In nature colours never clash
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INTRODUCTION

Slinfold CE Primary School
Forest School

(PF 1.1) Forest School’s—not an after schools club, or a senior boys school in Horsham, but a school of the woods. A unique way of using the existing school grounds to create an atmosphere where children can develop independence and self-esteem. By exploring and experiencing for themselves the natural world around them, reclaiming that sense of wonder on discovering why, how, when, and where.

Forest Schools originated in Europe in the early 20th century. The Forest Schools model originated in Scandinavia and involves children and young people attending a local woodland environment to learn on a regular sustained basis. The children learn to walk, run, balance, climb, scramble and swing. They learn about their environment and how to look after it through play, as well as how to respect each other’s personnel space. (Joyce, 2004: 4). A key element of this was child led educational process that supported their social, emotional and physical development.

In 1993, a group of childcare students visiting Denmark on an exchange programme witnessed the benefits of outdoor learning, which looked at air, fire, water and earth. They observed groups of children cooking on open fires, listening to storytelling, exploring at their own level. They climbed high into trees on rope ladders and swings, whittled sticks with knives, alone. (Trout, 2004:16) They brought the idea back to Bridgewater College and applied the initiative at their early years Excellence Centre to great effect. There were benefits to the children’s pride, confidence and well-being, which are now being addressed in the Every Child Matters agenda (Dept. for Ed, 2004), several years before that work was published.

Since then the concept has grown with Forest Schools spreading throughout Britain. A major organisation to recognise the importance of Forest School’s was the Forestry commission. In 2002, they stated ‘access to green space is not just about “the environment”. For young children there is perceived to be a great benefit in teaching most subjects in the natural environment.’ (O’Brien and Tabbush 2002) As a result, the commission are committed to supporting Forest Schools in the whole of the UK.

Scotland and Wales with support from their regional governments are funding projects, revising the OCN courses and supporting initiatives. The environmental charity, Green Light Trust, based in the east of England. County of Suffolk, Norfolk and Suffolk to name but a few, all are active supporters with environmental advisors and trainers. Many Wildlife trusts around the country are getting involved in providing training and research. In Sussex, private and charity concerns are now run training courses with Sussex Wildlife Trust promoting a personal level of support for trainees since 2005, experienced providers of environmental education promoting the reconnections between people and the natural environment.

Do not soil the shade of a tree that has been hospitable to you.
Forest School Staffing

John Burrell Forest School Award Level 3 Leader (Novice)
First aid responder (Scouts) with outdoor element
Mrs Richmond   Forest Schools Level 1
First aider at work, 3 day course

LD2.4

To provide ways of acquiring useful life skills in an outdoor environment.

To provide a safe environment in which children can take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning.

To help children appreciate, comprehend and show stewardship for the natural environment.

To develop self-esteem, tenacity and a positive outlook to learning through the completion of, achievable tasks

To meet the needs of children with all learning styles

To develop social and group working skills

To enable children to be independent, self-motivated and considerate

To be genuine to the forest school ethos and approach

To cultivate a secure, happy and welcoming environment

To provide stimulating and varied learning activities appropriate to the child’s needs and phase of development.

To help each child foster self-esteem, confidence, independence, self-control and interpersonal skills

To provide an opportunity for individuals to develop, to learn and to have fun with deep meaningful play.
Forest School Principals

Forest school is for everybody.

Forest school is a process which builds on an individual's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

Forest school is organised and run by qualified Forest school leaders.

Forest school maximises the learning potential of local woodlands through frequent and regular experiences throughout the year.

Forest school helps everyone to understand, appreciate and care for the environment.

Environmental Impact

We care about our woodland and understand that any activity carried out here will have an impact on this environment. We wish to keep this to a minimum and have a Woodland Management Policy in place. Continuous assessment and appropriate action and management will help keep the impact to a minimum and allow the enjoyment for all. (See full woodland impact assessment)

Policies for Forest School

The following policies are the minimum requirements for the safe running of Forest School activities. They are in addition to the main school policies and do not replace them. All members of staff and volunteer helpers have a duty to follow these policies and should be familiar with their contents.
**Health and Safety**

Slinfoild CE Primary School adheres to its Health and Safety Policy. Full details can be accessed through reading the policy, but a brief summary is given below:

We ask you to be responsible for your own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by what you do.

