



Ormskirk West End

Primary School

From Tiny Acorns, Mighty Oaks Grow.

Community Primary ages 4-11

Forest School Policy

Approved: Spring 2025 Next Review Date: Spring 2028

Aims

Forest School is a unique method of Outdoor Education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and awareness and knowledge of the natural environment. It is a child centred and child led programme that provides the opportunity for the children to use their personal learning style to complete their chosen tasks.

To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.

- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the wild area around them. Encouraging children to care for the environment is an essential part of Forest schools. In order to encourage the children to look after the site, we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave.

Legislation and Forest School

Legislation of importance to Forest School includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This act makes it a statutory that an employer has a duty to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare at work of their employees (in the case of schools adults and children) and any equipment used by them, and that employees are responsible for the Health and Safety of themselves and others they may be affected by their acts. The Children's Act 1989, makes it important to consider adult ratios for all activities, equal opportunities and access, clear communication with parents and DSB checks for staff and regular volunteers.

School Policies and Forest Schools Staff attending Forest schools sessions should be familiar with the following school policies:

*Medical Needs Policy

*Safeguarding Policy

*SEND & Inclusion Policy

*Ethos, Ethics & Positive Behaviour Policy

The Forest schools curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the main office along with the other policies. The Forest schools Leader has an up-to-date certificate in ITC Outdoor First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangement. All staff have first aid training. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is kept in the Office and a mobile phone is carried. The school will contact the parents. Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below. Safeguarding Forest schools sessions are led by a trained Forest School Leader, supported by members of staff.

Everyone involved is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff and volunteers are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them. All Ormskirk West End staff have current DBS checks. Any concerns about a child's physical or mental well-being will be shared with our named Safeguarding Officers.

Equality and Inclusion

During Forest schools all persons are treated equally. We aim to provide a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued. Behaviour At Forest schools we operate within the Behaviour Policy of Ormskirk West End. We praise and reward good behaviour using the established school systems. When a child's behaviour threatens the well being of him/herself or others, and he/she does not respond to a verbal warning, he/she may be returned to school.

Medical and Emergency Contact

Details All Medical Care Plans and Emergency contact details are held in the School Office.

Safety Sweep and checklists

The Forest School leader will carry out a thorough sweep of the site for hazards and risks before the group enter the site and appropriate measures will be put in place, e.g. the removal of an object, or warning the group of specific dangers related to the site.

Policy and Procedures for Use of Tools and equipment at Forest schools

Tools and safe use of tools are an important part of Forest schools. Their use will be carefully managed by the Forest schools Leader with an area of the site set aside for tool use.

- Introduction to each tool will be by an official 'Tool talk'. (These can be found in the Forest schools File).

- Good practice will be demonstrated by the Forest schools Leaders at all times.
- Tools will be introduced to the children only when the Forest schools Leader feels the children are ready.
- All tools will be used on a 1:1 adult to child ratio when using them.
- Risk assessments of tool use are carried out in addition to other Forest schools activities and reviewed on a regular basis.
- All tools will be returned to the tool bag and locked away at the end of each session. This is the Forest schools Leaders responsibility.
- All resources and equipment are checked regularly.
- Any unsafe, worn out, dirty or damaged equipment is repaired and cleaned, or replaced. Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires at Forest schools Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place: Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety: Stand behind the log Step over and sit down on log Stand up, turn around and step over log Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle In addition to the other resources, we will take a large container full of water.

When lighting a fire:

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle. The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.
- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will be engaged in activities elsewhere.
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods. All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating at Forest schools:
- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.

- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away. The Forest School Leader will follow the Effective Group Management Procedures outlined in the Forest schools Handbook.

The role of the Forest schools Leader

- The Forest schools Leader is a trained Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and holds an up to date ITC Outdoor First Aid certificate. They are responsible for organising the planning and running all Forest School sessions.
- The Forest School leader has the safety of the children uppermost at all times. The leader will carry out a detailed safety check before each session and comply with health and safety risk assessments. • The leader will ensure that all documentation is relevant and up to date.
- The leader will carry an emergency pack at all times.
- The leader is responsible for all equipment and will ensure that it is checked before use and returned to the resource area after use.
- The Forest School leader will keep an accident book and keep parents fully informed of any incidents that may occur during a session, eg, trips, falls, stings, etc.

Forest schools Rules

- Keep your hands away from your mouth
- Leave things to grow
- Keep within the set boundaries

Equality Statement

A disability equality assessment has been carried out on the policy and the guidance contained in it. Implementing this policy ensures that the same opportunities are provided to all pupils and supports Equality and Diversity.

Policy agreed: Spring 2025

Next review: Spring 2028