Elveden C of E Primary Academy



Our Forest School Handbook



‘Let Your Light Shine’

Matthew 5:16

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Statement of Ownership

This handbook was created by Mrs Maguire and Miss Greenhill throughout December 2019 to January 2020. This document will be reviewed and updated according to any changes that have to be made. These may be changes to the actual Forest School site or how the sessions may be run.

Information about school policy is taken directly from Elveden C of E Primary Academy website and relevant polices can be found on here.

Our next review for our Forest School Handbook will be January 2021. However, if any changes occur before this time, this document will be updated and relevant amendments made and all staff will be asked to read the handbook again and signatory evidence will be obtained.

Forest Handbook created by:

Zoe Maguire ……………………………………………………………….

Dani Greenhill …………………………………………………………………

Introduction

 The Forest School movement originated in Denmark and involved children and young people spending a sustained length of their school day in a local woodland. Here, the children would explore their surroundings, play with friends and learn about their local environment. They would not only learn about the flora and fauna of the woodland, but also how to take risks whilst in it and how to respect it. What’s more, their time outdoors was spent immersing themselves in ‘child led’ experiences, which had a positive impact on their physical, social and emotional development.

 In the United Kingdom, Forest Schools have been a fundamental part of Early years education since the 1980’s. It thrives on the idea that young children can develop enthusiasm for education through the appreciation of nature. Forest School Leaders have identified key benefits from being outdoors as it not only develops pupils’ confidence, but improves their behaviour and social skills as well.

 For us at Elveden, Forest Schools means a lot more than just being ‘outdoors’. As facilitators of learning, it’s the perfect opportunity for us to create an irresistible atmosphere, where our children can not only develop independence and self-esteem, but build a bank of memorable outdoor experiences that they will remember for life.

Our Forest school site is situated away from the school grounds in a nearby woodland on the Elveden Farm Estate (See Site/Ecological Management plan in Appendix…). The site is owned by The Elveden Estate Farm and they have given us access to use this location for our weekly forest school sessions. We have a signed agreement with the Estate to lease this as an annual contract (See Licensee Contract in Appendix…).

Our Forest School sessions are organised and delivered by our two passionate Forest School Leaders, Mrs Maguire and Miss Greenhill, who both have their Forest School First Aid award and who are supported by Class Teachers and our Voluntary Forest school Helpers (See Volunteer list). These committed Teachers plan their Forest School sessions for the children with our school’s 5 clear aims and principles in mind.

Our Forest School Handbook is available for all parties to read, Staff, Forest School Helpers, Volunteers and School Governors.

Aims and Principles

As a Church school, we have 5 clear aims which are inextricably intertwined with our Christian vision, mission statement, physical and mental wellbeing and Building Learning Power.

We want our children to be:

* **Ready to learn:** Children have a positive, confident attitude to learning.  They are both physically and emotionally ready to learn.
* **Resourceful:** Children show initiative, asks well thought out questions and are prepared to use a variety of strategies to learn.
* **Reflective:** Children are curious, able and willing to learn from their mistakes and can describe their progress
* **Resilient:** Children are prepared to persevere and stay involved in their learning, even when the process is challenging.
* **Reciprocal**: Children are prepared to help each other and work as a team.

Therefore, the curriculum at Elveden C of E Primary Academy is designed to provide a broad and balanced education that is inclusive of the needs of all pupils and gives them the skills, knowledge and understanding to prepare them for life’s journey. It ensures that academic success, as well as physical and mental development and health and well-being are key elements that support the development of the whole child and promote a positive attitude to learning, with an outdoor environment being the perfect setting to develop these.

Furthermore, the aim of our curriculum is for pupils to have the necessary skills to be successful, independent and motivated learners in readiness for their next stage of education. We feel it is important that the curriculum prepares children for their future and builds on our key values of hope, trust, respect and forgiveness. The curriculum celebrates diversity and values all God’s children with dignity. We encourage children to be confident and enthusiastic learners and enable them to take risks.