We ask you to take individual responsibility to follow health and safety procedures and work in accordance with instruction and training you have received.

You must co-operate with supervisors and managers on health and safety matters.

You must not misuse or recklessly interfere with anything provided to protect your health, safety and welfare.

We ask that you promptly report any unsafe conditions or practices.

You must use work equipment and personal protective equipment in accordance with instruction and training you have received.

We ask that you support us in achieving our health and safety targets.

You must play your part to maintain a safe and healthy workplace.

**Risk Management and Risk Assessment**

Risk-Benefit management is a fundamental part of life and is a skill needed for young people's safety and well-being. The Staff have a duty of care towards young people. However, this certainly does not mean not trying something new. Therefore we have responsibility not only to keep young people safe, but also to enable them to learn to manage risks for themselves. *Getting ready - Managing Risk* (From Council for Learning outside the Classroom)

Risk management is all about identifying and managing any significant chance of harm.
Forest schools conduct four types of risk assessment:

**Generic Site** — this should take into account all four layers within woodland.

**Generic Activity/Experiences** — this should take into account all the aspects of activities/experiences, including creative experiences, games and tool use. Once correct procedures, such as safe tool use has been established these generic activity risk assessments become part of the standard operating procedures.

**Daily** — includes weather, wild factors and any changes noted on the day. This can include assessments on individuals attending the session. This should be carried out by the forest school leader prior to a session. The children should be encouraged to conduct a generic site risk assessment with their leader on arrival at the environmental area.

**Ongoing Active** — involves leaders’ judgement during the session in response to changing situations.

**First Aid** (first aid kit? Can we have all these things in?? We can’t in school)

John Burrell holds a current First Responder certificate, issued by the Scout association and includes an outdoor element. Mrs Richmond holds a 3 day first aid at work certificate. They are responsible for all aspects of health and safety and carry out all medical equipment checks as detailed below.

**Contents for emergency / First Aid kit**
The kit needs to be regularly checked and re-stocked — An accident book is also present and will be completed as necessary. The kit should contain the following items, paying due consideration to the size of the group:

- Gloves/Antiseptic wipes
- Accident book
- Swabs /plasters /Eye wash
- Bandages (cotton, in various sizes)
- Micro-pore tape/wound closures
- Tough cut scissors/Tweezers
- Burn Ease (Large and small)
- Safety pins/Cling film/gaffer tape
Insect repellent

Emergency procedures
Medical information and emergency contact details for all in group are available in School Office, including adult helpers and leader of sessions. Mobile phone - adult helpers should all carry a mobile phone and numbers have to be exchanged amongst adults prior to session.

Other essential items
Welfare kit (wet wipes, hand gel, biscuits, and drinking water)
Medication for individuals/Bruise treatment/Insect treatment
Emergency fire kit
Accident, Serious Incident/Emergency Procedure

What to do in an accident
Child is assessed by trained outdoor first aider and treatment is given as appropriate.
Accident log book is completed and parents/carers are informed on return to school.

What to do in a serious incident
Child is assessed by first aider and first aid is administered as appropriate and emergency services are called by Staff as seen fit. Office informed (on site) and additional support sought.
The additional helper will walk towards point of vehicular access in order to direct emergency services to site.
Forest School Leader to stay with casualty and rest of group.
Serious incidents are logged in the serious incident log book and the school and parents/carers are informed as soon as this is possible.
As standard practice all incidents where the emergency services had to be called out are formerly reviewed with the Mrs Hine (Head-teacher) and any involved adults' in order to review practice and provide quality assurance.
(See also Legislation section)
Weather Checks and other considerations

Use a local forecast. It is good practice to assess the site prior to taking children out. Try and leave cancellation as late as possible. Below is a short outline of conditions that may lead to a cancellation of a session:
A rough guide is no entry to woods in winds of force 4 increasing to 5.
In windy conditions keep a watchful eye on the surrounding tree branches, especially, boundary Beech Trees.
Be aware that it is possible for tree limbs and branches to drop on any day.
Check children's clothing before start of any session on cold days.
Keep nearby Gardeners School Shed stocked with replacement clothing.
If the children are getting too cold either warm them up through exercise, shared shelter, sitting by the fire or going inside.

