

Planning must be detailed for every session. Planning is there to ensure that you have a successful session and ensures that you are organised with the correct equipment and resources. More often than not though, the children will take you in a different direction once in the forest and it is ok to go off plan. You follow the needs and interests of the learners that you have in front of you. Let them lead the learning. Activities should be offered and modelled in an inviting way so that children feel safe and encouraged to come and 'have a go'. It is ok if they choose not to join in, they may want to spend time alone and this is ok too.

There should be a general 'theme' to the sequence of sessions. You may have a team building focus for a couple of weeks if that is an area that you think the children need as a group. You may have some survival sessions for an upcoming school visit for example. The children may be really interested in their Stone Age topic and want to re-enact living in that era.

A risk assessment should be carried out before every session. Individuals or groups of children must be named so that it is clear what activities you will be providing to meet their needs and align with their interests.

A 5 minute lesson plan like this should be used to outline your session.

Date: _____
Group: _____
Location: _____

The 5 minute Forest School plan
...print and scribble away!

The template consists of several hand-drawn style boxes and shapes connected by arrows:

- A circular shape with a jagged edge containing the text "What is the THEME?". An arrow points from it to a rectangular box with a decorative border containing the text "How does it fit in to previous or future sessions?".
- An arrow points from that box to a rectangular box with a pointed bottom containing the text "Objectives".
- An arrow points from the "Objectives" box to a rectangular box with a dashed border containing the text "How will you differentiate these activities?".
- Below these, the text "What sequence could your activities follow?" is centered.
- Below this text are four rectangular boxes with decorative borders, each labeled "Activity 1", "Activity 2", "Activity 3", and "Activity 4" respectively. Arrows point from left to right between each activity box.
- Below the activity boxes, on the left, is a rectangular box with a dashed border containing the text "Health and safety issues?".
- An arrow points from the "Health and safety issues?" box to a rectangular box with a decorative border containing the text "What tools or equipment will you need?".
- A dashed arrow points from the "What tools or equipment will you need?" box to a circular shape with a dashed border containing the text "Opportunity for reflection?".

Forest School Staff and Responsibilities

Harrow Gate Forest School is led by Mrs Rebecca Tash, who is a level 3 qualified Forest School practitioner.

Our three other qualified level 3 practitioners are:

Emma Yeadon, Kristina Pybus and Alison Oates

All of the above staff members also have the Forest School first aid qualification.

We have four members that will be undertaking their level 3 qualification next year:

Vinny Dawson, Olivia Cook, Jade Ruston and Antonia Dickinson

A level 3 qualified practitioner will lead each session. Sessions may be supported by other Harrow Gate Staff or local volunteers.

Policies

All of the following policies are available through our school website and are saved on the school network.

<https://www.harrowgateacademy.org/statutory-information/policies>

Health and Safety • Safeguarding • Equal Opportunities • GDPR and Confidentiality • Fire Safety • Behaviour • Anti-bullying • Complaints • Sharp Tools • PSHE - Sustainability

Communication Agreement

It is important that there is regular, open communication between all stake holders so that Forest school can run safely. It is also important to ensure that Forest School continues to grow and develop, keeping it at the forefront of people's mind and at the heart of our school community.

Our Communication Agreement:

Who?	What?	When?	How?
Children	Instructions and agreements	Every session	Talk, meetings, photos/videos
Parents	Wish list of resources, equipment and clothing	As needed	Dojo and phone calls, newsletters
SLT & Head	Regularly meet with SLT and head to discuss progress and next steps Permission, purchasing, inspiration and ideas	Regularly	Talk
Governors	Updates on progress and how budget is spent Invite them in for a session	Termly	Meetings, reports, presentations
Other staff	Speak to class teachers about their children's achievements, planning, feedback, photos	After every session	CPD, email, face to face, Twitter
Site manager	Safety of the site, asking for work to be done on site	Regularly	Face to face, email
Bursars / Admin team	Finance, orders, budgeting, permission, sharing info with parents	When needed	Face to face, email
Gardeners	Planting, grass cutting	When needed	Phone, email

Appendix

Principles and Criteria for Good Practice

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.



- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally

sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.

- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and spiritual aspects of the learner.



Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification. Find more information on Forest School qualifications [here](#).
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.



- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