As a Christian school, we believe that in whatever they undertake in life, all children deserve a chance to ‘Let Their Light Shine’, and skills learnt outdoors are a great way to show this.

Within a climate of high expectation and challenge, all children are guided, supported and inspired to fulfil their true potential, emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually, both during their time at school and in their life ahead. Therefore, our Forest School sessions provide a safe environment where all participants can acquire new skills in an outdoor environment: they get to take risks, build resilience, make autonomous choices about their own learning and initiate free play with those around them.

Our woodland sessions help our children to appreciate and respect their natural environment, whilst building a bank of valuable outdoor learning experiences where each one of them can truly shine. In addition to this, our Forest Schools sessions encourage all learning styles and uncover ‘multiple intelligences’ in our children allowing them to develop holistically within this woodland environment.

Health & Safety at Forest School

The Health and Safety Policy for Elveden C of E Primary Academy, sets out a clear statement of the schools’ approach to the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors, whilst at the school. The following list is additional measures relating directly to our Forest School setting and its regular sessions:

* Every Forest School session will be run by a fully first trained Forest School Leader. There will be additional adults who are also First Aid trained, however the Forest School Leaders will be the ones who administer any first aid should it be needed.
* The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in his/her charge, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
* All Forest School helpers must read this handbook and appropriate risk assessments and understand/ comply with the general operating procedures for Forest Schools
* The Forest School Leader or Forest School Helper will carry a well-stocked first aid kit and Emergency bag.

 This emergency bag will contain:

Forest School Emergency Kit First Aid kit,

Emergency procedures

Medical information and emergency contact details of all in group

Risk assessments

Mobile phone

Clean water

Accident sheets

Individual medication

Blanket

Wet wipes

Tick remover

Spare clothing

Torch

In addition to tools/resources suited to the planned activity, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag.

* The Forest School leader will always carry a mobile phone in case there is an emergency and will have all children contact details on them within their emergency pack.
* In the event of an emergency, the Forest School leader will ensure that the school contacts the emergency services. If an ambulance is needed, the Forest School Leader will send an adult helper to the site entrance to direct the paramedics to the injured party.
* The Forest School leader will review their risk assessments before every trip to the Forest site and also carry out a daily risk assessment prior to visit.
* The Forest School Leader may undertake a dynamic risk assessment during a session. This will be recorded on the dynamic risk assessment record sheet.
* Risk Assessment/Procedures for tools must be read by all adults prior to the Forest School Session. Whilst using tools the Adult/child ratio will be always be 1:4. There is only one exception to this- the use of small knives for stick whittling, when it will be 1:2.

Equality and Inclusion at Forest School

Elveden C of E Primary Academy School is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of our children, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

At Elveden, we celebrate the uniqueness of every child and encourage them to shine in all they do, building a memory bank of learning experiences which prepare them for life’s journey’ with our motto ‘Let Your Light Shine’ (Matthew 5:16) encompassing an inclusive approach under God’s Guidance.

Our Equality Plan follows the 7 key principles:

1. All learners are of equal value.
2. We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is a strength.
3. We foster positive attitudes and relationships.
4. We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging
5. We observe good equalities practice for our staff.
6. We have the highest expectations of all our children.
7. We work to raise standards for all pupils, but especially the most vulnerable.

Safeguarding at Forest School

 Elveden C of E Primary Academy School recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection and for confidentiality. We understand that effective Child Protection work requires sound procedures, excellent multi-agency cooperation and a workforce that is confident in responding to child protection situations quickly and efficiently. A full copy our Safeguarding Policy is held in the school- below is a brief outline:

Any concerns should be communicated to Forest School Leader as soon as possible. They will then follow the standard procedure, which is to record the safeguarding incident on CPOMS and then inform the DSL (Designated Safeguard Lead) at school. This communication will happen via phone call from site.