Cancellation Procedure for a timetabled session

Having conducted a daily site risk assessment or in cases of severe weather where it is obvious that a session cannot take place inform Slinfold School Staff accordingly of the cancellation. Children will then attend normal class lessons.

Toileting Procedure

Children are toileted before leaving school building.
Children can return to School in pairs or accompanied as necessary.
If toileting is an absolute emergency -
  o A site is allocated with a cross of sticks; Eco friendly toilet paper is used.
  o A hole of app. 6-8 inches is dug. Children are told that they can use a stick if they have missed the hole. Earth is replaced after completion.
  o Children wash their hands in running water in the area set aside and use antibacterial solution. Hands are dried using paper towels which are collected and recycled after return to school.
Parental Consent Have we? Should it be parental awareness

Parents/carers are given a detailed outline of planned activities of the Wednesday afternoon session.
Parents/carers are given a Leaflet about what children should wear for the session.
Parents/carers complete the parental consent form for attendance at Forest School prior to sessions. This contains individual’s details, such as contact address and phone number, medical history and doctor’s contact number and address.

Use of Photographs size 14

Parents/carers at Slinfold School CE Primary School have given their consent for photographs to be taken. There are only very few children who are not to be photographed. Check this list prior to sessions.

Safeguarding Children Procedure

Please follow Schools Safeguarding policy - available online and in Office. Below is a brief outline.

Who is responsible?

Any concerns should be communicated to Forest School Leader as soon as possible. They will then follow the standard procedure of informing the possible signs

- Injuries (bruising, bruised eyes, fractured or broken bones, burn or bite marks)

- Continuous “accidents”
  An unlikely (or no) explanation for an injury
  A continual pattern of accidents or injuries
  A child saying that something is hurting
Behavioural indicators include:
A child who is very reluctant to return home
A child who is resistant to going home with one family member
Self-harm, self-destructiveness
Persistent aggression or violent play
Sudden shift in moods / withdrawn

Dealing with disclosure

Disclosure refers to a child talking about what happened, where, when, and with whom. If a child wants to tell you about something which is clearly both sensitive and difficult, it is important that you are able to make it possible for them to do so, particularly as this may be the first time they have attempted to talk about their experience.

Do
Remember that it is not your role to establish proof or gather evidence
Make time to listen to the child
Try to avoid the need for the child to repeat possibly embarrassing details
*Only ask open-ended questions - do NOT lead*
Be honest about the implications of confidentiality; the child must know that you will have to pass the information on to get them the help they need.
Allow the child to lead the conversation
Take the child seriously, acknowledge that they were right to tell, and are not responsible for what happened
Make notes as soon as possible after a disclosure

What to report in the event of concerns

Any concerns should be communicated in as much detail as possible to Forest School Leader who will then follow Policy Procedures as soon as possible.

What happens if staff are accused?

If staffs are accused the process described above has to be observed.
Activities and Games at Forest School

General Safety

All Forest School sessions are carefully planned and risk assessed by the leader, Forest School is a long-term child-led, educational process that promotes, observes and explicitly supports the social, emotional and physical development of children in a woodland environment.

Games and Activity Safety/Forest School Ethos

All games and activities are risk assessed by the Leader, see appropriate activity

“Key to supporting the child’s progress is an acknowledgement of the role of the Leader as a “significant other” who can encourage the development of self-esteem through appropriate matching of activity to a child’s preferred learning style. The development of the role of the “significant other” occurs through the long-term relationship that is built up over the duration of a Forest School programme. This relationship is founded on the twin principles of risk and trust. The successful matching of activities to a learner’s preferred discovering style occurs through continual detailed observations and evaluation of a child’s learning and behaviour over the duration of a Forest School programme.” Forest Schools (Knight2013)

