



Forest School Handbook

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What is Forest School?

Forest School at Springhead School is a student led learning session which offers lots of opportunities for holistic growth. It is part of a long term programme where pupil's skills will develop over their time. This programme supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. The aim of the sessions is to develop the students confidence through physical experiences in a natural (as possible) setting.

Our Forest School at Springhead

Our Forest School is located on our Barry's Lane site in the Secondary playground, adjacent to Seamer Road. We have a fire circle, nature table, mud kitchen along with numerous sitting spots to relax and resources in the shed to explore.

Our Forest School sessions provide opportunities for our students to develop their social skills, communication, fine motor skills, problem solving skills, risk management and decision making.



Forest School Ethos and Principles

Forest School ethos is based on the respect for the students to learn and investigate the world around them.

“It believes in children's right to play; the right to access the outdoors (and in particular a woodland environment); the right to access risk and the vibrant reality of the natural world; and the right to experience a healthy range of emotions, through all the challenges of social interaction, to build a resilience that will enable continued and creative engagement with their peers and their potential.”

Forest School focuses more on the process of learning rather than the content. Often the Forest School Leader will start the session with a directed activity and then students will be encouraged to develop their ideas in their own way to direct their own sessions.

There are 6 principles of Forest Schools

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 natural or woodland environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.

More information about the principles can be found at [The 6 Forest School Principles \(thepracticalforestschool.com\)](https://thepracticalforestschool.com)

Fire safety policy

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and may be used during many sessions. Engaging with others around the campfire is a crucial part of Forest School learning. Singing with others and cooking food on the fire is a great opportunity for the students and may only be available to them during Forest School sessions.

During these sessions we will learn why fire is important, how to respect the fire, the dangers of the fire and how to be safe and responsible around the fire. Some students may also learn about the fire triangle and how to build a successful fire.

At Springhead School, we aim to ensure that all students and adults participating in the Forest School sessions do so safely and with as little risks to their health as possible.

- Fires are only to be lit in the fire pit within the fire circle in the Forest School area.
- Only students partaking in the Forest School session will be allowed in the Forest School area during the session times, no one else is to use the playground whilst a session is on.
- When a fire is lit, all students will be seated safely around the fire circle or doing some focused work with a member of staff in a safe area.
- Students are not encouraged to put any items onto the fire once it has been lit unless they are doing so safely with the Forest School leader.
- Fires will not be lit during strong winds.

Lighting and keeping fires burning

A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. When lighting a fire, the Forest School Leader will take control and all other adults will be briefed prior and encouraged to read the relevant risk assessments.

The Headteacher is notified before each session involving the use of the fire pit.

- The Kelly Kettle will only be used on the safety tripod directly onto the ground.
- A fire safety kit will also be close by in case of emergencies, this includes a fire bucket (filled with water), a fire safety blanket, heatproof gloves and a first aid kit.

Extinguishing Fires

- At the end of the session the fire will always be extinguished safely.
- Water will always be closely available to extinguish a fire.
- Wherever possible, all fuels placed on the fire will be burnt to ash.

For more information please see Forest School Risk Assessment.

Use of Equipment and Tools

To achieve the full Forest School experience the students will have access to the tools and equipment within the area. The tools will be used 1-1 and can only be used once the student has earned it on their tool passport. The remaining equipment in the area can be explored independently by the students.

All tools have their own clear rules for correct use which includes specific PPE to be worn. A tool talk will be given each time a tool is used in the session. The students are encouraged to learn the talk and say it along with the Forest School leader.

Tool Storage

When not in use, the tools and equipment will be stored in a locked box/shed. The tools will be checked for damage each time they are used. If any appear damaged they will be logged and either fixed or replaced. The students will never help themselves, the Forest School leader will always be the one collecting and transporting the tools.

Safe use of tools

Tools are only used for specific purposes and the correct use will be modelled by the Forest School Leader.

Weather and Clothing

We follow the Forest School ethos of 'there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing'. It is important that the students dress appropriately for the weather when attending Forest School sessions. If its sunny then sun cream and a sun hat will be needed. If during Winter months its raining and cold, the sessions are still likely to run however, the students will need to wear coats and waterproof clothing. The only time a Forest School session may be cancelled is due to extreme weather such as snow/ice and strong winds.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

All students at Springhead will have the opportunity to take part in Forest School sessions, some sessions may be adapted to suit groups needs. Our Forest School site has been designed to include all students and will be wheelchair/walker friendly.

For more information regarding policies please see our Equality Policy and Accessibility Plan which can both be found on our School website.

Behaviour Management

Unacceptable behaviour in the Forest School area will not be tolerated. The students will have to show to the Forest School Leader that they can be trusted to use the equipment safely, any dangerous behaviour and the students may be asked to leave.

For more information regarding policies please see our Behaviour Principles and Behaviour and Discipline—Incorporating the anti-bullying policy, both of which can be found on our School website.

First aid procedure and medical help

A designated first aid box which includes a burns kit is located within the Forest School area, all staff and students are aware of its location. If a First Aider is needed then they will be called using the walkie talkie system we have in school. As the Forest School area is located within the school grounds it is easily accessible by members of school staff.

Forest School Rules

- Always listen to the Forest School leader
- Never be silly with tools because it's dangerous
- Respect the Forest School area and the equipment within it
- Don't pick any plants that are growing
- Stay within the boundaries—never go near the fire pit when a fire is lit
- Be aware of any hazards
- Treat everyone with respect
- We must wash our hands when we finish our session

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments will be available for all staff to read. All staff will have read and signed the risk assessment before partaking in any Forest School session.

If parents request to see the risk assessments they will be sent home to each individual.



Forest School Sessions

Dear Parents/Carers,

Starting in September we will be offering your son/daughter Forest School sessions. These will be led by a trained member of staff and will be held in our new Forest School area at our Barry's Lane site.

Some of the activities on offer will include the use of tools (bow saws, hack saws, bill hooks, hand and palm drills). There will also be opportunities to use flint and steels to start a fire in the designated fire pit. Our aim would eventually be to cook on the fires and enjoy some tasty marshmallows!

All tools will only be used under supervision and will be used for a purpose, for example to make jewellery. Students can only use the tools once they have earned their 'tool passport'. Students will also need to wear appropriate clothing for these sessions, this will often be trousers, suitable shoes and a jumper. If the weather is bad then waterproof clothing will be needed.

Some of the activities on offer through Forest School are team building, den building, fire lighting, cooking on fires, safe use of tools, sensory exploration of natural objects, natural art, bug hunting, animal identification, and storytelling to name a few.

Please return the attached permission form stating what your happy for your child to participate in.

Many Thanks,

Erin Broadbent

Forest School Leader

Forest School Permissions

I give permission for _____ to take part in weekly Forest School sessions. I understand that my son/daughter will need the appropriate clothing as stated in the letter.

I give/do not give permission for my son/daughter to use the following:

Bow Saw: yes/No	Flint and steel: yes/No
Hack Saw: yes/No	Fire pit: yes/No
Bill Hook: yes/No	Kelly Kettle: yes/No
Hand Drill: yes/No	Palm Drill: yes/No
Potato Peeler: yes/No	Loppers: yes/no

Signed _____ Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Relationship to student _____