When dealing with a disclosure whilst at the Forest School site, this is written up objectively by the persons disclosed to, and given to the Forest School Lead who will then put the incident on CPOMS.

Behaviour at Forest School

At Forest Schools, the behaviour policy is followed exactly the same. If a child is not behaving appropriately at the setting, they will be given their warning and chance to redeem themselves. After that, if their behaviour is still inappropriate, they will be taken out of their activity to reflect for 5 minutes. If any behaviour begins to be challenging or dangerous, the Forest School Leader will make the decision to exclude that child immediately from the session.

Risk Benefit Assessments at Forest School

Risk Benefit management is an essential part of Forest School. All Forest School staff have a duty of care towards the children they are with. Not only are all adults responsible for keeping children safe, but they must also allow children to take some risk for themselves. During Forest School Sessions, it is vital that children are allowed to manage their own risk. For example, when using sharp tools, however, risk assessments must be in place for these activities beforehand and all parties made aware of them. Forest School Risk Benefit assessments will be carried out half termly and a daily check made, every day before a Forest School session. In addition, any activity that requires a risk assessment will be in place for that activity before it takes place.

 The risk assessment process is as follows:

* We look for hazards.
* We decided who may be harmed and how this injury may occur.
* We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or if more should be done.
* We record our findings.
* We review our assessments and revise them if necessary.
* We inform all adults who accompany us.

Designated person responsibility:

Mrs Maguire -The Forest School Leader has been a member of Elveden Academy teaching staff for five years. She is the PE,PHSE and Mental Health lead as well as Lower Key Stage Two teacher. She also has Level 3 Forest School Paediatric First Aid.

Miss Greenhill – The Forest School Leader has been a member of Elveden Academy teaching staff for three years. She is the Early Years Teacher and SMSC, Collective Worship and I.CT lead. She also has her Level 3 Forest School Paediatric First Aid.

Lost or Missing Person Procedure at Forest School

All children are made aware of the Forest School Boundary. This safety procedure is introduced to the children by ‘beating the boundary’ together. Children are instructed to stay within eye sight of adults and the red safety bag at all times. The children are informed that if they ever hear a sharp whistle blown three times, they come back immediately as this is an absolute emergency.

In the event of a suspected lost or missing person, the whistle blowing system will be followed and all children will be counted and the time noted. After that, a five minute interval is immediately timed by Forest School Leader. The helpers and other staff will remain with the group and the leader will search the area. The School Office to be informed immediately by mobile phone and the police if necessary.

Parental Consent for Forest School

All parents/carers are given an introductory letter to Forest Schools and also the opportunity to attended a parents evening about it. What’s more, the Parents/carers are given a Leaflet about what children should wear for the session. Parents/carers have also completed the parental consent form for attendance at Forest School prior to sessions.

Use of Photographs at Forest School

Parents/carers at Elveden C of E Primary Academy School have given their consent for photographs to be taken. There are only very

few children who are not to be photographed. The Forest School Leaders will inform all adults who these children are.

Cancellation Procedure for a timetabled session at Forest School

If in the event that Forest School session will be cancelled, a daily site risk assessment will be conducted and in cases of severe weather where it is obvious that a session cannot take place, we will cancel the sessions. The children will then attend normal classes. If any extenuating circumstances arise as with regards to severe weather, we will bring the children straight back to the school site.

Toileting Procedure at Forest School

All children are toileted before leaving the school building. If children need to use the toilet during Forest School sessions, they are to inform an adult who will escort them. After children have been to the toilet, they will be reminded to wash their hands and then adult will escort them back. The toilet facility itself is located on site and the waste is removed at the end of the session and disposed of back at school.