Tool Safety and Tool Operating Procedure

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the safe usage and maintenance of all tools. Tools are always checked and counted before each session, at the end of a session the tools are recounted and the tools are maintained as outlined below. Safety boots should be worn at all times by adults using tools. Children may need to wear safety boots for certain activities. This will be identified in the activity risk assessment. Tool training and assessment of individuals should always take place prior to working with tools. Always risks assess tools, working area and activity. Establish a clear script for passing tools, as outlined under use of loppers and secateurs below and establish clear rules for accessing tools.
Fire Protocol including Fire management and Safety

Establish a fire area and train young people how to approach and leave before lighting a fire.
Sit your fire carefully; avoid tree roots, peat soil & deep leaf mould, rough ground etc. Always clear to bare earth.
Don’t light in windy or tinder dry conditions.
Have at least 1.5m between fire surround and seating logs.
Seating logs should have emergency escape routes between them.
Keep fires approx. 4m from any shelter built from easily combusting materials.
If a shelter is designed to have an integral fire-establish safety rules and multiple exits before use. Never leave a fire unattended.
Fix fire surround and seating to avoid accidents.
Have water and fire blanket available to extinguish the fire. Also hang a fire blanket near the fire.
Have a bucket full of fresh water for immersing a burn.
If young people have fires restrict flame height to equivalent of your knee.
Only use dead wood and explain habitat dead wood. Reduce smoke with dead wood use.

Camp Fire Cooking Procedure

Risk assesses working area and activity.
Food hygiene regulations should be followed.
Carry antiseptic wipes or soap and water for hand washing
Split open food and check it is cooked before consumption.
When cooking with a stick use green wood and remove bark before cooking using a knife or potato peeler and scraping action.
Don’t re-heat cooked food.
Avoid foods that need a lot of fat to cook in case of pan fire.
Get young people to tuck in long hair, roll up or fasten loose clothing.
Inform parents/carers of planned activity and gain permission. Check group does not suffer from food allergies or that other reasons, such as religious reasons, do not permit individuals to handle or consume certain food types.

“Food always tastes better cooked outside and on an open fire.”
**Lost or Missing Person Procedure**

Children are instructed that they have to stay within eye sight of adults. They know to immediately to gather around the adult if the whistle is blown three times.

In the event of a suspected lost or missing person the whistle is blown three times.

A five minute interval is immediately timed by Forest School Leader.

School Office to be informed immediately by mobile phone or responsible child as Office is on site and within 100 Metres.

**Positive Behaviour**

Forest School behaviour expectations

- Listen when adult is talking
- Take turns when talking with your peers, listen to what they have to say
- Keep to the Forest School boundaries agreed with Leader
- Be aware – keep yourself safe - look around you - take care
- Keep your friends safe too
- Use Forest School language – kind words and always be polite
- Be patient with each other, everyone learns at different rates

When behaviour becomes challenging reference will be made to Slinfold CE Primary School Behaviour Code as agreed by the Staff, Parents and Children. Behaviour that the Forest School Leader deems dangerous will result in child being excluded from the session immediately.
Equal Opportunities

The Slinfold CE Primary School (Forest School) Equal Opportunities Policy includes:

All children will be given the opportunity to participate in all Forest School Activities regardless of age, ability or gender.

The Forest School programme promotes children’s right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of self-sufficiency.

All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued and nurtured. Forest School activities and the use of Forest School equipment will offer children the opportunity to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.

Children with exceptional needs will be admitted to the Forest School programme after consultation between parents, School Staff and Forest School Leader. The Forest School programme will recognise the wide range of special needs of children and will consider what part it can play in meeting these needs.

All children should be adequately dressed to ensure that they are able to take part in all Forest School activities; therefore the Forest School programme will supply appropriately sized personal protective equipment e.g. work gloves, hard hats, and fire mitts when required.
Daily Operating Procedure

What to do before each session

Forest School Leader to check that all risk assessments are in place, particularly the daily risk assessment and carry out appropriate tasks. Check phone signal. Check appropriate clothing, group aware of hazards.

Forest School Leader to ensure that there is correct staff/child ratio and that all staffs are familiar with this handbook. Register to be completed by Forest School Leader. Forest School Leader to complete equipment check prior to each session.

What to do during the session

An ongoing risk assessment of the weather, behaviour, safety, and activities will be carried out by Forest School Leader.
Head count

What to do after the session

Site must be left with no rubbish or equipment or remains of campfire. Tool check, reflection time, closing circle, evaluations
All resources returned and stored in Forest School Shed/garage
Volunteers check list

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_Whosoever plants a tree?
Winks at immortality
Felix Dennis_
While there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. Recognition that taking risks is an important part of the learning and development it still needs to provide a safe and supportive environment in which the children can learn about the risks. Consequently a risk/benefit analysis will be used in the assessments for the activities.

The Slinfold Environmental Area Risk assessment will include:

All significant hazards will be identified and action taken or precautions put in place to reduce the risk to a safe level. All staff in the area will have access to the ongoing risk assessments and will be made aware of their duty to report any other hazards or potential hazards that they think the leader should be made aware of.

There are 5 steps to a risk assessment

1) Look for the hazard, windblown trees, litter and flood water.
2) Decide who might be harmed and how.
3) Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or amended.
4) Record the finding
5) Review and revise as necessary.

Insurance

West Sussex County Council and its staff are all insured to carry out Forest School activities on the Slinfold School site providing all the risk assessments and procedures are adhered to.

Legislation

Ensure that all equipment involved in accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by any investigators. Do not focus on who is at fault. In all cases keep a careful written record of all the facts, events and times retain this record, and if possible take photographs. Interviews only with witness present. Report incidents in the first aid log.

Incidents resulting in admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in and injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24 hours 0845 3009923.

First aid kits to be replenished and checked every 6 months. Any incidents or near miss must be subsequently investigated by Head teacher and existing controls amended as necessary.
Guidance on Knife and tool use

• Correct and safe use of all sharp tools will be demonstrated to all staff and children.
• Tools will be counted out and back.
• All will be supervised closely by leader and assessed competent to use such tools.
• Tools should be kept in a designated safe area when not in use, not to left unattended.
• All knives will be left closed or sheaved immediately after use.
• Walking around with unmasked tools will not be permitted.
• Safe working distances, suitable ratios and competence abilities will be adhered to at all times.
• Suitable boots/shoes and outdoor clothing will be worn. Including the use of helmets during felling operations. Gloves suitable for the tasks will be provided and must be worn.
• Designate a specific zone for those using knives.
• Always carry knife with sheath firmly on.
• Always pass knife in the demonstrated manner.
• Keep in sheath when not in use.
• Leader to count out and back.
• Ensure all children have had demonstration before use including how to grip, body positions, working area, and leader to assess individual’s competency and knowledge of knife drills.
• Knife work is supervised and distraction free.
• Each person to sit well out of reach of others and establish “Blood Bubble” procedure.
Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the children and adults in attendance. The sap and hairs from some plants can cause rashes and blistering when in contact with the skin, or after the skin is exposed to sunlight. Most rashes are caused by stinging nettles; this plant is well known and distinguishable and will be pointed out.

Serious poisoning from the ingestion of leaves, berries or fungi rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, the Forest School Leader will disallow all children from foraging and eating anything that has not been agreed safe.

If a member of any group is exposed to hazardous plant or fungi, so that they have a reaction the leader must be informed and appropriate first aid administered. If the nature of the reaction is deemed more serious, the appropriate emergency procedures will be taken.

**Biting & Stinging Insects**

Insect bites and stings can be common, particular in spring and late summer, and usually cause some minor irritation. In rare cases, people can have a serious allergic reaction that requires immediate medical treatment—if this is the case then the emergency procedure will be followed and the first aider will take charge. Any prior knowledge to suggest that a particular individual will have an allergic reaction the Forest School Leader will be informed, and a check of any self-administered medication (in date) will be carried out.

Ticks are known to occur in the area and appropriate advice and checks will be given.

**Safe Lifting**

Forest School activities are physically demanding for the children and staff, heavy objects, tree trunks etc are moved and carried. So it is wise to be aware of best practise, to avoid back injuries and manual handling principal are followed:

- Think and plan where and how object is to be moved
- Keep load close to waist and the heaviest side next to body
- Adopt a stable position feet apart
- Take a good hold
- Avoid bending your back
- Avoid twisting
- Keep head up and look ahead
- Clear path/put load down if you need to adjust it/ Move smoothly