Clothing & PPE at Forest School

Although risk assessments have be carried out for the Forest School Site, there may be the chance that the forest floor itself, may be wet and slippery at times. There is also a slight slope down into the woodland area at the site and although this will be gravelled, it may still be slippery if wet. Therefore it is vital that all parties using this area must wear suitable footwear. A pair of walking boots or wellies will keep feet dry and are safer to wear in these conditions. Furthermore, with Forest Schools taken place in most weather conditions, suitable clothing must be worn for the time of year.

All our parents were given an essential Forest School kit list before the session started and it is vital that the forest school leaders check children are suitable dressed for the activities. A spare bag of clothing will be taken with the emergency first aid bag, just in case.

The Forest Leader may also decide that on certain days, if visible is not great, that hi-vis jackets are worn by the younger or vulnerable children. The Forest School leader will also provide children with gloves if they are undertaking activities that involve clearing nettles and brambles and also if using certain tools. For example, it will be necessary for children to use gloves when using the bow saw, but tools such as Loppers are perfectly safe to use without gloves, as it is likely that in this case, gloves would reduce the control of this type of tool.

Tool Safety and Tool Operating Procedure at Forest School

The Forest School Leaders are responsible for the safe usage and maintenance of all tools. These tools are always checked prior to use and counted back in at the end of each sessions. The usage and maintenance of all tools is outlined in our individual Tool Procedures. It is vital that all adults model safe and correct usage of tools and that gloves are provided for the activities for all children that need them. This will be identified in the activity risk assessment. Risk assessments for the use of Tools will always take place prior to working with tools and an appropriately safe area created the tool tasks.

Fire Protocol including Fire management/ Safety at Forest School

The Forest School Leader has established a safe area of the fire pit. When starting the fire, all children and staff will be reminded how to position themselves around the fire pit when it’s in use. The Forest School leader will ensure the conditions are safe before preparing the fire sight and ensure that there is at least 1.5m between fire pit and seating logs. The seating area will have a enter and exit point and children will be reminded not to walk around the seating area. The Forest School Leader will ensure that the water bucket and fire blanket available to extinguish the fire if needed. There will also be a fire Blanket located on the nearest tree by the fire. There will also be a bucket full of fresh water for immersing a burn, if this accident should happen. Forest Leader to ensure that fire flame height to equivalent of their knee. The Forest School leader will ensure that the fire is put out properly and there is no trace left in the woodland.

Camp Fire Cooking Procedure

All risks are assessed beforehand of the cooking working area and fire pit area. Food hygiene regulations should be followed and the Forest School Leader will have antibacterial hand wash or soap and water for hand washing. All food will only be prepared and cooked by the Forest School Leader and will be check thoroughly that it is cooked before consumption.

The camp fire itself will only be used to cook the following items: damper bread, pancakes and marshmallows. This source of heat will also be used to heat water for refreshments such as hot chocolate for the children. The Forest leader to ensure all children with long hair, tuck it in away before sitting near the camp fire and also make sure clothing is fastened and no one has any cords or strings hanging that could dangle in the fire.

The Forest Leader must inform parents/carers of their planned activity if it involves these food items and gain permission for children eating these. They will also make sure that any food allergies are noted and alternatives made available.

Volunteer signing sheet for Forest School

Please read our handbook and sign here. Please see the Forest School Leaders if you have any queries after doing so.

Insurance for Forest School

Elveden’s Forest School Leaders and Staff are all insured to carry out Forest School activities on the Elveden Estate site providing all the risk assessments and procedures are adhered to. These documents will be updated if anything changes with the site and all parties will be informed.

Attached is the contract from the Elveden Estate, which shows Elveden School as the licensees. This contract is reviewed annually with both parties.

Legislation

Forest School Leaders will ensure that all equipment involved in accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by any investigators. Furthermore, in a case of an accident, all carefully written records of this will be recorded, as will the facts, events and times relating to this incident/accident. If possible photos will be taken for evidence.All incidents/accidents will be recorded in the first aid log.

First aid kits to be replenished and checked every 6 months.